

TITLE OF REPORT: Special School Provision and Developments

REPORT OF: Interim Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an annual update relating to the changes and developments to special school provision.

1. Background

Special school provision is constantly changing and evolving because it is affected by changes in mainstream provision, nature of special educational needs and disabilities and local and national policy. This report will outline the amount of provision available, future needs current issues and new developments across the schools.

2. Current Context

There are 6 special schools in Gateshead, Dryden and Hill Top schools are a hard federation and the Executive Headteacher is Jane Bryant. Furrowfield and Eslington are a soft federation and is moving to a hard federation and the Executive Headteacher is Michelle Richards. Gibside school's Headteacher is Judith Donovan and The Cedars Headteacher is Martin Flowers and is an Academy.

All of the special schools have been rated by Ofsted as at least good with Dryden, Eslington and Gibside schools outstanding schools. This supports the view that Gateshead has high quality special school provision in place.

3. SEND discussion with special school headteachers and the June 2016 survey with the SEND Inspector and SEND Team.

3.1 Hilltop

The school has surprisingly high numbers of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) which is changing the profile of the school. There are now fewer pupils with moderate leaning difficulties (MLD) as the prime need. Pupils are more complex with a growing number of pupils with mental health needs. Some of these children have not been identified sufficiently well at primary but have developed significant

and challenging SEND in years 7 and 8.

Hilltop could take another 30 pupils if needed as the school has capacity. There is a challenge between the service that is provided to them from other agencies particularly health on what their children need particularly in terms of speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and mental health support. The school are using Kalmer counselling to provide additional support to pupils.

3.2 Gibside

Numbers on roll are significantly higher particularly in Key Stage 1. Capacity was reached at the Whickham site (June 2014) so the school expanded on to the Blydon site; provision here was further increased in September 2016. Some children from a local mainstream primary school attend sessions at Gibside on a part time basis. Pupils from Gibside attend a number of primary schools across the borough on a part time basis. Some children have significant SEMH and there is a lack of provision for children with SEMH and SLD. Gibside do not have adequate space for this particular group of children. The school wants to look at maybe satellite links with local schools, where they support children in bases etc but within a mainstream setting. Staff at Gibside have a range of skills including working with children with ASC, SLD and PMLD and could offer mainstream staff support in these areas within a mainstream setting.

The school continues to provide excellent support to training in partnership with local universities.

3.3 The Cedars Academy

Pupil numbers are now the highest they have ever been in the school's history. In June 2016 they were full with classes of 12 children with 1 teacher and 2 TAs. Nurture classes and other classes may be smaller in the school. There is a growth in ASD and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). There are not large numbers of out of borough placements in The Cedars.

The school has plans to expand provision. The building development, won't create more space but will provide better areas to learn and to provide meeting rooms and therapy areas. There are plans for KS 1 downstairs and KS 2 upstairs in the present building. The school wants to have unique areas so that children understand where they will be and the transition involved.

The school has also accessed funding from Sports England but this is early days in terms of the project. The school plays a key role in Tyne and Wear Disability Sport Competition Structure and Inclusion CPD, The Innovation Project and Community and After School Programme Support. The school wants to provide its own specialised sporting facilities to accommodate their growing population and

continue to build on their profile as a Regional Centre of Excellence for Disability Sport.

In the past four years all of the leavers have had successful transition from Cedars Academy into FE, training or employment. Building on this the school are developing a Post 16 at Walker Terrace in Gateshead. The school doesn't have room at The Cedars and needed a more adult friendly space which reflects a college environment. The school want to provide for development of greater independence. They leased the building over 10 years and moved in November 2016. The building has the capacity for 30-35 pupils. The development of three learning routes, Routes to Independence (R2I), Routes to Employment (R2E) and Routes to Vocation (R2V) will provide individual choice and relevant accreditation for students.

The introduction of a highly effective Access to Learning team provides strategies to support staff and students to overcome barriers to learning.

3.4 Eslington

Eslington Primary School expanded in September 2015 to provide up to 60 places with an additional integrated 8 place ARMS (Additional Resource for Mainstream Schools) for Key Stage Two pupils. It provides for children aged between 5 – 11 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH).

The school has increased space and capacity and had 43 pupils for September 2016. ARMS currently at Eslington, has been based there over the past 7 years. In the ARMs some pupils are extremely challenging for ARMS funding. Consequently, it has been proposed by governors to close the ARMS in September 2017.

The school is located across two sites: Eslington Hazel Road, just off Bensham Bank and Eslington Rose Street, near the Redheugh Bridge in Gateshead. OFSTED judged Eslington Primary School as outstanding in all four categories in 2013. It also holds a number of nationally recognised awards including National Healthy Schools status and the Inclusion Standard Gold Award.

Due to the pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs that often impact on both behaviour and academic progress, most pupils enter school working well below those levels expected for their age. However, ongoing assessment and rigorous tracking procedures result in many pupils achieving above average and often outstanding rates of progress. This outstanding achievement is 'the result of pupils rapidly developing very positive attitudes to learning and by making a very good response to teachers' high expectations.'

As well as a child psychotherapist who works with individual pupils, Eslington employs a play therapist for one afternoon a week to work with individual pupils on their emotional health. A range of emotional well-being programmes and academic interventions are all used to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Wherever possible, children access activities at local primary schools and the transition to

secondary schools, whether mainstream or special, is highly successful. All pupils are proud to be members of this lively and vibrant school community and enjoy forging caring and sustainable friendships with each other alongside consistent and dependable adults. Pupils feel extremely safe and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

There is a gap in the market for training teachers in SEMH so Eslington would like to become a teaching school in the future.

3.5 Furrowfield

Furrowfield School is a 71 place secondary school with a 14 place residential provision attached. It provides for pupils aged between 11-16 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH).

They offer a bespoke curriculum which aims to engage pupils, as well as ensuring pupils are given the opportunity to attain GCSEs in line with neighbouring secondary schools.

As well as a psychotherapist who works with individual pupils two days a week, Furrowfield provides a range of resources and tools to support pupils with their emotional resilience, social skills, independent skills and other specific difficulties. A range of programmes are also used to support pupils with their learning needs and in particular, to support pupils with personal confidence and in understanding their own academic potential and ability. The pupils have access to Connexions to support and guide them with their career choices and next steps to further learning beyond 16 years. Pupils at Furrowfield can take part in a range of work experience placements and additional programmes such as 'Fairbridge', which provides them with additional work life skills and qualifications.

Crossfield House, the residential provision was inspected in February 2017 and was judged as 'good' in all areas. A dedicated pastoral team known as 'House Parents' support pupils in both the residential and in school.

Furrowfield pupils thrive in an environment conducive to preparing students for life beyond school and ensuring the emotional support via nurturing principles, whilst also providing very high standards of teaching and learning.

The numbers for pupils predicted are around 72 and possibly increasing to 75. This assumes 14 in year groups and 5 additional places per year. The school feels this is the maximum number for the school. The current numbers are 68 in a 71 place provision. Research suggests that the maximum figures should be about 60 for secondary SEMH.

Currently, the school are refurbishing a bungalow on limited funding. However, a member of staff has taken this on and is liaising with Dryden re living skills facilities. Another bungalow may be used for more challenging pupils who need to go out of borough.

The school could offer vocational needs and provide a home environment in which children can learn. Staff have expertise that could be used in practical skills. Also it could be used as a nurture room.

At the moment the future is about working with training agencies to develop career options. Some pupils have gained employment as a result but school are watchful around training agency standards and the value for money. The school will be monitoring this further. Under the Equality Act providers do not adhere to the same standards as the school and therefore they may not be able to use them. Attendance must also be closely monitored, first day absence should be picked up by the agency and school informed.

The other key issue is about modernising the school. Making pupils more accountable and independent in managing their needs. There is a discussion around modernist lunchtimes.

3.6 Eslington Primary and Furrowfield Schools Soft Federation

In September 2015, both Eslington Primary School and Furrowfield Secondary School formed a soft federation. They both have a Head of School with a shared Executive Headteacher. The governing bodies have now agreed to be a hard federation.

Currently, pupils from both schools are admitted primarily from Gateshead Local Authority with a small number of places being taken up with pupils from other Boroughs.

The majority of pupils across the schools are boys although the number of girls is increasing year on year. The Schools have a higher than average number of pupils looked after by the Local Authority (LAC). On occasions, the schools will admit a pupil for up to 6 months without either a Statement or EHCP for assessment. More than half of the pupils have additional learning difficulties or secondary conditions such as ADHD or ASC which impacts on their behaviour and ability to access learning. A minority of pupils have been identified as being gifted or talented in a specific area.

The schools have established extremely positive and successful relationships with parents and carers, including those who have not previously had a good experience of other schools. There are dedicated staff in both schools who also work across the transition phase with parents between Years 6 and 7. The team provide family support with attendance, behaviour by the pupil at home and facilitate parenting courses and parent support groups. Staff across both schools work closely with a range of agencies to ensure that the academic, emotional wellbeing, mental health and welfare needs of all of the pupils are met.

3.7 Dryden

Dryden figures are as expected. The school has 56 children currently. 9 ASD pupils have this as their primary need rather than Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) but this may not be accurate. Numbers are slowly increasing and the school could go to 60. There are concerns around pupils who have profound difficulties who are 18 and the bandings as they will require substantial social care packages around them.

Further capacity for Dryden is available. There is potential for another 10 pupils. The living skills bungalow on the site is supporting different learning contexts that can be used by post 16s. It is a house equipped to give children an experience of real life. It has a charity shop/office as well as independent living. It is also used by Hilltop. This is an exciting initiative in terms of developing curriculum and making it relevant for post 16.

Health input is from physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. Thrive and Kalmer counsellors are also used. There is the need for more speech and language therapy and the school would like more occupational therapy. Also concerns re the medical issues the school are expected to deal with e.g catheterisation, suctioning etc. As more students move up from Gibside, there is access to only one nurse across the schools and this will not meet all of the needs.

What next? The curriculum is stimulating and relevant but the school want to develop working together with other headteachers on living skills in the future. Most able students are being prepared for independent living. There is a need to take account of core changes in post16 provision including funding. This may mean provision is watered down dependant on the level of funding.

3.8 LA Projections of SEND numbers

Projections are based on figures from the past few years. At this moment we have figures that show an increase in ASD. Pupil projections need to happen for pupil place planning and higher needs so that LA can plan resources accordingly.

There is an increase to 525 pupils in special schools from 379 in 2009. But those figures are now going to stabilise. Proportions are in relation to population increases but there are other factors involved. There are discussions on factors e.g use of recreational drugs during pregnancy. Whatever the causes, there is undoubtedly an increase and a need to use the higher needs block for more pupils. Normally there are 100 applications for a single plan and there was 185 by June 2016.

In terms of specific areas:

ASD and SEMH is increasing and communication is decreasing.

The LA has been using out of borough places for SEMH and are still needing to do this. Also the LA is having requests from Tyne and Wear LAs asking us to find places for their children.

ARMs are closing at some of the schools. This may affect special school places. There is only so much that we can do though in terms of increasing numbers. Eslington has increased, Hilltop rebuilt, Dryden numbers are stable. Furrowfield figures are stable but secondary schools are still looking for places In Furrowfield. Gibside numbers are going steadily up. Eslington figures look stable but may well increase again and there may be more out of borough requests to come in. ARMs at Bede needs factoring in to our SEMH numbers.

The Cedars has no feeder school but numbers will increase slightly over next 2 years and increase in KS1 has not been factored in at present.

Hilltop figures will increase slightly and the school has concerns over Y14 placements and whether possible funding wise this would be possible in the future.

Some out of borough placements who should have been at Furrowfield have been placed elsewhere because there have been no places available.

SEMh at secondary was a significant pinch point in June 2016 and a prediction of 30 places short. It is hard to predict SEMh primary but it may be higher than predicted presently.

Eslington governors are currently discussing the vision for the future and use of buildings across both Eslington and Furrowfield in their federation arrangement.

Post 16 provision for SEMh also needs to be considered for those who are academic and want to stay on.

3.9 In summary on projected numbers

Looking at projected numbers indicates that we need to consider ASD and those pupils who go outside of the borough because we do not have enough places. Also SEMh secondary where there is a rise in numbers. Complex ASD for up to 10 places is needed and up to 30 places for secondary SEMh.

Also 2 year old funding means an increase in high needs pupils and increased pressure on places.

The Cedars and Gibside are on the increase in numbers and this is impacting on buildings and staffing.

3.10 Proposal

- i The schools agreed to look further at Key Stage 4 alternative provision across Furrowfield, Hilltop and Millway so that the schools can use facilities as a joint enterprise.
- ii Gibside could expand to take more children for ASD where they can have specific time out for short periods of time.
Some children are sent out of borough to alternative provisions that have more space and therapeutic input. The school has the staff but not the space at the current time. There is no space in Gateshead for Out of Authority children for ASD. This expansion is dependent on having the appropriate high quality premises. The school could consider possible provision for 10 pupils with ASD assessment and intensive support who are then moved into their right placement.

3.11 Post 16

Funding from EFA is not for 5 days but for 3 days. This presents a challenge for the future costs for post 16. At present some pupils have specialist provision till 19 then mainstream college for 3 years. But have to show progression by 18 for it to continue to be funded. Wording is different in terms of provision for post 18 in the COP. Funding for Y14 is a national issue.

The problem we will have is that previous pupils have had a funded package and parents expect that. However, this is an issue for everyone across the country. This needs to be under discussion through the Post 16 group on implications for funding.

4. Recommendation

It is requested that the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive an annual report on Special schools and provision.

Ann Muxworthy, Inspector SEN and Inclusion