

Section 4

Equality

Analysis Toolkit

**St Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Primary
School**

For Decision Making Items

May 2022

Question 1 - What is the nature of and are the key components of the proposal being presented?

The proposal relates to the creation of a special educational needs (SEN) unit for up to sixteen pupils with social communication and interaction needs at St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School. This school is a mixed primary school for pupils aged between three and eleven years.

Question 2 - Scope of the Proposal

Is the proposal likely to affect people across the county in a similar way or are specific areas likely to be affected – e.g., are a set number of branches/sites to be affected?

The proposal may affect children who currently attend St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School as the proposal means there will be an increased number of pupils attending the school with social communication and interaction needs in the future.

Question 3 – Protected Characteristics Potentially Affected

Could the proposal have a particular impact on any group of individuals sharing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, namely:

- Age
- Disability including Deaf people
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race/ethnicity/nationality
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or Civil Partnership Status

And what information is available about these groups in the County's population or as service users/customers?

This proposal will have a particular impact on children and young people with disabilities and their families. Pupils will be within the age (younger people) protected characteristics group and are likely to meet the definition for the disability protected characteristics group.

Although the numbers completing the consultation were low, 100% of the people who completed the survey were female. 100% respondents also identified as being white which may mean this ethnicity is over-represented amongst respondents in comparison with the communities which the school will potentially serve.

Question 4 – Engagement/Consultation

How have people/groups been involved in or engaged with in developing this proposal?

This proposal is an element of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2019 to 2024. Final approval for this strategy was provided by Cabinet in October 2020 following a public consultation during the summer of that year. Lancashire residents were made aware of this through notifications on Lancashire County Council website, Twitter and Facebook websites, the Local Offer website and Facebook page and via the Parent Carer Forum. In addition, a letter was sent directly to each of the following stakeholders advising them of the consultation:

- POWAR
- Lancashire Parent Carer Forum chair
- Governing bodies, proprietors and principals of a range of educational providers including pre-school, school age and post-sixteen settings
- Children, Family and Well-being Service who have responsibility for children's centres
- Youth offending team
- Local Members of Parliament
- Diocesan/Church Authorities
- The Regional Schools Commissioner

The information relating to SEND provision, presented as part of this public consultation, was updated in June 2021. The updated information was shared with various stakeholders, including families and a range of education providers during a series of meetings that took place during the summer term 2021 and which included Local Area Partnership, head teacher update and Schools' Forum meetings.

Separate consultations were undertaken in relation to this specific proposal to establish an SEN unit at St Francis of Assisi Primary School. Informal consultation was carried out between 1 October 2021 and 7 November 2021. This included a public consultation meeting via an online video conference on 12 October 2021 and an online survey between 1 October 2021 and 7 November 2021

The outcomes of the informal consultation were presented to Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, Edwina Grant (OBE) and Lead Member for Education, County Councillor, Jayne Rear. Approval was given in March 2022 by the Executive Director and Lead Member to undertake the formal consultation required to make prescribed alteration/significant change to the school, that is to establish an SEN unit.

The formal consultation included an online survey between 23 March 2022 and 3 May 2022 on the Council's 'Have your say' website. Statutory notices were published in the Ormskirk Champion on 23 March 2022. A public consultation meeting was arranged at school for 21 April 2022.

There were 5 responses to the formal consultation. Of the responses to the proposal, 3 strongly agreed and 1 tended to agree. Respondents' comments in favour of the proposal included the benefits it would bring to the children, community and school and the need for increased provision. The 1 response to the proposal who strongly disagreed commented on a negative past experience.

Question 5 – Analysing Impact

Could this proposal potentially disadvantage particular groups sharing protected characteristics and if so which groups and in what way? This pays particular attention to the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of protected characteristics;
- To advance equality of opportunity for those who share protected characteristics;
- To encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life;
- To contribute to fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not/community cohesion;

The proposal to establish an SEN unit at St Francis of Assisi Primary School is likely to have an adverse effect on some pupils who currently attend the school, and their families. There may be some disruption to existing pupils' education while building works are carried out. It is also possible the creation of the SEN unit will affect access to the school site for families who transport their children to school.

There will be a small increase of up to sixteen in terms of the number of pupils attending the school, however class size should not be affected and therefore the impact on existing pupils will be limited after any modifications to the building have been completed.

It is anticipated that for many pupils and more widely for children who may be able to access the SEN unit at St Francis of Assisi Primary School if this is approved, the impact will be positive and their equality of opportunity will be advanced. Some consultation respondents referred to there being insufficient specialist provision for the numbers of pupils with special educational needs in Lancashire. Where it is possible for pupils to attend school closer to home and it is also the wish of the children and their parents and carers to do this, their ability to have links in their local community is likely to increase contributing

both to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between communities.

Question 6 –Combined/Cumulative Effect

Could the effects of this proposal combine with other factors or decisions taken at local or national level to exacerbate the impact on any groups?

Other factors and decisions that might have a combined and/or cumulative effect include the redesign of the short breaks offer that is currently underway. This is a service that is provided for children and young people with disabilities, some of whom may attend the SEN unit that is being considered as part of this proposal. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the short breaks offer as it has not been possible to provide all of the short break activities and daytime and overnight breaks that are usually available. It is also not possible to foresee how provision in schools and in relation to short breaks will develop over time in the light of any changes that will need to be made in response to the pandemic.

Question 7 – Identifying Initial Results of Your Analysis

As a result of the analysis has the original proposal been changed/amended, if so please describe.

The proposal has not been changed or amended.

Question 8 - Mitigation

Will any steps be taken to mitigate/reduce any potential adverse effects of the proposal?

Steps will be taken to minimise the impact of any building work on existing pupils' education.

Question 9 – Balancing the Proposal/Countervailing Factors

This weighs up the reasons for the proposal – e.g. need for budget savings; damaging effects of not taking forward the proposal at this time – against the findings of the analysis.

The proposal is designed to have a positive overall impact on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities as it reflects the overall objectives of the reforms that were introduced with the Children and Families Act 2014. Nationally there was 21.6% increase in demand for places in maintained special schools between 2015/16 and 2019/20; in Lancashire there was a 22.9% increase in demand over the same time period. In addition, there are on average 300 fewer SEN unit places in Lancashire in comparison with other authorities in England if they were the same size.

Families seek placements in private and independent special schools where more specialist provision is not available within the maintained sector. This increases the demand on high needs block funding because for the main part special school places within the private and independent sector are more expensive. This proposal will increase the number of SEN unit places available to children and young people within the south area of the county and the range of choice available to families. It will support a more efficient use of the resources available to children and young people with special educational needs.

In addition, the more specialist teaching that will be available within the SEN unit is likely to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning for all children who attend the school. There may be some disruption while any building works, if needed, are carried out however this will only be for a time limited period.

Question 10 – Final Proposal

In summary, what is the final proposal and which groups may be affected and how?

The proposal remains to establish an SEN unit for up to sixteen pupils with social communication and interaction needs at St Francis of Assisi Primary School by adapting the existing accommodation on the school site.

This proposal will enable the council to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to making the provision needed for a greater number of children and young people with special educational needs in the south area of the county.

It is likely that children and young people who attend the school currently may be affected during the time any building work may be being undertaken.

Question 11 – Review and Monitoring Arrangements

What arrangements will be put in place to review and monitor the effects of this proposal?

The local authority is required to review the special educational provision and across the local area for children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities as part of its statutory duties. This can only be achieved by monitoring the changing needs of the local population of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and making sure the outcomes in education, health and care are being improved as a result of the provision being made. This is one of the primary functions of the SEND Partnership Board, which is a multi-agency group with representatives from across the local area including young people, parents and carers as well as commissioners and providers of education, health and care services. The SEND Partnership Board meets every two months. It is led by senior post holders from within the council and NHS, including the Executive Director of Education and Children's Service and the

Joint Chief Officer within the NHS and reports directly to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

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Position/Role Head of Service Inclusion/Equality & Cohesion Manager
Equality Analysis Endorsed by Line Manager and/or Service Head
Decision Signed Off By
Cabinet Member or Director

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