

TITLE OF REPORT: Primary Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) Provision

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on progress in relation to the development of the proposed pilot of Primary Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) provision, and on proposed changes to existing ARMS provision. Also, to seek approval for the further development and implementation of ARMS attached to Gateshead Primary Schools. Secondary school ARMS provision will be reviewed during the spring term 2018 and an update report will be provided to Cabinet afterwards.

Background

2. In June 2017 Cabinet endorsed the development of a new model of primary ARMS provision in response to pressures on special school places within the primary sector. It was accepted, at that time, that a review was required because Gateshead's existing additionally resourced mainstream school (ARMS) provision was no longer meeting the needs of all children with SEND. Additionally the High Needs funding is overspending by £1.6 million.

3. Pilot model – Autism/Social Communication Difficulties special/mainstream host school provision (SMHS)

Two primary schools have expressed an interest in becoming the pilot model host school. There will be further discussion during January 2018 on the benefits and logistics of the provision. The Governing Bodies will also be consulted and the host primary school will be decided by a panel made up of representatives from the Council and Gateshead primary and special schools. The host primary school will then work collaboratively in partnership with Gibside School to develop and implement the pilot Autism/Social Communication Difficulties Provision SMHS.

4. Changes to existing ARMS provision

All schools with existing ARMS provision have been consulted and the views of those schools will be incorporated into a further update report which will be submitted to Cabinet in relation to these proposals at a future date.

5. Eslington ARMS

It is proposed that Eslington ARMS provision which currently provides 8 places for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Key Stage 2 will close but that the existing 8 places will become designated special school places at

Eslington. This will mean that Eslington School will have a total of 68 specialist SEMH places for children aged 4-11 years across the two school sites.

6. High Spen ARMS

Having considered the current and predicted Hearing Impairment (HI) population in Gateshead, the need for specialist provision for HI children in a specialist ARMS setting is negligible and the needs of these children can be better met by the Low Incidence Needs Team in their local neighbourhood school. High Spen ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for the current HI children placed there in partnership with the Council's Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) but the Governing Body has requested that the provision is gradually phased out. Therefore, when the current children in the ARMS finish their education, it is proposed that High Spen ARMS will close. There are currently 4 children at High Spen, Y6(1), Y4(2), Y2(1).

7. During the discussions with Head Teachers of schools with existing ARMS provision it was recognised that the pilot model should not be a 'one size fits all' model and that a number of the ARMS were already working well. In recognition of this, it is recommended that the following is agreed:

8. Bede ARMS

Bede ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Key Stage 1 (age 5-7 years) and will work informally with Eslington Primary School to share best practice around assessment and intervention.

9. Brandling/Cedars ARMS

Brandling ARMS will work formally in partnership with Cedars Academy to deliver specialist provision for children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) at Key Stages 1 and 2 (age 5-11 years).

10. Rowlands Gill ARMS

Rowlands Gill ARMS Interim Head Teacher and Governing Body have expressed a desire to continue to deliver the ARMS provision working in partnership with Gibside School.

11. Swalwell ARMS

Swalwell ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for children with Physical Difficulties (PD) at Key Stages 1 and 2 (age 5-11 years). The Head Teacher and Governing Body of Swalwell Primary School have expressed an interest in working in partnership with a Cedars Academy to share expertise and knowledge and to secure the best outcomes for the children in the Swalwell ARMS provision.

12. Consultation will be arranged with parents/carers of children in the existing ARMS and with staff and Trade Unions to discuss the new arrangements and formal Service Level Agreements will be drawn up between relevant parties involved in the procurement and delivery of ARMS provision, which will be monitored by the Council's SEND Service.

13. Secondary ARMS

A further report will be provided to Cabinet to review the current secondary ARMS provision at Thorpe and Whickham Academies.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Approves the further development and implementation of the pilot model Special/Mainstream Host School (SMHS) which will provide specialist inclusive teaching for children and young people in the primary sector with Autism/Social Communication Difficulties. An update report will be submitted to Cabinet during the spring term 2018.
- (ii) Agrees the developments in relation to the existing primary ARMS provision intentions. An update report will be submitted to Cabinet during the spring term 2018.
- (iii) Agrees consultation to commence in relation to the phasing out/closure of High Spen and Eslington ARMS.
- (iv) Notes that a review of the Secondary ARMS provision will be undertaken with a further report in early Summer 2018.

For the following reasons:

- a) To meet the Council's statutory duty to promote high educational standards and to make effective use of resources.
- b) To comply with School Organisation legislation.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The Council has statutory duties to promote high educational standards; ensure fair access; promote diversity and ensure education is appropriate to meet the different age aptitudes and abilities of pupils in its area and make efficient use of its resources.
2. The proposals in this report are consistent with statutory duties set out in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, the vision for children and young people as set out in Vision 2030 and the outcomes set out in the Council Plan 2015-2020.

Background

3. There are current pressures on our special school places within the primary sector at both Gibside and Cedars Schools with very limited availability of places for the next academic year. ARMS provision forms part of the Council's continuum of SEND support and provides a valuable opportunity for pupils with SEND who would ordinarily be taught in a special school, to be included and integrated in a mainstream education setting. This can be particularly beneficial for pupils who struggle with their social communication skills. ARMS provide specialist educational intervention for this cohort of pupils which in some cases can result in them returning full time to a mainstream setting.
4. A number of primary ARMS have closed in recent years, due mainly to the impact of SATs results on the mainstream primary school and in addition many potential ARMS places are currently vacant due to the future uncertainty of some of the ARMS. This represents a significant amount of planned specialist provision not being delivered to address the needs of individual children which is clearly an inefficient use of resources at a time when there is huge pressure on High Needs Block funding which is currently predicted to be overspending by £1.6 million this financial year.
5. Although technically ARMS provision is 'commissioned' by the Council, in reality the model of provision was implemented without employing a recognisable commissioning approach. For some time, commissioners and providers have experienced a number of difficulties in relation to the implementation of ARMS provision. These have resulted, principally, from the absence of formal Service Level Agreements, and the fact that there have been significant issues to resolve about the nature of the provision. The process has suffered from a lack of transparency and clarity. Key issues include:
 - Inconsistency of approach in relation to ARMS provision including the true level of inclusion of children in mainstream settings
 - Lack of consistency in funding arrangements
 - Clarity of responsibility in terms of governance arrangements
 - Lack of formal commissioning arrangements
6. In order to ensure the future success of the ARMS model, to support providers in their efforts to deliver high quality inclusive provision, and to provide for an appropriate level of stability, these issues must be addressed for future years.

7. In recognition of this, in June 2017, Cabinet endorsed the development of a new model of primary ARMS provision being developed during September-December 2017 leading to this being piloted thereafter and rolled out on a wider basis from September 2018.
8. Proposals endorsed included:
 - The current ARMS and Gateshead special schools working together to form collaborative partnerships to share expertise and skills. It is proposed that pupils in ARMS provision could be registered with special schools, with the special schools providing expert staffing and assistance on an outreach basis. We propose that this type of provision is known as a Special/Mainstream Host School (SMHS).
 - All Gateshead mainstream primary schools being invited to express an interest in working in partnership with a special school to host provision initially for children with autism/social communication difficulties. This is in recognition of increasing numbers of children being identified with these needs in the primary sector and a gap in provision.
 - The governing bodies of Rowlands Gill and Eslington Schools being invited to trial the new proposed model which would involve Rowlands Gill working with staff from Gibside School to offer provision for children with learning difficulties and Eslington working with a mainstream school for Key Stage 2 children with social emotional and mental health difficulties.
 - All existing ARMS schools being offered the opportunity to comment on a proposed new model which would be based on an outreach basis from Gateshead special schools. This could also enable greater movement of children between mainstream and special schools if it is considered that needs are changing or to provide additional support if needed for a temporary period. As part of this process, we would formally require all existing ARMS host schools to indicate their continued willingness to host a provision or to formally withdraw.

Consultation

9. Between September and October 2017, formal discussions took place with the Head Teachers of existing primary ARMS provision regarding the new pilot model and the potential of it being rolled out across existing ARMS from September 2018. They were requested to consult with their Governing Bodies and inform the Council by 30 November 2017 as to whether they wish to continue to host their ARMS provision or formally withdraw it. All but two (Eslington and High Spen) of the Governing Bodies of the existing ARMS have requested to continue to host their ARMS provision. It is proposed that the Eslington and High Spen ARMS will be phased out and/or closed as outlined below which will be the subject of further consultation and a separate Cabinet report during the Spring term 2018.
10. The Cabinet Members for Children and Young People have been consulted.
11. Pilot model – Autism/Social Communication Difficulties (ASCD) special/mainstream host school provision (SMHS)
13. Two schools have expressed an interest in becoming the pilot model host school. Further discussion will happen during January 2018 to discuss the benefits and

logistics of the provision. The Governing Bodies will be also consulted and the host primary school will be decided by a panel made up of representatives from the Council and Gateshead primary and special schools. The host primary school will then work collaboratively in partnership with Gibside School to develop and implement the pilot Autism/Social Communication Difficulties Provision SMHS.

14. It is anticipated that pupils taught in the pilot Autism/Social Communication Difficulties SMHS would be registered with Gibside School and Gibside would provide the staffing resources and management on an outreach basis. Following agreement from parents/carers, pupils attending the SMHS provision would be registered with Gibside School and will have the benefit of experiencing inclusion within a mainstream setting along with the specialist skills, expertise and support provided by staff that will be recruited by Gibside School. Pupils registered at Gibside SMHS would also benefit from having access to the facilities at Gibside School so that they can access therapy such as use of the hydro therapy pool and therapy equipment. Staff at the SMHS would also be able to spend time at Gibside School to enable them to have high quality training and mentoring.
15. The provision will be commissioned from Gibside School by the Local Authority (LA) and a formal Service Level Agreement will be drawn up between the LA, Gibside School and the host primary mainstream school and provision will be monitored by the LA's SEND Service.

16. Existing ARMS

The current number on roll and costs of the provision are shown below:

School	Cost	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Places	Vacancy
Bede	£123,093	1	4	0	1	0	0	6	8	2
Brandling	£160,000	0	1	3	1	1	3	9	16	7
Eslington	£80,000	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	8	4
High Spen	£100,000	0	1	0	2	0	1	4	8	4
Rowlands Gill	£77,000	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	8	5
Swalwell	£131,974	1	0	4	4	1	0	10	10	0

17. Eslington ARMS

It is proposed that Eslington ARMS provision (which currently provides 8 places for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Key Stage 2) will close. Due to increasing numbers of primary aged children with SEMH needs requiring specialist intervention, it is recommended that Eslington School increases its specialist provision to offer 8 additional places, meaning the school would have a total of 68 specialist SEMH places for children aged 4-11 years across the two school sites. Eslington School will work informally with Bede ARMS to share best practice around assessment and intervention of Key Stage 1 (and potentially Key Stage 2 in future) pupils with SEMH which will also create greater flexibility between the two provisions.

18. High Spen ARMS

High Spen ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for the current children with a Hearing Impairment being taught there in partnership with the Council's Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) but the governing body has requested that the provision is phased out. Having considered the current and predicted HI population in Gateshead, the need for specific provision for HI children in an ARMS setting is negligible as the children can be supported by the LINT in their local neighbourhood school. This will avoid the need for lengthy school travel time for often very young children. Therefore, when the current children in the ARMS finish their education, it is proposed that High Spen ARMS will close.

19. During the discussions with existing ARMS Head Teachers it was recognised that the pilot model is not a 'one size fits all' model and that a number of the existing ARMS were already working well. In recognition of this, it is recommended that the following is agreed:

20. Bede ARMS

Bede ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Key Stage 1 (age 5-7 years) and will work informally with Eslington Primary School to share best practice around assessment and intervention. The Head Teacher and Governing Body have also expressed an interest in delivering provision for children with SEMH at Key Stage 2 at Bede in future but this will be investigated at a future date.

21. Brandling/Cedars ARMS

Brandling ARMS will work formally in partnership with Cedars Academy to deliver specialist provision for children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) at Key Stages 1 and 2 (age 5-11 years).

22. Rowlands Gill ARMS

Rowlands Gill ARMS interim Head Teacher and Governing Body have expressed a desire to continue to deliver the ARMS provision working in partnership with Gibside School.

23. Swalwell ARMS

Swalwell ARMS will continue to deliver specialist provision for children with Physical Difficulties (PD) at Key Stages 1 and 2 (age 5-11 years). The Head Teacher and governing body of Swalwell Primary School have expressed an interest in working in partnership with a Cedars Academy to share expertise and knowledge and to secure the best outcomes for the children in the Swalwell ARMS provision.

Consultation will be arranged with parents/carers of children in the existing ARMS and with staff and Trade Unions to discuss the new arrangements and formal Service Level Agreements will be drawn up between relevant parties involved in the procurement and delivery of ARMS provision, which will be monitored by the LA's SEND Service.

Alternative Options

24. The Council could:

- (i) Decide to not approve the proposals and continue with the current level of ARMS provision however, this would not provide the opportunity for existing ARMS to work collaboratively in partnership with special schools in order to improve provision and this would leave a gap in provision for pupils with Autism/Social Communication Difficulties.
- (ii) Decide to increase the number of specialist places for pupils with Autism/Social Communication Difficulties however there currently is not sufficient capital funding available to expand existing primary special schools or create a new special school in Gateshead.
- (iii) Decide to close all ARMS provision and increase the funding provided to the Council's High Incidence Needs Team (HINT) to deliver specialist outreach teaching and intervention for pupils in mainstream primary schools. However, this would result in current ARMS children needing to be placed in other educational provision, some of which could be specialist. There is a lack of specialist places in Gateshead so this could result in an increase of children being placed in out of authority provision, which is a more costly option due to higher placement and transport costs and results in children being educated outside of their community.

This could also potentially result in challenge from parents through statutory objections, as well as potentially being a more expensive option due to intervention requiring to be delivered across all primary mainstream schools in Gateshead on a peripatetic basis, which could be more challenging to manage and co-ordinate effectively.

Implications of Recommended Option

25. **Resources:**

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that it is anticipated that by creating additional provision in mainstream settings this will reduce demand on special school and out of borough places. Until the individual commissioning arrangements and service level agreements are in place, and the impact on special school and out of borough places is known an estimate of the possible savings cannot be quantified.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – Specialist teaching staff will be employed to teach pupils in the new Autism/Social Communication Difficulties SMHS. Levels of staffing required will be based on the needs of the children registered at the SMHS and this will be agreed between Gibside School and the new primary mainstream host school.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no implications from this report.

26. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no implications from this report.

27. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are some Equality and Diversity Implications arising from this report as the children attending the ARMS have a disability. A stage 1 Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been completed which highlights that the proposals will have a positive impact for primary school aged children with a disability.
28. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – no implications from this report.
29. **Health Implications** - There are no implications from this report.
30. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no implications from this report.
31. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications from this report.
32. **Area and Ward Implications** - no specific implications. Children attending the ARMS provision are resident across Gateshead.