

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 28 March 2013
PRESENTED BY: Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise
SUBJECT: Re-designation of Ashley School
WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the responses received during the representation period to the statutory consultation to re-designate Ashley School and extend the age range.
- 1.2 A summary of the decision making process is included in the report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 Proposals having been published in pursuance of the powers set out in sections 15(1) and 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and having had regard to the statutory guidance and to responses to consultation IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the following related proposals be approved:-**
- 2.2 With effect from 1st September 2013 Ashley School will be re-designated as an 11-19 school for middle to high ability pupils with Social Communication Needs and Autism.**
- 2.3 With effect from 1st September 2013 Ashley School will have 70 places for pre 16 pupils and 42 places for post 16.**
- 2.4 The offer of post-16 provision will commence in September 2014.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The representation period on the statutory consultation to re-designate Ashley School and extend its age range closed on 13th March 2013. The proposal is to establish provision at Ashley School for 112 children and young people aged 11-19. The school will cater for vulnerable pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and those with identified Social Communication Needs who have a moderate to high learning ability. There will be 70 places for ages 11 -16 and 42 places for ages 16-19. To allow sufficient time to develop an appropriate post-16 offer this provision will commence in September 2014.
- 3.2 At the close of consultation 241 responses had been received. A further 5 responses were received after the close of the consultation. 238 of the responses received within the representation period supported the proposal.

There were 3 responses received which did not support the proposal. One of these responses was sent by the Development Manager and Company Secretary of HAFs on behalf of the 100 plus families (Halton Austic Family Support Group). However, a number of responses have also been received from parents who are members of HAFs supporting the proposal. A summary of the responses received is attached at Appendix A.

3.3 The issues raised by those who did not support the proposal included the following:

Environment – all areas of the school need to be low arousal not just one and there needs to be support for sensory needs.

Significant investment has been made to the school environment with many areas of the school now low arousal and support is available for sensory needs. A CD of the changes to the school environment has been produced and was shown after the public/parents consultation meetings.

Training – the training of all staff was raised as another area of concern.

A full list of the training undertaken by the staff at Ashley was presented and distributed at the consultation meetings. Details of training are included in Appendix B.

Criteria – it was suggested that the need is for all of the Autistic Spectrum be covered by the school and that this was the recommended approach by NAS review.

The authors of the NAS review have confirmed that their recommendation was to fill in the missing provision for this group of pupils and not replace any other type of provision already in existence.

Capacity – concern was expressed that the school would not have sufficient capacity to cope with the demand for places.

The school will be able to offer 70 places for pupils in the five year groups 11 to 16. The provision at Ashley will add to the existing provision available in the borough for pupils with Social Communication and Autism. It will complete the continuum of provision and compliment the provision offered in Halton's schools, resource bases and special schools.

Post-16 Provision – concern was expressed about the offer of post-16 provision and the impact on Riverside College.

At transition from Key Stage 2 some parents look for 11-19 provision as they believe this provides stability and continuity for their children. Many of the parents of vulnerable children with a diagnosis of ASD and identified social communication needs have indicated that they would want 11-19 school provision.

The most appropriate post-16 provision for any current Ashley pupil will be determined at the annual review of the statement of SEN and will be based on the individual needs of the young people and the place that best meets these needs.

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. If referred to the Adjudicator the proposal and any representations must be forwarded to the school Adjudicator within one week of the end of the two month representation period along with any representations received and not withdrawn. Appendix C outlined the issues the decision –maker needs to consider.

4.2 The decision-maker can decide to:

- Reject the proposals;
- Approve the proposals;
- 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 The reason for the decision must be given whether it is approved or rejected it should also include the factors and criteria for the decision.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Executive Board agreed on 24th January 2013 to set aside £450,000 from the Schools Capital Basic Need budget for 2012/13 and that an additional £50,000 be put aside from any future Education Capital budgets allocated for 2013/14 to address the adaptations that will be required.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The most appropriate provision for any current Ashley pupil will be determined at the annual review of the statement of SEN and will be based on the individual needs of the young people and the place that best meets their needs.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People

The proposal meets the requirement to provide diversity and choice within the Borough and addresses a gap in provision which was identified through the National Autistic Society (NAS) review.

7.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

This additional provision and the extension of the age range ensures good access to a quality provision for pupils thus providing greater employment prospects for these children and young people in future.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

The re-designation of Ashley school will allow for multi-agency professionals working on the site. Health professionals will ensure the health and well-being of pupils are promoted and supported.

7.4 A Safer Halton

Any adaptations to school will be designed to ensure that children, staff and other community users feel safe and secure on site.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal N/A

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 8.1 Failure to address the gap in provision as identified as identified by parents and the NAS review could leave the council exposed to challenge by parents through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). If the gap in provision is not addressed, parents will seek out of borough provision.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 9.1 The re-designation of Ashley School will ensure an inclusive and coherent approach to matching the needs of children and young with ASC locally. The quality of the provision will meet NAS standards and currently Ashley School is judged as a good school by Ofsted. Parents and carers will have a better choice of high quality provision for their children locally.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

- 10.1 A gap in provision has been identified for vulnerable pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and for those with identified Social Communication Needs who have a moderate to high learning ability.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 11.1 Retaining the current designation of Ashley and the current age range was considered this was rejected as it would not meet the gap in provision identified.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

- 12.1 A decision will be required by Executive Board prior to 1st September 2013

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Documents	Place of Inspection	Contact
NAS Report	Rutland House Steve.nyakatawa @halton.gov.uk	Steve Nyakatawa 0151 511 7344
Executive Board Report 18 October 2012	Rutland Hose	Steve Nyakatawa as above
Executive Board Report 24 January 2013	Rutland House	Steve Nyakatawa
Representation responses Phase 1 and Statutory	Rutland House	Ann McIntyre