

DB/EM/LTM

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Dear Parents/Carers, Staff, Governors and other interested parties

Re: Consultation on Building Communities of Specialist Provision for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Lincolnshire

This letter is to inform you about possible changes to enhance the provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Lincolnshire.

You are invited to take part in the consultation process on the proposed strategy for change and related individual school changes. It is important we hear your views.

Consultation begins on 8 January and runs until 14 March 2018. As part of this process there will be a number of school-based and public events planned, to provide more information, the opportunity to share queries and concerns and for people to register their level of support to these proposals.

The proposed changes would potentially affect all pupils with special needs, including those who are not yet part of the education system. It is important that you are aware of what Lincolnshire County Council (the Council) and special school providers are suggesting in their strategy. You can find out more details by going to www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/SENDcommunities. Please make any comments and suggestions you feel should be considered before any final decisions are made.

The Council and all other stakeholders can confidently reassure parents/carers and all concerned parties that, at no point in the implementation of this proposed strategy, will any pupil be expected or forced to change school against their wishes. All opportunities to move to a school closer to home will be on a voluntary basis and transition will only occur as part of an agreed and fully supported process, at a suitable time in the child's education. Transition to a school nearer home would only take place when the special schools are able to meet all needs and have the necessary capacity, facilities and staffing in place.

Reasons for reviewing the current approach and strategy

In March 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that it expected all local authorities to undertake a strategic review of their High Needs Strategy (provision for pupils with SEND) and identify proposals for change. The DfE is particularly concerned that the number of pupils identified as having High Needs has been increasing each year; and that there are fewer pupils with SEND attending mainstream schools. They also stressed the importance of parents playing a role in shaping any proposals.

This follows earlier independent research (Isos Partnership – 2015) which was commissioned by LCC. The findings indicated a need to reshape specialist provision for

the increasing population of pupils with SEND; support for an "all needs" approach to special education; and a need for more collaborative working between specialist and mainstream schools. Parental views gathered in the research included concerns about the impact of out of county placements on pupils and families.

Proposals

The proposed strategy has been developed in collaboration with the Head Teachers of all special schools, Children's Services and Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum. It seeks to improve current educational provision for pupils and their families. Three objectives were agreed to support the new vision for communities of specialist provision for children and young people with SEND in Lincolnshire:

- Lincolnshire pupils with SEND will have access to an integrated and collaborative all needs education system which provides excellent education, health care and support interventions.
- An integrated school system is established where children and young people get the right health care, and education in the right place, at the right time, as close as possible to where they live.
- The integrated school system will provide the foundations for provision without boundaries: where children feel they belong, are respected, hopeful and optimistic about their future.

In order to deliver the proposed strategy, there would need to be some changes to Lincolnshire special schools. At the moment, special schools are designated with meeting specific types of need. The proposed strategy requires all special schools (with the exception of Social, Emotional and Mental Health specialist schools) to be designated to meet all needs. This would ensure that all special school places would be accessible to pupils with SEND. It would also help address the issue of pupils attending a closer school instead of the need to travel significant distances.

Some special schools would need to offer more school places to meet demand now and in the future. There would be a need to invest significant funding to create more places and to improve the condition and suitability of the buildings. Part of the plan includes a proposal for a new special school (Lincoln), and other schools to join together to meet local special educational and disability needs across their existing age range. Satellite sites, co-located with mainstream schools but managed and staffed by special school personnel, would support pupils who may move successfully from special school into mainstream for all or part of their education. These satellite sites would provide additional support for pupils with SEND attending mainstream schools.

Whether those affected are maintained schools or academies, consultation will take place at a local level on a school by school basis, with parents, pupils, staff, governors, trustees and multi academy trusts. You are invited and encouraged to take part and comment on both the overall strategy and the resulting proposed changes to each school that would be affected. Your contribution is extremely valuable and will help shape the future provision for pupils with SEND.

At the end of the public consultation the County Council's Executive, will receive a report in April 2018 with recommendations based upon feedback received during the consultation period. The feedback, views and comments from the consultation will help inform the Executive's decision. If the decision is to proceed with the proposals that

would result in changes to schools, then the strategy would be adopted and legal statutory notices would be published in May 2018 at each of the schools affected.

There would then be a further opportunity of 4 weeks to respond to the proposals. The outcome would then be reported back to the Council's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and Executive in July 2018, before being passed to the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) for a final decision in relation to changes to academies.

Should the strategy and changes be agreed, we hope that work to improve the school buildings and provide the accommodation needed to make the necessary changes would take place over the next 3-5 year period. Work would be carefully phased to minimise any disruption to schools and pupils. More information will be published once a final decision is made and more detail is known.

These proposals have the potential to make a significant, positive change to future provision for pupils with special educational and disability needs across Lincolnshire. Please take time to let us know what you think.

Have your say

You are invited to find out more information about the proposals, where public events are taking place and to feedback by 14th March 2018 by using the following link:

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/SENDcommunities.

Through the website you will also be able to find copies of all documents related to these proposals, how each school/academy might be affected, and a link to a short questionnaire to gather your views. Hard copies are also available on request through your nearest special school or by writing to SEND Special School Project, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL or emailing SENDCommunities@lincolnshire.gov.uk or phoning 01522 552439.

Yours sincerely

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