

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 17 November 2016

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, People

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT** Closure of Westfield Primary School Resource Provision Base for Pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the responses received during the representation period to the statutory consultation to close the Resource Base for pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties at Westfield Primary School.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the decision making process which needs to be followed.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) the Resource Provision Base at Westfield Primary school closes with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016;**
- 2) the Local Authority continues to provide support to the three pupils in the Resource Base at Westfield Primary school until they finish their primary education at the school; and**
- 3) funding previously allocated to fund the Resource Provision base is ring fenced and reinvested into Hearing Impaired provision and the recruitment of additional central staff both teaching and non-teaching.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 At the Executive Board meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016 it was agreed that a statutory consultation could be undertaken on the proposal to close the Resource Provision Base for pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties at Westfield Primary School.
- 3.2 The statutory proposal was published on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016 for four weeks closing on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016. It was advertised in the local press

and distributed to all schools and settings, along with the feedback form. Copies were shared with parents, staff and governors of the school, trade unions, neighbouring authorities, Diocesan authorities, health, primary schools, parents / carers of pre-school children with severe and profound Hearing Impaired Loss, Halton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group the Chair of Halton Impart, the local MP, local Elected Members and the National Deaf Children's Society. Any respondents were given the opportunity to complete the feedback form distributed or respond on line.

- 3.3 The statutory notice, proposal and feedback form were all placed on the Council's website.
- 3.4 A staff and governors meeting was held at the school on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016 followed by a parent and public meeting, to which representatives from the National Deaf Children's Society were invited. The notes from both meetings were placed on the Council's website and copies are attached at Appendix A and Appendix B.
- 3.5 Those people wishing to respond to the consultation were advised to put their views in writing to Mark Reaney, Operational Director Legal and Democratic services. They were also advised to note that the representation period was 4 weeks and the consultation would close on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016.
- 3.6 At the close of consultation seven responses had been received. Of this number, six responses were received from parents/carers and one response was received from the National Deaf Children's Society. Five parents/carers did not support the proposal and one was unsure. The responses from the parents/carers included parents of pupils within the current provision and parents/carers of pupils in the mainstream school. A summary of the responses received is attached at Appendix C. The response from the National Deaf Children's Society is attached as Appendix D.
- 3.7 The issues raised by those who did not support the proposal were as follows:
  - **children who have hearing problems should continue to go through main stream schools**
  - **Fantastic unit to allow hearing impairments to remain in mainstream environments**

There are no Key Stage 1 pupils in the current Resource Base as in the main parents are opting for a mainstream setting with support from the team. New-born Hearing Screening allows the early identification of children with hearing loss, currently none of the parents of younger children have expressed an interest in the Resource Base for their child.

With the advances in technology and the right support children now make greater progress by being a part of a mainstream peer group with language support

- **all children should be taught sign-language to help them communicate with others**

This is not a primary requirement of the current Resource Provision staff – if there is sufficient capacity it may be possible to continue to offer training in sign-language.

- **the hearing unit is important to the school, however I think more children would benefit from the £60,000 put back into mainstream school.**

The majority of pupils with a hearing impairment are in mainstream provision. Reinvesting the funding to employ additional peripatetic teaching and non-teaching staff and commissioning additional places where necessary, should ensure that we can more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of pupils across the Borough with a Hearing Impairment.

- **I think it is wrong that children who need to use the resource base should have to travel miles possibly out of area away from school through no fault of their own, in order to use a resource base.**

The numbers requiring a resource base is reducing in the Borough making the current model unsustainable. Specialist out of borough provision has been commissioned for some pupils for a number of years. This practice will continue where appropriate.

- **My daughter has hearing problems and has recently started this school. We were delighted that she was allocated this school because of hearing/resource facilities. If this facility closes it will set her hearing back by years.**

New-born screening allows the earlier identification of hearing loss. Many of the babies currently have mild to moderate hearing loss. There was no support available in early years previously this is now available with children seen on either a weekly or monthly basis. As a result there is less developmental delay for children starting school. The cohort and needs of hearing impaired children has changed over the years, many children have cochlear implants earlier, the majority use FM systems other changes in IT and technology enable more children to be educated in a mainstream school. In addition, support can be provided by the Local Authority Team.

The facilities in the Resource Base will remain and any child assessed as requiring support due to hearing loss will continue to receive support from the specialist hearing impaired central team in line with NatSIP recommendations.

- 3.8 Appendix D is a copy of the response received from the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). A summary of the recommendation of the NDCS and the response is listed below.

#### **Focus on outcomes for deaf children and monitor outcomes**

The peripatetic specialist team will continue to monitor the outcomes of children and young people from Halton with a Hearing Impairment

#### **Reinvest funding into peripatetic services**

The funding previously invested in Westfield Resource Base will be ring fenced and reinvested into the development of the peripatetic central service.

#### **Recruit and retain specialist staff**

Halton Borough Council is committed to recruiting expert specialist teaching and non-teaching support as part of the development of the central team.

#### **Commission resource base placements out of borough**

Service level agreements are in place with an out of borough local provider for a number of pupils. We will explore the option of developing an SLA with Liverpool City Council to meet future needs.

#### **Monitor future need for resource base provision**

An annual review will be undertaken to identify levels of demand and provision.

#### **Support children transitioning into mainstream provision**

The peripatetic team will work with those children transitioning to mainstream provision to ensure they continue to receive the support they require to meet their needs.

#### **Make reasonable adjustments to mainstream school**

As part of Halton's Accessibility Strategy, schools are required to make reasonable adjustment for disabled pupils. Access funding will continue to be made available so that eligible schools can access support towards the costs of any adaptations required.

Support will continue to be provided for technological equipment.

#### **4.0 DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

4.1 The decision-maker (Executive Board) must decide the proposal within two months of the end of the representation period otherwise the decision must be referred to the Adjudicator for a decision. Any appeal to the adjudicator must be made within four weeks of the decision.

4.2 Decision makers need to be satisfied that the proposal meets the SEN Improvement test. A full list of the factors to consider are attached as Appendix E.

4.2 The decision-maker can decide to:

- Reject the proposals;
- Approve the proposals without modification;
- Approve the proposals with a modification
- Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition.

Conditional approval can only be granted in a limited number of circumstances related specifically to Academy provision or changes in admission arrangements relating to another school. A date by which the conditions should be met must be set.

4.3 Within one week of making a decision, the LA must publish the decision with the reasons for it on the website, alongside the proposal. Copies must also be sent to:

- The LA where the Schools Adjudicator is the decision-maker
- The Schools Adjudicator where the LA is the decision maker
- The Governing Body
- Local C of E Diocese
- The local Roman Catholic diocese; and
- Any other appropriate body.

4.4 Within one week of the decision being made the LA should make the necessary changes to the school's record on the department's EduBase system and must make the change by the date of implementation.

4.5 The proposal and responses to the consultation to close the Westfield Primary School Resource base for Pupils with hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties were discussed at the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board (PPB). The main concerns raised were in respect of the support for the current, and what would happen to any children who might have similar needs. Assurances were provided that current pupils would continue with the same support until they move on to secondary education and that the system of support was more effective and robust to meet similar needs without the need for such a

resource base. The Chair and the majority of the PPB supported the proposal as put forward.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Resource Base currently receives £10,000 for each of its six places giving it a total of £60,000. £20,623 is provided for a Signer each year and an additional £5,081.73 is allocated for each pupil placed in the base.
- 5.2 Funding will continue to be provided to Westfield Primary School to support the costs of the two teaching assistants until the three current pupils have completed their primary education at the school.
- 5.3 The funding from the unit will be reinvested into employing specialist staff to support pupils across the borough with Hearing Impairment and when appropriate commissioning a place in specialist provision in a neighbouring Local Authority.
- 5.4 Schools will be invited to apply for Access funding where building adaptations are required.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Supporting pupils with a hearing impairment in their mainstream local school is more inclusive as it allows pupils to be educated within their own community, alongside their siblings, friends and peer group.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None identified

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None identified

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None identified

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 As reducing numbers of parents are choosing to have their children educated in a Hearing Resource Base it is becoming more difficult for the base to be financially viable and to be able to recruit the appropriately qualified staff.
- 7.2 As the majority of families would prefer their child to be educated in a mainstream setting with support we may not be able to provide the appropriate level of support across the borough to meet need unless we can reinvest the resources saved from the closure of the Base.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 This proposal is aimed at ensuring pupils with Hearing Impairment can be educated within their own local community and is therefore more inclusive.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on this proposal.

## **9.0 REASON FOR DECISION**

- 9.1 Provide a more inclusive offer for pupils with HI giving them the opportunity to be educated with support alongside their peers.

## **10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 10.1 Retaining the current provision. This was rejected as it is less inclusive and more costly.

## **11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

- 11.1 The implementation date is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

## **12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
January Statutory Notice	Rutland House	<a href="mailto:ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk">ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk</a>
Executive Board Report 14/07/2016	Municipal Building	As above
Executive Board Report 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	As above	As above
Halton Borough Council – Children and Young People’s Services – Accessibility Strategy 2015-2018	Local Offer Website	As above

