

**Report to the Cabinet**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 2 March 2023

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

**Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Preston Central West; Preston  
Rural; Preston South West;  
Preston West; Leyland Central,  
Leyland South,

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Caring for the vulnerable;

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Strategy Implementation - Establishment of Special Educational Needs Unit at St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Leyland, and Expansion of Applebee Wood Community Specialist School, Lostock Hall**

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**Brief Summary**

This report outlines proposals to increase the availability of special needs provision as follows:

- (i) The establishment of a Special Educational Needs unit attached to St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Leyland.
- (ii) The further expansion of Applebee Wood Community Specialist School, Lostock Hall.

**Recommendation**

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the initiation of a feasibility study and the informal consultation process to establish a Special Educational Needs unit at St Anne's Catholic Primary School, a mainstream primary school in Leyland.



- (ii) Subject to (i) above, authorise the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to review the outcome of the informal consultation and to decide whether to proceed with the formal consultation.
- (iii) Approve the initiation of the informal consultation process to increase the number of special school places at Applebee Wood Community Specialist School, Lostock Hall from 147 to 167.
- (iv) Subject to (iii) above, authorise the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to review the outcome of the informal consultation and to decide whether to proceed with the formal consultation.

## Detail

### Special Educational Needs unit at St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Leyland

In May 2022, Cabinet approved a request to seek further expressions of interest from schools, in relation to proposals to develop Special Educational Needs units attached to mainstream schools. As a result, eight submissions were received from mainstream schools to develop Special Educational Needs units, and approval to progress to the next stage for four of these schools was given by Cabinet in January 2023.

Approval is now being sought to initiate a feasibility study and the informal consultation process for one of the other four schools, namely St Anne's Catholic Primary School in Leyland. This would take the number of primary schools with Special Educational Needs units in the Preston/Leyland area above the number that was originally put forward in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Strategy. The reason for this request is that demand for more specialist provision continues to increase. A decision was made by the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services not to progress the other three proposals at the current time, as further work was required in relation to the feasibility of one of these proposals, the individual circumstances of another school prevented progression of the second proposal and the third school withdrew their application.

St Anne's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry, voluntary aided primary school for pupils between the ages of three and 11 years, identified as a good school by Ofsted in 2018. The request is for the development of a Special Educational Needs unit for 16 pupils with generic learning difficulties, which is the same as that for Seven Stars Primary School, which is also in Leyland. This deviates from the original proposal that was put forward in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Strategy, which was for Special Educational Needs units for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, or for those with social language and communication needs. The reason for this change is that the proposal offers scope for more pupils with more diverse learning needs to attend schools within their local community, and more recent analyses of emerging special needs across the county supports the need for more wide-ranging specialist provision.



Preliminary work has indicated that there is capacity within the school building to accommodate the development of a Special Educational Needs unit for up to 16 pupils, with little if any additional building works.

Preston is one of the county's most densely populated and deprived areas with numbers of requests for Education, Health and Care Needs assessments continuing to rise, along with exclusion rates and the demand for specialist provision.

The addition of a Special Educational Needs unit to a mainstream school is 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 to decide whether to proceed with the formal consultation to establish a Special Educational Needs unit at St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Leyland.

The results of the formal consultation and feasibility study will be presented to Cabinet for final approval for the permanent addition of the Special Educational Needs unit later this year.

### **Expansion of Applebee Wood Community Specialist School, Lostock Hall**

Applebee Wood Community Specialist School is a special school in Lostock Hall, for children with generic learning difficulties between the ages of four and 16 years. Cabinet gave final approval in September 2022 to increase the number of special school places from 127 to 147. This additional capacity was created through the building of an extension to the main school site that was funded by the school.

Applebee Wood Community Specialist School had already obtained planning permission for a further extension to the school, to create the additional teaching space for another 20 pupils at the time of the last expansion. This further expansion would increase the capacity within the school from 147 to 167 pupils, increasing the number of places by more than 10%. An increase of more than 10% is also a substantial change to a school, and is therefore subject to the statutory consultation processes required to make such a change.

It was the intention of Applebee Wood Community Specialist School to fund this second expansion in its entirety. The school has been identified as a school that would benefit from the Department for Education's Schools Rebuilding Programme and would like these additional school places to be included in the overall design specification for any building works that are completed, as part of the school's rebuilding. Cabinet is therefore being asked to approve the proposal to initiate the informal consultation process to increase the capacity from 147 to 167 special school places at this school. Cabinet is also 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 outcome of the informal consultation process and to decide whether to proceed with the formal consultation process.



## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Financial**

Any building works that are required 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.

The expansion of Applebee Wood Community Specialist School requires no capital commitment from the capital programme.

Revenue funding will be allocated from the High Needs Block Allocation.

### **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**

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

The Applebee Wood Community Specialist School project is to be funded from within the school's own resources and managed by the school. The school has also been identified as one that will benefit from the third round of the Department for Education School Rebuilding Programme, which is understood to impact on a different part of the premises. The asset management service is liaising with Department for Education in this regard.



## List of Background Papers

| Paper | Date | Contact/Tel |
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

