

17 February 2022

**Specialist Provision Review**

**Wards(s):** All

**Portfolios:** Councillor Chris Towe – Education and Skills

**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 there should be further information or updates.

**3. Know: Context**

Following on from the paper brought to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021, this report provides an update on the ongoing work surrounding pupil place planning for SEND.

The ongoing focus of the school organisation service 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 Inclusion Service, a five-year plan is being created to ensure our statutory responsibility for having sufficient school places is met.

**3.1 Local Authority Support**

The Local Authority have recruited 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 school services within Walsall.

Together they will have responsibility for oversight and driving forward the education and inclusion agenda including the following 3 projects, working with our current LA teams, staff, and Walsall schools:

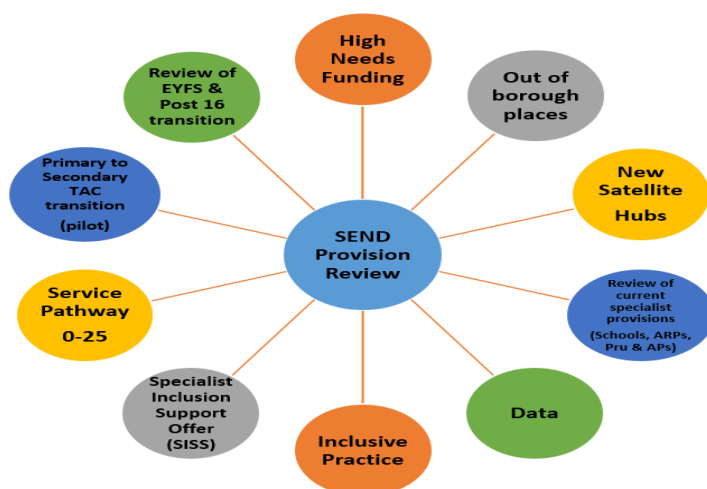
**Specialist provision group/work-** leading the development of the special provision plan to meet the gaps identified through the special provision group review of SEND places, working closely with our capital/school organisation team and SEND.

**Specialist inclusion Service development** – leading the development of our support services to support schools with behaviour, mental health support, and children at risk of poor/ non-school attendance or exclusion.

**School Improvement** - working with Local Authority representatives and schools' teams to support the school improvement agenda e.g., Schools Causing Concern conversations, commissioning Challenge Education and family of school's developments conversations with schools as well as Families of Schools.

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 clear themes that all interweave and have equal importance to the overall vision of improving outcomes for CYP with SEND:



Each of these key strands of work can be grouped into two themes - 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 EYFS to Post 16 to ensure we are preparing our CYP 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 CYP with

SEND. 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, we must 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 CYP 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.

### **3.2 Pupil Place Requirement**

The pupil place requirement for SEND places is broader than just Walsall and indeed the Black Country; it is an increasing need for many Local Authorities. There continues to be increased demand for specialist school places and increased levels of SEND needs across the region and nationally. The reasons underpinning this are multi-faceted including improved early identification of needs, changing complexity of need and general increased demand.

The impact of this is that local authority areas may not have the sufficient or appropriate provision and capacity to deliver specialist support in their area and children may need to be educated in out of Borough commissioned high-cost independent settings that may not always be able to deliver good outcomes nor be value for money.

Following a detailed review and analysis over the last 3 years, forecasts indicate that Walsall is likely to see an annual demand growth of 6.3% of statutory assessments, which in turn will lead to a need for additional specialist places across the Borough. This has considered fluctuations in demand because of the pandemic.

The table below shows the current commissioned number of specialist places across Walsall for primary and secondary schools. The purpose of the table is to show shortfall in places in specialist provisions.

### **Commissioned places in Special Schools and Specialist Provisions:**

	<b>Commissioned Places Primary (P) R-Y6</b>	<b>Commissioned Secondary (S) Y7 - 14</b>
<b>Special School</b>	343	480
<b>Specialist Provision</b>	36	91
<b>Total</b>	379	571

## Shortfall in commissioned places in Special Schools and Specialist Provisions:

	2022 -2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		2026-2027	
	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14	P R- Y6	S Y7- Y14
<b>Projected places needed</b>	471	596	460	677	465	718	503	733	528	739
<b>Shortfall</b>	92	25	81	106	86	147	124	162	149	168

The forecasted demand shows a shortfall of places for Walsall over the next five years. These places are for both special schools and specialist places within mainstream schools.

Whilst the long-term plan for places is being reviewed there is an immediate requirement from September 2022 for high-need Cognition and Learning and Autism places in primary and secondary schools. Further places for Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) places within secondary are also required. The group is working with head teachers and governing bodies, from both mainstream and special schools to find an appropriate solution for this immediate need; this could be in the form of satellite/hubs, reorganisation of specialist places and/or increased commissioned numbers within current special schools.

Whilst the current need for 2022 is known, analysis of the forecasted demand including requests for statutory assessments, types and level of need is ongoing to ensure sufficiency of provision for the longer term. This more detailed review will allow Walsall the opportunity to provide the places required and ensure appropriate provision for all children moving forward in the most appropriate type of setting. 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.

### 3.3 Longer term needs

Interim solutions are being reviewed across the Borough in all education settings to provide additional places to meet the current needs of the CYP in Walsall.

For the majority of CYP, a mainstream education would be the most appropriate provision, however where needs are more complex and significant, a specialist setting may be an option. Consideration of additional ways to support CYP with an EHCP to remain in mainstream provision is one of the key themes in the action plan.

Once numbers have been confirmed in terms of need and designation, there are areas where the additional place requirement could be created for Walsall pupils:

## 1) Expansions of existing provisions within the Borough.

The School Organisation team has requested Integrated Facilities Management to commission work from an external architect company to undertake desktop feasibility studies. Currently they are working to establish the number of places each school can accommodate based on the ambulant and non-ambulant requirement of children within the school.

The architects, alongside the school organisation team will then review the current arrangements model of our special schools and consider how the existing spaces could be utilised in other ways to create more places within the current school footprint. They will also evaluate the site to determine if an expansion would be possible – considering any site constraints e.g., ground problems/mineshfts, highway implications etc.

In addition, working with our corporate landlord team, any existing corporate assets that are underutilised will be reviewed for consideration as satellite school expansion projects.

## 2) Review of capacity within mainstream settings that could accommodate and support additional SEND provision.

The School Organisation Team are currently reviewing all Net Capacity Assessments and floor plans for mainstream schools across the Borough to establish a baseline of teaching spaces and any surplus areas in the schools. These assessments will be used to have informed conversations with schools about the opportunity and suitability for a SEND hub to be created within the school. This would be utilising existing space within a school were appropriate, for children with SEND requirements to attend the provision at a mainstream whilst being on the school roll of their appropriate SEND school provision.

The table below indicates different types of provision that could be created within mainstream schools.

Special Resourced Provision (SRP)	Special Unit Provision	Satellite Provision	Hub Provision
CYP remain on roll of the mainstream school.	CYP remain on roll of the mainstream school.	CYP remain on roll of the designated special specialist school and are part of the specialist schools commissioned numbers.	CYP remain on roll of the designated special specialist school and are part of the specialist schools commissioned numbers.
Commissioned numbers are agreed.	Commissioned numbers are agreed.	The location of Satellite provision is located as a standalone building.	The location of Hub provision is co-located on the site of an existing school.
SRP tend to provide for a specific need such as speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), hearing or	Unit provision tend to provide for a specific need such as speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), hearing or		

visual impairment (HI/VI) or autism.  In SRP pupils spend most of their time (usually well over 50% of their timetable) in mainstream classes.	visual impairment (HI/VI) or autism.  Pupils in a Unit spend most of their time in their unit base, only attending mainstream classes for a few lessons, such as PE, for assembly or for lunch.		
--	---	--	--

### 3) Creation of a Free School.

The Local Authority may have to review the need for a SEND Free School within the Borough, created through the DfE Free School Wave 15 application round – which we understand is likely to open in the Spring Term 2022.

### 4. Financial

The additional places and needs will form part of the SEND capital plan and utilisation of DfE grant funding for additional school places. Commissioned places are funded from the High Needs Block of schools funding and growth funding has been built into the future modelling of this funding.

### 5. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position. The Committee may decide to ask that a further briefing on place planning be offered to members.

### 6. Respond

The Committee may decide to request further information as pertains to individual planning area and school expansions.

### 7. Review

Continued development into the review of SEND place requirement across the Borough to future proof SEND provision for Walsall will continue through the special provision group.

Capital needs will be taken to Capital board

#### Background Papers:

SEND Strategy Paper – Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 March 2021

#### Authors:

Rob Thomas, Head of Access – [rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk)

Alex Groom, School Organisation Manager – [alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk)