

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 19 January 2023

Report of the (Acting) Director of Education, Culture and Skills

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Skelmersdale Central;
Skelmersdale East;
Skelmersdale West; West
Lancashire East; West
Lancashire North; West
Lancashire West;

Corporate Priorities:
Caring for the vulnerable;

Increase in the Number of Places at Kingsbury Special School, Skelmersdale and Establishment of Special Educational Needs Units across Lancashire
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Sally Richardson, Tel: 07920086432, Head of Inclusion
sally.richardson@lancashire.gov.uk

Brief Summary

This report provides an update on the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Strategy and identifies proposals to increase the range and amount of specialist provision available in different locations across Lancashire.

Included within this report are the results of the feasibility study and informal consultation to expand and increase the number of pupil places at Kingsbury Primary School, which is a special school in Skelmersdale for children with generic learning difficulties. Cabinet is asked to note the results of the informal consultation and give approval for the initiation of the formal consultation process, which is a requirement to make this type of permanent change to a school.

In addition, proposals are put forward to initiate feasibility studies and start the informal consultation process which would support the development of Special Educational Needs Units attached to four mainstream schools in different locations across the county.



Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Consider the results of the informal consultation to expand and increase the number of school places at Kingsbury Primary School, Skelmersdale and to approve the issuing of statutory notices and the initiation of the formal consultation process required to make these changes.
- (ii) Approve the initiation of feasibility studies and the informal consultation process to establish Special Educational Needs units at the following mainstream schools:
 - Thornton Primary School;
 - Calder Vale St John Church of England Primary School, Garstang;
 - Park Primary School, Colne;
 - Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School, Hyndburn.
- (iii) Subject to (ii) above, authorise the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to review the outcomes of the informal consultation and whether to proceed with the formal consultations to establish Special Educational Needs units at these schools.

Detail

Kingsbury Primary Special School

Kingsbury Primary Special School, Skelmersdale is a school for children aged between 2-11 years with generic learning difficulties. The proposal is to expand the school by creating 30 additional places, through the addition of a modular buildings on the school site. This new accommodation will be funded by the school. This would increase capacity at Kingsbury Primary School by 30 places to 120.

In September 2022, Cabinet gave approval to initiate the informal consultation processes to expand and increase the number of places at Kingsbury Primary School. This expansion would increase the number of school places by more than 10%. This type of change is considered to a prescribed alteration or significant change to a school and a formal consultation is part of the statutory process required to increase the number of special school places in this way.

Consultations

The informal consultation with interested parties in respect of this expansion was carried out between 10 October 2022 and 13 November 2022. This period of consultation included a meeting for all interested parties on 11 October 2022.

A total of thirteen responses were received to the informal consultation; twelve respondents strongly agreed with the proposal and comments included the need for



more specialist placements and building on benefits already provided at Kingsbury Primary School. No comments were received from the respondent who strongly disagreed with the proposal.

A summary of consultation responses is set out at Appendix 'A'. These are deemed to be Part II as Appendix 'A' contains information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

Special Educational Needs units where feasibility studies/informal consultations have not started

A request to invite mainstream schools to submit expressions of interest in establishing Special Educational Needs units was approved by Cabinet on 7 April 2022. The following four schools are either located within or close to the areas of the county where units are still required:

- Thornton Primary School;
- Calder Vale St John Church of England Primary School, Garstang;
- Park Primary School, Colne;
- Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School, Hyndburn.

All these schools are rated good by Ofsted.

Cabinet is asked to approve the initiation of feasibility studies and informal consultations, where appropriate, for the establishment of Special Educational Needs units at these schools, to accommodate up to 16 pupils with social communication and interaction needs.

Calder Vale St John Church of England Primary School is located in the Garstang area in the North of the county. It is an inclusive school, with a proven track record of providing support successfully for children who have been difficult to place. Although this area of the county has not previously been designated as requiring a Special Educational Needs unit, expressions of interest from schools in the Lancaster/Morecambe area have been limited and there is currently only one such unit attached to a mainstream primary school in that location. Calder Vale St John Church of England Primary School has good transport links to Lancaster.

Park Primary School is located in Pendle in the East of the county. Walverden Primary School, which is also in the East of the county, had previously been approved for a Special Educational Needs unit, this is not currently being taken forward due to general building works being required across the school which must be completed prior to adapting the school to accommodate a Special Educational Needs unit. The cost of building works required at Walverden Primary School in order to establish a Special Educational Needs unit have significantly increased since initial approval was granted by Cabinet and therefore further approval is likely to be required in the future, should a decision be made to proceed with the proposal to develop a Special Educational Needs unit at this school.

All four schools have space available to accommodate pupils within a Special Educational Needs unit, either in the school building or on the school site, although



some schools may require a small amount of building work to make the necessary adaptations to existing space within school. Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School would require a modular classroom, or an additional build onto the existing school building, to accommodate the Special Educational Needs Unit, the cost and feasibility of such would be determined through the informal consultation.

The addition of a Special Educational Needs unit to a mainstream school is also considered to be a prescribed alteration and therefore the local authority is required to complete the necessary statutory processes in order to implement this type of permanent change. The informal consultation is not a requirement of the statutory process although it is recommended.

Cabinet is asked to authorise the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to review the outcomes of the informal consultations and whether to proceed with the formal consultations to establish Special Educational Needs units at these four schools.

The results of the formal consultations and feasibility studies will be presented to Cabinet for final approval for the permanent addition of an SEN unit to each of these schools in 2023.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The expansion at Kingsbury Primary School requires no capital commitment from the capital programme.

Any building works that are agreed by the authority to establish Special Educational Needs units will be funded via the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation this is grant funding and the amounts of funding available may limit the schemes that are deliverable

By increasing the county council's internal Special School Provision, this will enable progress to be made towards keeping up with the demands on the service and becoming less reliant on the use of Independent School placements which are not cost effective and currently a growing pressure on the revenue budget.

The current average cost of an independent school placement is £44,000, compared to an average internal Special School place of £22,000.

Demand/expenditure is currently increasing by approximately 8% per year, compared to indicative funding allocations for the High Needs Block of 3% per year. This is making the gap between expenditure and funding much wider over the next few years. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities sufficiency work is being carried out to address these issues and to prevent Lancashire County Council going into a High Needs Deficit Position. The additional internal places created will therefore help to support the growing financial pressures on the High Needs Budget.



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 places and potential for increased costs out of area. This proposal mitigates the risk of this and the county council failing in its duty to provide sufficient school places.

Equality and Cohesion

The proposals impact the age (young person) and disability protected characteristics. Whilst it is anticipated that the proposals should be positive in terms of advancing equality of opportunity for these groups, an Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared following formal consultation to reflect issues raised during the full consultation process.

Property Asset Management

All works are being funded from within Kingsbury Primary School's own resources and managed by the school.

Any works necessary in respect of the mainstream Special Educational Needs Units would be identified through the feasibility studies.

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

Appendix 'A' - Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Appendix 'A' contains information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

