

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

19th June 2018

Executive Response to the Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group

Purpose of the report

1. To present the response of the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills to the Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group.

Background

2. On 15th May 2018 the Interim Report of the Task Group was received at a meeting of Cabinet alongside the report of Special School Provision in Wiltshire.
3. The following Task Group's recommendations have been presented to the relevant Cabinet member for response at this committee meeting.
4. For the committee's information, the Interim Report of the Task Group is included as an appendix to this executive response for members to note.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

Recommendation No.1	Produces a strategy document outlining the future provision of SEND education provision roadmap across the whole of Wiltshire, detailing the vision of what service will be in 10 years' time. This strategy should clearly define how this vision will be accomplished and detail all the interim stages to achieve it, including timelines.		
Reason for recommendation	To provide a single vision for SEND education and the route towards achieving it.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	REFUSED	The strategy is in a state of development, with a current focus on special schools, the policy for which will be clarified through consultation processes. Development of policies for resource bases and post-16 (agreed needs for which are implied below) will follow, as will that for Early Years. A partnership approach

			involving co-production could be articulated further; such an approach, which is consistent with Education & Skills Directorate aspirations to work with schools, would preclude a pre-emptive substantive strategy document.
Action			Success criteria
Creation of a holistic SEND education provision strategy.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.2	Supports the task group's conclusion that, whilst accepting there are significant challenges in trying to maintain the current three schools in the north of the county with MLD/SLD/PMLD designations (Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicholas), it would not be appropriate to combine all three schools into one site. Should the decision be made to consolidate the number of sites, provision should be retained in each of the strategic towns in the county, i.e. Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury, therefore ensuring adequate MLD/SLD/PMLD designation provision across the county.		
Reason for recommendation	Evidence received by the Task Group suggested that creation of one single-site SEND school in the north of the county would not be advisable. Further evidence led the task group to conclude that schools located close to the three strategic towns in Wiltshire would be the best choice.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	REFUSED	Options for a single school in the north, or two in the north reflecting the task group's recommendation, are both offered for consultation in the current period. Ofsted inspection evidence demonstrates that the largest special schools including those over 300 places are often judged outstanding, so the conclusion that such schools are inadvisable is difficult to reconcile with that professional evidence.
Action			Success criteria
Options to be included in pre-consultation.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.3	Retain Downland School to provide ASD/SEMH and Springfield to provide ASD provision in the north of the county
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	and produce firm proposals for the medium and long-term provision of ASD and SEMH in the south of the county.		
Reason for recommendation	To maintain the ASD provision in the north of the county.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	The recommendation is consistent with actions reported to the May cabinet meeting.
Action		Success criteria	
Retain Downlands School.		N/A	
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.4	Avoid the use of mixed-designation schools in the future of Wiltshire SEND School provision that include ASD/SEMH and MLD/SLD/PMLD.		
Reason for recommendation	The task group received warnings against the mixing of these designations in a single site.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	Whilst this is beyond the experience of Wiltshire schools and is uncommon, it is not unknown for such mixed designation schools to be judged outstanding by Ofsted. Whilst blanket warnings such as this are not supported, there is no proposal to establish such a school currently.
Action		Success criteria	
Support the task group recommendation.		N/A	
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.5	Support the task group's conclusion that the remaining 4 local authority maintained SEND schools should consider forming their own MAT and form partnerships with other schools across the county.		
Reason for recommendation	The task group considered the potential benefits from this model as detailed in their report.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	The council recognises the national policy to support MATs and school partnerships
Action		Success criteria	
Investigate the formation of a Special School MAT		N/A	
Target date		Implementation date	

N/A	N/A
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Recommendation No.6	Investigates the possibility of working with the existing schools and/or any local MAT to explore the benefits of combining the schools together to create a one school multi-site solution.		
Reason for recommendation	The task group identified that this possibility may produce the benefits of both a large single-site school and multiple schools.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	This is not a proposal currently subject to consultation, but responses to that might indicate support for the idea, in which case it would be examined.
Action			Success criteria
Investigates the benefits and possibility of creating one school across multiple sites.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.7	Works with the special schools to strengthen and develop the provision of resources bases particularly looking at how these could be further developed in the secondary sector. Special Schools should be actively encouraged to provide “best practice” support and advice to those mainstream schools running resource bases.		
Reason for recommendation	Resource bases were identified by all stakeholders involved as an attractive option to consider for provision.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	The May Cabinet report indicated the need to focus on special school provision whilst recognising other areas of SEND policy which would benefit from review subject to management capacity. A review of resource bases would involve both special and mainstream schools.
Action			Success criteria
Investigation of the expansion and development of resource bases.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.8	Consider the possibility of Special Schools running and managing some of new resource bases in areas where there
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	is no appetite from the local mainstream schools to provide such a resource.		
Reason for recommendation	Resource bases were identified by all stakeholders involved as an attractive option to consider for provision. SEND schools all expressed an interest in running and managing resource bases located on mainstream school sites.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	Supported in principle as above.
Action			Success criteria
Investigate SEND schools managing resource bases on mainstream school sites.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.9	Give serious consideration to utilising suitable post-16 provision for SEND learners across the four sites maintained by Wiltshire College, with additional support from outside bodies where needed.		
Reason for recommendation	Where possible the task group concluded that post-16 children with SEND would benefit from being educated with children of similar ages.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	Wiltshire College has a strong track record of improvement and success in SEND delivery; the LA supports the proposal to work with and support this, subject to the retention of a full spectrum of provision to meet the spectrum of needs.
Action			Success criteria
Investigate post-16 education for children with SEND.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.10	Implement a Systems Thinking review of the identification, associated assessment, Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and referral processes to cover each of the various stages and include all professionals involved in the process with an aim of ensuring that EHCPs are age and stage appropriate.		
Reason for recommendation	Concerns regarding the EHCP process were expressed to the task group from multiple sources.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield

Executive response	19 th June 2018	REFUSED	LA data and its Ofsted inspection conclusions demonstrate Wiltshire's improvement and success with EHCPs. Whilst it is important to take account of schools' feedback, it needs to be established whether concerns are essentially about systems, funding or perceived operational tensions before committing to a Systems Thinking review. This work is already part of the Families and Children's Transformation Programme.
Action			Success criteria
Implement a systems thinking review of the EHCP process.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

Recommendation No.11	Supports the formation of a working group established by Wiltshire Council to develop single vision and aspiration for the delivery of SEND education provision across the county comprising of SEND school and academy representatives, the WPCCC, Wiltshire College, other relevant service providers, and Wiltshire Council officers.		
Reason for recommendation	To assist in ensuring all relevant parties are working towards a single vision for the education of Wiltshire children with SEND.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Alan Stubbersfield
Executive response	19 th June 2018	ACCEPTED	This recommendation appears to link with recommendation 1 about a strategy and is consistent with the executive response about co-production. The council has already adopted that approach with the Wiltshire Special Schools Partnership (WASSP) meetings which have taken place over the past year. Other dedicated groups also exist (under Schools Forum and Primary Heads Federation) so the schools' collective appetite for further meetings would need to be tested.
Action			Success criteria
Contact relevant parties and begin establishment of the working group.			N/A
Target date		Implementation date	
N/A		N/A	

5. The extensive work of the task group is commended, and the majority of its recommendations are accepted. Where refusal is recorded above, that should be seen in the context of the Executive comments which show these decisions are made “on balance” rather than in terms of complete disagreement. Some comments in the report on the allocation of ASD/SEMH provision and on EHCPs are notably critical, and although it is contended in response that they lack substance, the implications for partnership, relationships and mutual trust are noted as highly important. The Executive is committed to engaging with stakeholders including schools in order to promote effective and dynamic partnerships.

In relation to the ASD/SEMH decision, it has been reviewed in the context of responding to a complaint from school governors, and the conclusion reached is that there is no evidence to support the contention that the decision lacks merit or that the Figheldean site is unsuitable for the newly designated purpose. Subsequent expert exploration of alternative sites has confirmed Figheldean as the best option. In relation to EHCPs, Ofsted evidence supports their improvement and quality, with LA audits identifying only 2% as inadequate and 58% as good or better, judgements broadly reflected in parents’ feedback. It is recognised that tensions around funding complicate these matters, hence the exploration within the Families and Children’s Transformation programme.

Proposal

6. To note the executive response to the Interim Report of the **SEND School Provision Task Group**.

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

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