

APPENDIX A

Dear Parents/ Carers/ Colleagues

As you know, we are currently reviewing our provision for children with generalised learning difficulties. In the past, the children may have been described as having moderate, severe or profound and multiple difficulties.

We think it is important to offer as many children as possible an opportunity to be educated in a mainstream school. This idea is not new. It is included in our Special Educational Needs policy and is in line with national thinking about inclusive education.

Some children will need to receive some, or all, of their education in a special school. In Leicester City we are fortunate to have high quality special schools offering excellent educational opportunities for children with learning difficulties. We want to use this expertise by strengthening links with mainstream and special schools. We must also ensure that special schools are fully equipped to provide excellent facilities and accommodation for all their pupils.

To respond to both of these ideas, we need to make changes to some mainstream schools and some special schools in Leicester City. We understand that change often causes anxiety and we want to provide you with as much information as we can about our plans.

The information here is an outline of our proposal for changes in provision for children with learning difficulties. We would like to hear your views about the plans. With the proposal there is a reply sheet for you to tell us what you think. It would be very helpful if you could return this as soon as possible. As well as the consultation responses, we will be having general meetings in the six special schools in January and February to give you an opportunity to discuss these ideas.

Yours sincerely

Paul Livock
Service Director
(Pupil and Student Support)

INTRODUCTION

In its publication *Excellence for All Schools - Meeting Special Educational Needs*, (1997) the Government clearly set out its direction by stating that:

‘. whilst recognising the paramount importance of meeting the needs of individual children, and the necessity of specialist provision for some, we shall promote the inclusion of children with SEN within mainstream schooling wherever possible.’ (p5)

The Government has also stated that it intends to reduce social exclusion. The DfES distributed the ‘Index for Inclusion’ (Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education) to all schools. Other key initiatives - for example, ‘Preventing Social Exclusion’ (Social Exclusion Unit) and ‘Valuing People’ (Department of Health) were further evidence of a strong Government drive to promote Social Inclusion, nationally.

The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* makes reference to building the capacity of schools and Early Years settings to make provision for pupils with SEN and disabilities.

Leicester City has a tradition of supporting pupils with special educational needs in a variety of settings and through diverse provision. This ranges from mainstream schools along a continuum of support to full-time placement in a special school. Recent Ofsted Inspections have confirmed that the quality of education in Leicester City Special Schools is high. However, there are increasing numbers of parents requesting support for their children in local mainstream schools.

This has resulted in a reduction in the allocation of places in City special schools. This reduction in numbers has already presented funding difficulties for some schools in the current financial year and suggests that the viability of schools with primary-aged pupils will reach a critical level from the next financial year and worsens the year after.

For all of us working with pupils with SEN in Leicester, the challenge now is to achieve greater inclusion whilst protecting the entitlement that all children have, to a quality education. To do this, we must build upon the excellent practice in our special schools and mainstream schools.

Background

In 1998, the City began a review of the provision it was making for pupils with SEN. In August 2000, from this work, the Education Committee approved a policy for Special Educational Needs based on the following aims:

- To ensure high levels of achievement, effective learning, progress and development for all pupils regardless of any special educational need;
- To support Leicester schools in meeting the diversity of needs of all pupils with SEN increasingly within their own communities (“developing inclusive schools”);
- To secure a range of provision appropriate to pupils’ individual needs;
- To facilitate a high level of satisfaction and participation of pupils, parents and carers in determining how pupils’ needs are best met;
- To ensure effective mechanisms which sustain consistent practice across all City schools through a clear and common understanding of the respective responsibilities of schools and the LEA and the agreed procedures which ensure timely identification, assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation of needs, intervention and provision;
- To establish transparent mechanisms which resource schools and ensure all pupils’ needs are appropriately met, wherever possible, without recourse to Statements of Special Educational Needs, and that for all pupils (including those with Statements, resources are used in a transparent and accountable manner;
- To ensure that schools identify and describe how they provide access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, for all pupils;
- To facilitate collaboration in inclusive practices between all city schools; and
- To ensure access to appropriate training and expertise to support the aims and objectives of the LEA’s policy.

These aims set out a vision for the future education of boys and girls with special educational needs in Leicester City. The shape of future provision *must* be a dynamic and evolving structure.

From these aims, an SEN strategy was developed. Many elements of this have either been achieved or are currently underway. For example:

- 1) The mainstream funding formula, which resourced schools directly to make provision for pupils with SEN and laid the basis for revising the Local Management of Special Schools formula.
- 2) Promoting inclusive practice in schools - Leicester City has produced a comprehensive Meeting Individual Needs Document with extensive training and support for its implementation. The DfES and Audit Commission have commended this document.
- 3) Behaviour Support Strategy - The original Behaviour Support Plan was produced in 1998 and a revised plan in 2000. In line with Government requirements this is due for review in 2004.

- 4) Training Programme to support Inclusion: Last year over 200 central courses were run by support services, together with customised support and training in individual schools.
- 5) The development and restructuring of provision for pupils with SEN in the City of Leicester.

This fifth element will involve the development of many workstreams over a period of years and will include the examination and development of provision for pupils with a range of special educational needs such as autism; social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical and sensory needs. This consultation paper puts forward proposals for the first of these workstreams: **the future development of special provision in the City for pupils with Moderate, Severe, and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (MLD, SLD, PMLD).**

Future Developments

The formative consultation document - *'Meeting Individual Needs: Development and Restructuring of Provision for Pupils/Students with Special Educational Needs in the City of Leicester'*, proposed that,

"All primary and secondary schools will provide for a wide range of general learning difficulties, including moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties."

Whilst the ideal long-term goal would be for all schools to be fully inclusive, not **all** mainstream schools will be able to cater for **all** pupils who should have full access to the National Curriculum and appropriate resources and facilities. For example, few schools are fully accessible to pupils with physical disabilities and even with a rolling programme of building improvement; this would take many years to achieve

Schools' resources are often stretched by the need to achieve challenging targets. They may not be best placed to take up the new initiative. To do so successfully, they will require additional resources.

Establishing a network of provision - Schools with Additional Resources (SARs) working in partnership with Special Schools.

Schools with Additional Resources (SARs) are those funded over and above their delegated budgets in order to meet the Special Educational Needs of a wider range of pupils than those normally on roll.

The concept is not new: Schools with Additional Resources (or Enhanced Resource Schools [ERSs]) are established in many Authorities. Locally, Nottingham and Derby, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire all have examples of

SARs/ERSs. Indeed, forms of SAR are already in place in Leicester City. The LEA has audited the Current unit provision in the City and intends to develop the nature and pattern of SARs in the City to ensure strong links with special schools and encourage the development of inclusive pathways.

Wherever possible, SARs would be established in neighbourhood 'pyramids' - linked infant, junior (primary) and secondary schools - so that parents can identify a 'pathway' for their child's educational career, without the uncertainty of transfer at the end of each phase.

The general aim of the SARs will be to meet fully, the Special Educational Needs of statemented pupils whilst working towards the greatest degree of inclusion and social and academic achievement in the primary or secondary curriculum, within mainstream schools.

It will be important for special schools to be included in the development of SARs. Their expertise will be used to contribute to direct pupil support and the training already available to staff in SARs and other mainstream settings.

Funding for each SAR will relate to the number of places bought by the LEA and the 'place factor' designated for each level of Special Educational Need as determined by the Local Management of Special Schools (LMSS) formula. This means simply, that fewer places will be bought in special schools for the following year, - with subsequent effects to individual school budgets.

Falling rolls and decreasing budgets will impact significantly upon at least *four* special schools in the next financial year. This will pose staffing and curriculum problems, which would become serious, unless a solution can be agreed.

However, this also presents an opportunity to develop new and innovative special schools in a way that ensures a continuing and viable pattern of provision.

The new schools would offer state-of-the-art buildings and equipment together with the best practices in the education of MLD/SLD/PMLD pupils. The Authority would consult with students, staff and parents about the features they would want to see in these new schools.

A joint Health and Education Working group involving both Primary Care Trusts and representatives from the City, County and Rutland Education departments is addressing the current concerns regarding school nurse support. This group will establish appropriate nursing cover for all of the schools in the area – including the new schools.

The location of the schools will be dependent partly upon the success of the City's bid for over £150 million to develop secondary education in the City.

Schools could either be redeveloped on existing sites or on new sites in the City. In either case, every opportunity will be taken to ensure that the skilled and experienced staff working in the present schools would be retained to establish the new schools.

The new schools would develop close working relationships with SAR 'pyramids' to provide advice, support and inclusion opportunities on a collaborative basis.

Currently, there are 6 schools making provision for pupils with MLD, SLD and PMLD:

Ellesmere College (11-19)
Emily Fortey (5-19)
Nether Hall (5-19)
Oaklands (5-11)
Piper Way (5-11)
Western Park (5-19)

Proposal: Primary Provision (7-11)

Given the current numbers of primary age pupils in special schools, the likelihood of a continuing decrease in County numbers, *plus* a reduction arising from the establishment of SARs, it was considered realistic to propose the development of **one generic primary special school - offering provision to 125 children with moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, for Key Stage 2 only.**

It was agreed by the professional groups consulted, that younger Foundation/Key Stage 1 (F/KS1) pupils could be provided for within mainstream settings, including SARs, with appropriate support. This was also the view of the special school representatives. It was noted that there were limited numbers of pupils with high dependency needs; that many F/KS1 children are already supported in mainstream; and therefore, the overall number of Key Stage 2 pupils would not require more than could be provided by a single special school.

Proposal: Secondary Provision (11-19)

In the case of the secondary MLD/SLD/PMLD pupils, the same reduction in overall numbers is projected. However at the secondary stage, it is often considered advisable to create teaching groups with similar cognitive abilities.

Therefore, **two** proposals were considered:

Secondary Proposal One:

Create two new KS 3/4 (11-19) secondary schools, each of an approximate

capacity of 175, with one school making greater specialist provision for pupils with higher dependency needs.

Secondary Proposal Two:

Create one KS 3/4 (11-19) *generic* special school with a capacity of 350 (possibly across two sites).

In the case of both proposals, it is expected that there will be similar purpose-built facilities and that the school/s will develop close partnerships with mainstream secondary schools and with the FE sector.

Alternative proposals were considered including amalgamating the existing establishments into four schools: one primary and one secondary MLD, one primary and one secondary SLD. However, this was not considered a viable option as the current and projected pupil numbers would not sustain 4 viable schools in the longer term.

In addition, a proposal to realign the current pattern into four schools 2x7-14, 2x14-19 was eventually discounted at Project Board, as the City has no similar pattern of mainstream provision to which the new schools could correspond.

Timescale

In order to avoid a situation where one or more schools falls into financial difficulties, it is important that the formal processes are completed within the next year to permit the establishment of shadow governing bodies and the reassignment of staff to the new schools:

- This consultation will end on March 22 2004. There will be opportunities for staff, parents and governors to send in their views and/or to discuss these proposals with officers. (The form at the end of this document can be used if you wish).
- Following this consultation, Councillors will decide whether to take the proposals further. Should they decide to do so, and then there will be a further, *formal* consultation process.
- A *formal* consultation must take place within a set timescale. This would be completed during the Summer Term 2004.
- The results of this further consultation would be taken to the School Organisation Committee in the Autumn Term 2004. It would be for this Committee (SOC) to decide if schools should be closed and new ones opened.
- If SOC agrees, arrangements would then be made to appoint 'shadow' governing bodies for the new schools. Head teachers and staff would be appointed as 'designates', working in their current schools. Building work would begin around this time.
- The new schools would open in the Autumn 2005 but if buildings were not completed, children and staff would remain in the existing school buildings

until their new schools were ready.

RESPONSE SHEET

Please use this sheet to express your views about key elements of the proposals described in the LEA's Consultation Document about future arrangements for children with generalised learning difficulties.

Please return to:- Jane Douglas, PA to Service Director, Student & Pupil Support, Leicester City Council, Education & Lifelong Learning, Marlborough House, 38 Welford Road, Leicester, LE2 7AA

Please tick one box next to each proposal to indicate your Agreement or Disagreement.

Please add any comments in the spaces provided.

1. General arrangements

A continuum of provision - comprising mainstream schools (including those with additional resources - SARS) and new special schools - will provide for pupils with generalised learning difficulties

Agree

Disagree

Comment

PRIMARY

2. Foundation and Key Stage 1

A range of mainstream settings including dedicated SARS will provide for pupils at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Agree

Disagree

Comment

3. Key Stage 2

The creation of one generic primary special school to offer provision to 125 children at Key Stage 2 (7-11 years)

Agree

Disagree

Comment

SECONDARY

You are asked to consider two options for students aged 11 and over. These are described in 4 and 5 below.

NB Both proposals envisage the new schools developing close partnerships with the Further Education sector.

If you agree to 4 (Option A), please also answer question 6.

4. Option A

The creation of two new Key Stage 3/4 (11-19 years) special schools - each to provide capacity of approximately 175 places.

Agree

Disagree

Comment

5. Option B

The creation of one generic Key Stage 3/4 (11-19) special school to provide 350 places - possibly across two sites.

Agree

Disagree

Comment

6. Supplementary Q (if you agree to Option A in 4 above)

One of the two secondary special schools will make special provision for pupils/students with higher dependency needs.

Agree

Disagree

Comment

7. ANY OTHER COMMENT: