

## **Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Specialist Provision Plan and SEN school places**

<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Service:</b>	Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team, Access Service
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Statham

#### **1. Aim**

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the current position of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) specialist provision planning within the Local Authority.

#### **2. Recommendations**

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether any further information or updates are required

#### **3. Report detail**

This report provides an update on the ongoing work surrounding our specialist provision and pupil place planning for SEND. The ongoing focus of the team is to review the requirement for SEND places across the borough in terms of pupil place planning and future proofing our place requirement. Working closely with the SEN and inclusion service, a five-year plan is being created to ensure our statutory responsibility for having sufficient school places is met.

##### **3.1 Our Vision**

Our vision is that all children and young people in Walsall will, irrespective of their learning needs or abilities, gain the skills and confidence to live well in their community. They will be supported and nurtured through an educational system that responds to their circumstances and prepares them for adulthood. Our ambition is to create a culture where there is effective, high quality learning provision, combined with meaningful and purposeful school partnerships, focused on the direct pursuit of improved outcomes for all Walsall's children and young people.

We must ensure that Walsall's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer continues to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people. We know that good provision requires a strong and effective culture of inclusion that supports all children and young people to thrive. All children and young people deserve the support they need to be confident, resilient individuals

with their own ambitions and aspirations as they develop into adulthood irrespective of their learning needs or abilities.

### 3.2 Local Authority Support

The Local Authority has the support of two Head Teachers, Cathy Draper (Short Heath Federation) and Kate Bargh (North Star Federation) on a part time secondment basis to support the development of the specialist provision review in Walsall.

Working closely with officers, they are working on the following projects in SEN:

- **Specialist provision group** – working closely with our capital and place planning teams to develop the special provision plan to meet the gaps identified through the special provision group review of SEN places.
- **Specialist inclusion service development** – working closely with our inclusion teams to develop services to support schools with behaviour, mental health support and children at risk of poor/non-school attendance or exclusion.

The work of the special provision review group aims to improve current processes and reorganise current provision to support better outcomes for children and young people (CYP) with SEND in Walsall. The work within this action plan aims to offer short, medium and long-term solutions. The expectation is that this work encompasses all sectors; education, health and social care and is co-produced with CYP and families working to the 'better together' principle.

The action plan is divided into two themes that interweave and have equal importance to the overall vision of improving outcomes for CYP with SEND. The two themes are: - the protocols to support inclusive practice and the review of specialist settings.

**Inclusive Practice:** The equity of inclusive practice across the borough is the highest priority. This is essential for the whole the education sector from early years to Post 16 to ensure we are preparing our children and young people adequately for adulthood. Much of this work will involve reinforcing the SEND Code of Practice (CoP) and establishing clear protocols, support, and pathways for all partners, including health and social care to support mainstream settings with the full inclusion of children and young people with SEND. This will entail working collaboratively with partners will allow greater opportunities to work in a more coordinated and efficient way.

**Review of Specialist Settings:** Whilst our inclusive vision and legal presumption, that all children including those with SEND have a right to mainstream education, is a priority we must also ensure that children with significant and complex SEND have the opportunity to attend a specialist setting in a timely way. A review of current specialist places (special schools and resourced provisions) will focus on the immediate and future needs. An accurate picture of the data will enable provision to support the needs of children and young people in the short, medium and long term. This will also include a full review of out of borough places that are used for SEND placements.

### 3.3 Pupil Place Requirement

Significant work has been undertaken to review the additional specialist places needed for the next 3-5 years.

The demand identifies provision for complex needs:

- Cognition & Learning including severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)
- Communication & Interaction including Autism
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

The local authority will continue to look at meeting demand across 4 key areas:

- LA commissioned special schools
- Resourced provision in mainstream schools
- Alternate Provision
- Independent special schools

We have already begun to meet our growing need as significant additional capacity has been created and already commissioned at LA special schools and mainstream schools with resourced provision.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS					
SCHOOL NAME	COMMISSIONED PLACE NUMBER				
	Sep-19	Sep-20	Sep-21	Sep-22	Sep-23
Castle Special	178	189	204	222	222
Elmwood Special	67	72	72	77	77
Jane Lane Special	120	120	136	166	175
Mary Elliot Special	127	127	137	140	140
Oakwood Special	85	100	130	150	200
Old Hall Special	98	98	103	103	103
Phoenix Special Academy	41	41	41	41	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>964</b>

Over the last 4 academic years, there has been a 35% increase in commissioned numbers across the special schools.

<b>ARP/SRP IN MAINSTREAM</b>					
<b>SCHOOL NAME</b>	<b>COMMISSIONED PLACE NUMBER</b>				
	<b>Sep-19</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>	<b>Sep-21</b>	<b>Sep-22</b>	<b>Sep-23</b>
Bentley West Primary	10	10	10	10	10
Rushall Primary	15	15	16	23	23
Lindens Primary	10	10	10	10	10
St Francis of Assisi Secondary	13	13	11	11	0
Shire Oak Secondary	10	10	10	10	10
Pool Hayes Secondary	10	10	10	10	10
New Invention Infant	0	0	0	8	8
Christ Church CE Primary	0	0	0	8	8
Short Heath Junior	0	0	0	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT</b>					
<b>SCHOOL NAME</b>	<b>COMMISSIONED PLACE NUMBER</b>				
	<b>Sep-19</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>	<b>Sep-21</b>	<b>Sep-22</b>	<b>Sep-23</b>
New Leaf	65	65	65	65	65
Shepwell	60	60	60	60	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>135</b>

Over the last 4 academic years, there has been a 15% increase in commissioned numbers across the specialist resource provisions (SRPs) in mainstream schools.

As part of plans to meet the additional demand, Cabinet approved funding of £2.4m to increase the number of places in SRPs by 122.

Several mainstream schools have agreed to have a specialist resource provision which are in the planning stages..

These include:

- Meadow View Primary School
- St James Primary School
- Pinfold Primary School
- Blue Coat Junior School
- Moorcroft Wood Primary School
- Christ Church Primary School – key stage 2
- Joseph Leckie Academy

These SRPs would provide 72 additional places.

In addition, several other schools are in conversation with the local authority over potential developments of SRPs for the remaining 50 places originally planned for.

In addition to the SRP developments, feasibility studies for expansion options at the existing special schools have been commissioned. The initial feasibilities have been undertaken and discussed with special schools.

A proposed expansion plan and capital strategy will be taken to Cabinet later in the autumn term, once plans are finalised and costs submitted for approval of capital funding.

A continual review of forecasted demands and places needed, as part of an annual sufficiency statement will ensure the needs for Walsall's pupils is kept under review.

### **Independent Sector**

The local authority continues to have dialogue with independent providers who are looking to establish provision for SEN pupils in Walsall and where appropriate will commission places for pupils.

A new independent special school, Cherry Tree School, opened in September 2023 on the site of the former Abu Bakr Boys School on Queen Mary Street. The school provides capacity for 75 pupils with complex SEN needs.

In addition, a proposed new independent school is being developed by the Witherslack Group on the former site of Abu Bakr School on Scarborough Road. This school is currently planned to open in September 2024.

## **4. Financial information**

The additional places and needs will form part of the SEND capital plan and utilisation of DfE grant funding for additional school places. This will be reported through the financial reports to scrutiny. Commissioned places are funded from the High Needs Block of schools funding

## **5. Reducing Inequalities**

It is of crucial importance to the Council's strategic objectives that the young people of Walsall can access the right provision to meet their need to achieve the appropriate qualifications, progressing to employment and / or training and to make a positive contribution within the Borough in the future.

## **6. Decide**

The Committee may decide to note the current position and request further information or assurance if necessary.

## **7. Respond**

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access planned work and performance board programmes.

## **8. Review**

The work of the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team is subject to constant monitoring and assessment via the Children's Services Performance Board process.

### **Contact Officer(s)**

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