

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 7 July 2022

Report of the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Lancaster Central; Lancaster East;
Lancaster Rural East; Lancaster
Rural North; Lancaster South East;
Morecambe Central; Morecambe
North; Morecambe South;

Corporate Priorities:
Delivering better services;

Expansion of Morecambe Road School, Lancaster

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Brief Summary

This report provides the outcome of the formal consultation which has been carried out in relation to a proposal to expand Morecambe Road School, Lancaster.

Morecambe Road School is a co-educational special school for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties. Final approval is being sought to increase pupil numbers by 34, to create a school population of 189, and to redesignate Morecambe Road School as a school which meets the needs of children and young people with generic learning difficulties.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to consider the results of the formal consultation and:

- (i) Approve an increase in the number of special school places at Morecambe Road School by 22 places to 177, to be created through the building of additional teaching space on the main school site.
- (ii) Subject to approval to (i) above, approve the creation of an additional 12

special school places at Morecambe Road School, increasing the overall number of places to 189. These 12 places will be created through the development of satellite provision on the site of Lancaster and Morecambe College.

- (iii) Approve a change to the designation of Morecambe Road School from one for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to one for pupils with generic learning difficulties.

Detail

This report provides the results of the formal consultation following Cabinet approval in May 2022, to initiate the statutory proposal and formal consultation process to make the following changes at Morecambe Road School:

- 1) Increase the number of special school places by 22, which would be achieved through building work to increase the amount of teaching space available on the existing school site.
- 2) A further increase in the number of special school places by 12, which would be achieved through the development of satellite provision on the site of Lancaster and Morecambe College.

The above two proposals would result in an overall increase in pupil numbers of 34, to create a school population of 189.

- 3) Change the designation of the school from one for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to a school for pupils with generic learning difficulties.

All three proposals are classed as significant changes to the school and are therefore subject to a statutory process.

Morecambe Road School is a school for children and young people between the ages of three and 16 years with moderate learning difficulties. It has been identified as a good school by Ofsted since 2003. The school is over-subscribed.

School expansion

There is ongoing building work within the school site for expansion of the school to create an additional 22 places. This building work is being funded from within the resources available to the school and no additional capital funding is being sought for these works.

Development of satellite provision

The creation of a further 12 special school places would be achieved through the development of a key stage 4 satellite provision at Lancaster and Morecambe College. It is anticipated the development of this satellite provision would build on and formalise existing arrangements between the school and college, and would

better equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to prepare themselves for adulthood.

The satellite provision on the site of Lancaster and Morecambe College would be used to increase the number of special school places within Morecambe Road School. Pupils attending this provision would be able to use the facilities and accommodation available on the college site. Any pupil placed in the satellite provision would be on the roll of Morecambe Road School, and the school would be responsible for the education of all children attending the satellite provision, including, for example, the curriculum, staffing and all resources.

The Governing bodies of both settings are supportive of the proposals. The Headteacher of Morecambe Road School, the Director for Personal Development and Welfare and the Principal at Lancaster and Morecambe College have discussed and agreed the proposal for the satellite provision. All policies and procedures are aligned with existing policies at Morecambe Road School. All pastoral and safeguarding responsibilities for the young people attending the satellite provision remain with Morecambe Road School.

Change in school designation

Morecambe Road School is currently designated as a school for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties. The type and level of severity of special needs which Morecambe Road School currently provides is no longer reflected in the current designation. It is therefore proposed that Morecambe Road School is redesignated as a school for children and young people with generic learning difficulties.

Consultations

The formal consultation was conducted in accordance with the statutory guidance for making prescribed alterations to schools that has been provided by the Department for Education.

The consultation was publicised in the Lancashire Evening Post. The consultation booklet and questionnaire were posted on the Morecambe Road School and Lancaster and Morecambe College websites, and on the Lancashire County Council 'Have your Say' website. It should be noted that only two responses were received to the consultation via the Lancashire County Council website. While these responses were supportive of the proposal, any decision based on these results would need to be heavily caveated, due to the very low response rate.

The formal consultation period included a meeting at Morecambe Road School for all interested parties on 9 June 2022. Six parents/carers of children and young people who currently attended Morecambe Road School were present, together with three members of staff from Lancaster and Morecambe College and two from Morecambe Road School. A representative from Lancashire Council also attended the event. All attendees provided positive feedback about the proposals. One parent sought reassurance that all the safeguarding policies and procedures were aligned between

the school and college. Reassurance was given by the Head teacher at the school and the Learner Support staff at the College.

Cabinet is asked to give final approval to expand Morecambe Road School by 34 additional places. 22 of these places would be based within the existing school site. 12 places would be based in a satellite provision at Lancaster and Morecambe College, which is located 0.3 miles away from Morecambe Road School. The separate 'satellite' provision would be operated as part of Morecambe Road School.

Cabinet is also asked to give final approval to redesignate Morecambe Road School as a school which meets the needs of children and young people with generic learning difficulties.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The county council and partners across education, health and care are required to work together, to plan for and meet the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities, in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 2014.

If the decision was not to proceed with the proposals contained within the report, the risk would be insufficient special school places and increased costs for out of area provision. This proposal mitigates the risk of this and the county council failing in its duty to provide sufficient school places.

Financial

High needs funding within the dedicated schools grant supports provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. This revenue funding enables local authorities and education providers to meet their statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014.

The expansion of Morecambe Road School requires no capital commitment from the capital programme.

The provisional allocation of high needs provision capital allowance from the Department for Education has been announced at £12.1m for 2022/23, together with the £400,000 capital funding approved by Cabinet in February 2022. This gives a funding programme of £12.5m, from which a programme can be developed following the consultations for suitable projects. The approval of the projects within the programme will be the subject of future reports to Cabinet.

Human Resources

If the expansion of Morecambe Road School is approved and the satellite opens on the site of Lancaster and Morecambe College, staff may be required to move

between the school site and the satellite. The distance between the two sites is 0.3 miles. It is not envisaged that this would be problematic for staff affected. Staff will be/have been consulted on the proposal so that any concerns raised can be addressed.

Equality and Cohesion

The Equality Impact Assessment for Morecambe Road School is set out in Appendix 'A'.

This proposal impacts on both the age (young people) and disability protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 and is designed to contribute positively to the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aim of advancing equality of opportunity and its related aim of increasing participation in public life for these children and young people, their families and carers.

The initial review of provision in Lancashire that informed the SEND Sufficiency Strategy and the further review in June 2021, indicated that there are fewer children and young people educated in mainstream schools in Lancashire than nationally. There are also more children educated in specialist provision and secondary alternative provision than nationally, therefore, the demands on the high needs block funding are significant.

The lack of access to supported provision in mainstream schools and to local specialist provision of particular designations and for those with the most complex needs is resulting in some children and young people travelling to schools outside their community.

Property Asset Management

Planning permission has been obtained by Morecambe Road School and all building works are being funded from within the school's own resources and managed by the school.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A