

Wards Affected:

All Wards

ITEM 2

DELEGATED DECISION

14 MARCH 2017

A PROPOSAL TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PLACES AVAILABLE IN THE SPEECH, COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE NEEDS DEPARTMENT AT CAROLINE HASLETT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families)

Report Sponsor: Caroline Marriott (Head of Delivery, Special Educational Needs and Disability)

Author and contact: Lisa Munro (Inclusion and Intervention Manager)
Tel: 01908 657842

Executive Summary:

The council is required to follow a five stage process prescribed by law in order to make significant change to SEN departments:

- 1) Informal consultation
- 2) Publish a statutory proposal
- 3) Formal consultation (four weeks)
- 4) Decision
- 5) Implementation (if appropriate)

This paper reports the results of the four week formal consultation and recommends that the council proceeds with the proposal to reduce the number of places available in the Speech, Communication and Language Needs Department at Caroline Haslett Primary School from ten places to five places.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the number of places for Speech, Communication and Language Needs at Caroline Haslett Primary School be reduced from ten places to five places.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Increasingly, the council has found that children with SCLN are able to have their needs met through the inclusive approach that mainstream schools offer. Caroline Haslett Primary School is funded for a ten place provision; currently there are only five children on roll using this provision.

The children who are requesting SCLN provision often present with more complex needs; such as behaviours that challenge, sensory needs and learning needs. As a result, the SCLN department often feels unable to meet their needs. Children who present with these more complex needs are often then placed within our communication and interaction provisions; where the demands are high, all our communication and interaction provisions are currently full.

The council proposes to reduce the SCLN department provision and increase the number of places available for children with Communication and Interaction needs at Charles Warren Academy. Proposed changes to specialist provision at Charles Warren Academy are subject to a separate consultation that will be undertaken by the Academy.

- 2.2 An informal consultation on the proposal to consider whether there was a need to change the way specialist resourced provision ('department') for SCLN is delivered within mainstream schools was carried out between 27 April 2016 and 22 June 2016, a period of eight weeks. Notification of the consultation was sent to a range of stakeholders and the consultation was available online with an electronic response form in order to give stakeholders the opportunity to submit views. Of the 76 respondents to the consultation, 59% of school staff and 39% of parents were in agreement with the option to discuss changes to specialist departments for children with EHCPs. Following this consultation a delegated decision was made on 1 November 2016 to proceed to a formal consultation.
- 2.3 A statutory consultation took place between 5 January 2017 and 2 February 2017, a period of four weeks. As prescribed in the DfE's Statutory Guidance, a notice was published in the press and displayed at the entrances to Caroline Haslett Primary School. The consultation, including a detailed proposal document, was published on the council website and was emailed to stakeholders. Details of the consultation are included in **Annex C**.
- 2.4 There were 10 responses to the statutory consultation, 60% were in favour of the proposal; 30% disagreed with the proposal and 10% did not state their view (see **Annex C**).

Themes of concern together with officer responses are set out below:

- (a) Children should be able to attend the department so that they become more confident - Children will continue to have access to the provision, the number of funded places will reduce to match demand.
- (b) Communication skills are essential for children - All children within all schools have the opportunity and support through a graduated approach to teaching and learning to make progress in their communication skills.
- (c) Provision at the school is of a high standard and children have been able to progress so that they can access the curriculum - It is not proposed that the current provision changes, just to reduce the funded places from ten to five.
- (d) The population is growing and this will lead to an increase in children with special needs. More places in departments are required. Children will fail if they do not have access to this provision - Children will continue to have access to SCLN provision, the council is proposing to increase places within our communication and interaction departments.

3. Options

(a) Option 1 - Do nothing

The SCLN Department at Caroline Haslett Primary School is currently funded for a ten place provision. There are only five children on roll using this provision. If the council continues to commission the current provision with empty places, other children will be disadvantaged as the investment will not be available to fund the local services they require. Those other children may consequently need to attend specialist provision outside Milton Keynes or independent provision at a high cost to the council.

(b) Option 2 - Reduce the SCLN department provision at primary age through reducing the number of places at Caroline Haslett Primary School from ten to five

A reduction in the number of available places in the SCLN department will ensure that the distribution of funded places matches the demand and the needs of the children. Schools funding is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and a restructure of the way the places are commissioned by the council will enable schools with departments to provide a more individualised model of support, catering for the complexities each child brings. Alongside this proposal, the council is also proposing to increase the number of places available for children with Communication and Interaction needs at Charles Warren Academy. This proposal is subject to a separate consultation that is being undertaken by Charles Warren Academy. **This is the recommended option.**

(c) Option 3 - Phase a closure of the department at Caroline Haslett Primary School

Although departments are not a statutory requirement, the council is required to ensure there is suitable education provision to meet the needs of all children. The department provides a good service and is popular with parents. If the department were to close, it is likely that more children requiring specialist provision would be placed in schools outside Milton Keynes or in independent provision, which would not be financially sustainable.

4. Implications

4.1 Policy

The proposed changes to department provision support the provision of a good local school place for every child (Milton Keynes Council plan 2016-20 delivery priority 8.3). This proposal provides an improved structure to support the inclusion of children and young people who access department provision.

4.2 Resources and Risk

Revenue

Schools funding is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The proposed change does not directly impact on the council's General Fund. However, there are significant pressures on the high needs block of the DSG and this proposal supports appropriate prioritisation of high needs places. Every year the number of funded places in each department is agreed and these are funded from the DSG at £10k pa. Empty places therefore, cost the DSG, so it is important that the distribution of funded places matches the need of the children to ensure DSG funding is spent appropriately.

N	Capital	Y	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

There are no implications as a result of this proposal.

4.4 Legal

- (a) This paper is written in accordance with new guidance from the *DfE "Guidance for decision makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals - April 2016"*
- (b) The Council has two months from 2 February 2017 (the closing date of the statutory consultation) to determine whether the change should proceed.

4.5 Other Implications

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers:

DfE "Statutory guidance for decision-makers deciding prescribed alteration and establishment and discontinuance proposals", April 2016.

[DfE Guidance for decision makers](#)

[Delegated decision report 1](#) November 2016: "Proposal for changes to specialist departments for children with Education Health and Care Plans"

Annex A	Statutory Notice
Annex B	Complete Statutory Proposal
Annex C	Summary of responses to the statutory consultation