

Dear Colleagues,

Proposals for a re-design of special school and Pupil Referral Unit provision in the City

After a lengthy period of consultation and co-production with key stakeholders including schools, governors, parents, young people, health, social care and community and voluntary sector colleagues, a report on the above is going to Children, Young People & Skills Committee on 6th March 2017. This report will be making recommendations about the reorganisation of special school and Pupil Referral Unit provision which will then be subject to a further period of formal consultation between March and May. The report will be published on the council website on 24th February 2017. The purpose of this email is to give a summary briefing on its contents.

Our vision and principles are about improved outcomes and life chances via integrated health, education and care services offering personalised bespoke support to children, young people and their families and high quality flexible and responsive support to schools to build staff skills and expertise. We have a large budget to meet children's needs in the city but it is under increasing pressure year on year. Therefore to achieve best outcomes and best value for all children we need to make changes to ensure we have the right provision in the right place for the right young people at the right time and that is not always the case at present.

We have been reviewing our special schools and Pupil Referral Units for some time. While they offer very good and valued provision, we believe they could be better still. The bringing together of agencies working as an integrated team around the child and family in a timely way can significantly improve outcomes and avoid problems escalating that can lead to distress, family breakdown and preventable need for expensive educational, residential and care placements. Additionally over time, the pattern of needs in the city is changing and some special schools have been left with falling rolls year on year and consequent financial deficits while others are over-subscribed. A further factor is that for the most complex young people we now have to make provision up to 25 years rather than 19 years and this is a new challenge which we need to meet, without being given any extra money by the government.

These recommendations are not about 'cuts' to special educational needs and disability spending, as we will continue to spend the same amount as before in total on children and young people with SEND, although it will have to stretch further. It is about making sure special educational needs and disability funding, always under extreme pressure, is spent in the most efficient and equitable way across all sectors of education to meet the needs of all pupils. The aim is to improve and consolidate our special provision around a vision for a better service to children and families. By consolidating buildings, leadership and back office functions for our current six special schools and two Pupil Referral Units, we can use the resources more efficiently that are urgently needed by children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities around the city and make sure money for support gets to children wherever they are best placed in the system.

The specific recommendations in the committee paper at this stage of the review are as follows:

1. To approve the extension of the age range of **Hillside and Down View** schools to enable them to admit children as young as 2, if parents seek a place there.

We issued statutory notices on this proposed change in January 2017, following a period of consultation. This change will offer a greater range of preschool opportunities to parents,

and make more effective use of the council's resources, as very young children with complex needs can access specialist provision closer to home.

2. **Patcham House Special School** –Having carried out a formal consultation, we now publish statutory notices for the proposed closure of Patcham House School for children with complex needs from August 2018.

Patcham House has offered consistently good education and support for pupils with complex needs for many years and has a valued leadership, governance and staff team. However in recent years, the number of pupils needing a place at the school has declined significantly. Almost all of the 20 remaining pupils are in their final two years of school and under these proposals they would all be able to finish their education without interruption at Patcham House. For the very few year 9 pupils, alternative personalised and quality options would be found in consultation with families. The falling roll has meant it has become very difficult for the school leaders to balance the books without substantial extra funding from the Local Authority each year. This extra funding is very much needed to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities elsewhere in the city.

3. **Social, Emotional and Mental Health Integrated Hub** - We move forward with plans to consult on the creation of a citywide hub for those with social, emotional and mental health needs, by maintaining current provision at Homewood College and proposing the merger of the two Pupil Referral Units, Brighton and Hove Pupil Referral Unit and The Connected Hub, to form one Pupil Referral Unit, operating both provisions under the oversight of an executive headteacher. It is likely that a number of sites will be used to enable us to meet the range of social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils in the hub.
4. **Learning Difficulties Integrated Hubs** - We move forward with plans to integrate and form two learning difficulty hubs, one in the east and one in the west of the city by proposing the merger of
 - a. Hillside/ Downs Park (west hub)
 - b. Downs View/ Cedar Centre (east hub)

The technical process to achieve each hub is to close one school and expand the other, which would be renamed to signify the new beginning. We recognise the sensitivity in closing any school and want to reassure the community that this is in no way any comment on the value of the schools which will need to close, but a way forward which results in no reduction in the number of school places and ensures that the needs of pupils continue to be met appropriately with minimum disruption.

The consultation period on the creation of the new hubs will run from 13th March till 8th May. An online consultation document is due to be published on the council's website, so that everyone can submit their views. A series of consultation meetings for key stakeholders will also take place during the consultation period. Details will be available shortly.

The report also includes updates on the following:

New Special Facility

The Local Authority intends to open a new secondary Special Facility for children with complex special needs to complement the Special Facilities that already exist in Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (Swan Centre), Hove Park (Phoenix Centre) and Longhill School. Three secondary schools have expressed an interest in hosting the new Special

Facility and the LA has made preliminary visits to all three. The formal application process will begin shortly with a view to a decision on the host school by the end of the summer term 2017. The Special Facility is planned to open in September 2018.

Early Years Specialist Provision – Following serious consideration of 3 possible sites, we now intend to carry out a formal feasibility study for the new integrated nursery and will be able to update on this in the near future.

Kind regards,

Pinaki Ghoshal.
Executive Director, Families, Children & Learning.

24th February 2017