

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
8 March 2007

THE CLOSURE OF BURTON HILL SCHOOL, MALMESBURY

1 Purpose of Report

To inform the Committee of actions taken to provide Wiltshire pupils attending Burton Hill School with appropriate and alternative education from September 2007.

2 Action required of Scrutiny Committee

To note this report.

3 Background

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee received a report on the closure of Burton Hill School at its meeting on 29 November 2006. The Committee resolved to receive a fuller report at its next meeting.

Burton Hill School is owned and managed by The Shaftesbury Society. The Society decided at a meeting on 31 October 2006 that the school should close on 31 July 2007.

Wiltshire currently has 15 pupils attending the school, all of whom have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Four of these 15 pupils are due to leave the school on 31 July 2007. Wiltshire, however, retains the responsibility to ensure that the educational needs of the other 11 children and young people are met.

There are very clear requirements on local authorities who wish to amend or alter a Statement of Special Educational Need. In particular, parents and children and young people have to be consulted and involved in decision making as far as possible. Wiltshire is firmly committed to ensuring that the educational provision named in Statements takes into account the wishes and views of users and is agreed with them. However, where agreement cannot be reached, users have the right to appeal to a Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal which can make a decision binding on all parties for one year.

4 Actions taken

Following the announcement of the closure of the school, the headteacher called an individual meeting with parents of all children and young people attending the school. Relevant professionals such as Health colleagues were involved as necessary. An officer from Wiltshire County Council attended every meeting concerning a Wiltshire child.

By the end of January 2007, the headteacher had convened an annual review of all Wiltshire's pupils. An annual review is a requirement laid on the local authority and applies to every child or young person with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Annual reviews are the principal means by which the effectiveness of special educational need provision is assessed, its impact in helping the child or young person reviewed, and adjustment in the type or level of provision recommended to the local authority.

An officer from Wiltshire County Council attended all of the annual reviews held for Wiltshire pupils and for the majority of the reviews two officers attended.

The local authority has also had a separate meeting involving relevant officers with parents of all children or young people at the school to consider alternative provision.

Officers of the County Council are now considering all of the information and advice offered and parents' and users' views. On the basis of this, Statements will be revised and alternative provision proposed. It is anticipated that this process will be completed before the end of March 2007. All parents and current Wiltshire pupils at Burton Hill School should, therefore, know before the end of March what future provision the local authority believes will meet their needs.

5 Financial considerations

Until all individual decisions have been made and agreed, it is not possible to put a precise figure on the cost to the County Council of alternative provision. Current projections are that new provision will be made at somewhere between nil additional cost and an increase of £140,000.

Some pupils receive social care respite services through the school. Until new educational provision has been confirmed it is not possible to determine the continuing level and cost of this service but it at present no net increase in the cost to the Local authority is anticipated.

6 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to note the actions which the County Council has taken to identify appropriate education for Wiltshire pupils currently at Burton Hill School, the efforts made to ensure that parents and users have been consulted and involved in decisions, and the possible financial impact of the school's closure.

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