

Statutory Consultation on the proposal to close the Resource Base for Pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties at Westfield Primary School.

Wednesday, 28th September 2016 at 2.30pm

School Consultation

In attendance:

Ann McIntyre	Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision (HBC)
Anita Parkinson	Divisional Manager – Inclusion (HBC)
Julie Metcalf	Lead Teacher for Hearing Impairment (HBC)
Lyndsey Hignett	Teacher for Hearing Impairment (HBC)
Catriona Gallimore	Capital Programme Planner – Education, Inclusion and Provision (HBC) (note taker)
Claire Dawes	Headteacher Westfield Primary School
James Parker	Assistant Headteacher Westfield Primary School
Leslie Le-Surf	Chair of Governors Westfield Primary School
Ian McIntyre	Associate Govern Westfield Primary School or Westfield Primary School
Joyce Docherty	Governor Westfield Primary
Denise Gough	Teaching Assistant/signer - Hearing Impaired Unit Westfield Primary School
Joanne Berry	Teaching Assistant - Hearing Impaired Unit Westfield Primary School

Ann McIntyre welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Purpose of the Meeting

It was explained that the purpose of the meeting was to allow questions to be raised regarding the second stage of the process (Statutory Consultation) on the Local Authority's (LA) proposal to close the Resource Base for pupils with Hearing Impairment (HI) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) at Westfield Primary School. The rationale behind the proposal would be explained and there would be the opportunity for questions.

A four week pre-statutory consultation took place between 22nd June and 20th July 2016 and on the 15th September 2016 the Executive Board approved progression to the next stage, known as Statutory Consultation.

It was explained that many parents with children with a hearing impairment are now choosing a mainstream school with a package of support. Removing the Resource Base will allow this funding to be invested into increasing the level of peripatetic specialist teaching and non-teaching in Halton, so that the needs of those children educated in a mainstream setting that require additional support can best be met. It was noted that some profoundly deaf pupils whose needs cannot be met in Halton, attend a specialist school in Knotty Ash.

There are no savings with this proposal as the funding will be reinvesting in providing peripatetic support across schools in Halton and when appropriate commission specialist provision in a neighbouring Local Authority.

It was asked whether there would be a negative impact on other schools. It was explained that it should make other schools more accessible for pupils with a hearing impairment.

The Resource Base has the capacity for six pupils with hearing impairment and specific learning difficulties. Demand had decreased and there are currently only 3 KS2 pupils accessing provision.

There would be no change to the support provided to the three pupils currently in the Resource Base. The Local Authority would continue to fund the costs of the Teaching Assistant and the Signer and would provide teaching support from the LA Peripatetic Hearing Impaired Specialist Teachers until all three pupils had completed their primary education.

The statutory consultation is for four weeks from the 21st September until 19th October 2016. The LA does not respond to individual responses to a consultation. All responses will be summarised and the LA will provide a written response to queries/comments raised and submit this to the Executive Board as part of the report which will be tabled on the 17th November 2016. Executive Board will then determine whether they wish to approve the proposal.

All those that attended the meeting were advised to comment again as this is a separate consultation to the pre-statutory consultation which took place in June. Paper copies of the feedback form were offered, and they were also advised that responses can be made via an online form by following the link www.halton.gov.uk/westfield.

Questions

1) How will the funding be reinvested?

We will ensure that Westfield Primary has sufficient money to pay the staff supporting the 3 children still in the base, and will advertise for a Peripatetic teacher to teach at Westfield Primary and across Halton.

The funding will enhance the current peripatetic team to support HI children and funding will be ring fenced for this purpose.

2) Is it easy to recruit a HI Teacher?

HI teachers are often more attracted to working within a central peripatetic team than in a Resource Base so it should be easier to recruit to than it has been to fill the vacancy at the school.

3) The notice mentions that the unit is for pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), what about the children that are SpLD and not HI, why are you closing the unit when we still have pupils with SpLD?

*This unit was for pupils with Hearing Impairment **AND** Specific Learning Difficulties, with the hearing impairment being the primary need.*

All schools have pupils with specific learning difficulties the Headteacher and governors determine how to support these pupils within the schools resources.

It was noted that Westfield is widely recognised as providing excellent support for SEN pupil. The head said that currently 42% of the school population are SEN.

In 2015/16 all school budgets were cut by 5% because the SEN budget was overspent. This is one of the reasons why Halton would rather schools support/retain their pupils rather than send them to a specialist provision. However, if a child required specialist provision, the LA would secure that.

4) What if a 4th child came to the school with HI before the end of December 2016?

If a child was identified, Halton would look at Peripatetic support or secure specialist provision.

Parents are asking for their HI children to be taught in their mainstream school which supports this new peripatetic model. Where appropriate pupils may have an EHC Plan and receive enhanced provision.

Some schools identify children as SEN differently to other schools and it is not consistent. Over all, Halton has a high proportion of children with SEN but there is only so much funding. Halton are now looking as how best we allocate the funding and will be consulting on this shortly.

5) How many preschool aged HI children are there?

Four children have been identified. They currently attend the Cochlea Implant Centre in Manchester, by the time they are 5 they will be able to hear.

6) How many primary school aged children are there with severe Hearing Impairment?

There are seven children; four attend mainstream schools and three attend Westfield.

7) Are the 3 children attending Westfield from Halton?

Yes, two are from Runcorn and one is from Widnes.

8) How does the Specialist Teacher support HI pupils in schools?

For profound/severely deaf children, the Specialist Teacher initially meets with all staff at the mainstream school and talks through the National Sensory Impaired Partnership (NSIP) criteria, so that the staff know about the child. Following this, the Specialist Teacher will spend an hour a week with the child and school staff.

9) What is the current staffing provision in Halton?

Currently Halton have 3 Specialist Teachers and 2 teaching assistants.

If the statutory consultation proposal is approved, the LA would then look to recruit an additional Specialist Teacher to enhance the current Peripatetic team.

10) How many HI pupils are there in Halton?

There are 137 pupils that have a hearing impairment. Only profoundly deaf pupils get support, of which there are 14. Severely hearing impaired pupils are in a specialist provision.

11) Will the school budget be affected from the 1st January 2017?

The LA will provide the figures to the school. Halton will continue to provide financial support for the salaries of the 2 members of staff at the school that support the 3 pupils in the unit until the pupils leave.

12) With regards to Specialist Teacher support, is it an hour per pupil per week in the unit?

Yes.

13) How do I view the LA response to my comments from the last consultation?

Go to the Halton Website and look up the Executive Board meeting for the 15th September 2016. Appendix D of the papers contains a summary of the feedback and the LA's response.