

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Special Educational Needs Subgroup

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2010

Present:

Councillor Carmody – In the Chair
Councillors Di Mauro, Judge and Shaw
Mrs T Sheikh

Councillor S Newman – Executive Member for Children's Services

Apologies:

Councillors Cox and Keller.

CYP/SEN/10/04 Minutes

Decision:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2010.

CYP/SEN/10/05 Plans for the New Buildings

The Building Schools for the Future and Academies Programme Director provided the Subgroup with a display of the plans and artists impressions of some of the new buildings and facilities. The display included:

- The site plan and artists impression of the Grange School building, along with some progress photographs;
- The site plan and the floor plan of the new extension of Webster Primary School, with progress photographs;
- The site plan, artist's impression and progress photos of the new build extension of Newall Green High School;
- The site plan, artist's impression and progress photographs of the new facilities at Lancasterian School.

The Programme Director gave the Subgroup an update on the progress to the new buildings and facilities. None of them had been affected by the curtailing of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, and all were going ahead according to plan.

Abraham Moss High School, Newall Green High School and St Peter's Roman Catholic High School are the three mainstream secondary schools which will have facilities for speech, language and communication (SLC) needs and for physical disabilities. The six mainstream primary schools that will have facilities for SLC needs are Rackhouse, Barlow Hall, Webster, St James', St Willibrord's and Pikefold Primaries Schools. Three primary schools, Crossacres, Old Moat and Pikefold, will have facilities for physical disabilities. In Pikefold and Old Moat Primary Schools,

these facilities are being built as part of complete rebuilds of the schools and so will take longer.

The Programme Director explained that the new building of Grange School is being built on the site of the old building of Cedar Mount High School. The plans on display included the outdoor environment and discrete play areas. The residential unit was also in the plan, which will have 10 places for children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and ten short break places.

The plans for the new facilities at Webster Primary School were typical of those that are being built in the six primary schools which will have resourced provision for SLC needs. The space is approximately 100 square metres, the equivalent of two classrooms, and will include a speech therapy room and a social room. In most of the primary schools the extra space will be built as an extension, although in some the extension will house classrooms and the resourced provision will be created within the existing building.

The artist's impression showed the new frontage of Newall Green High School. The extension will be single storey, but will have the capacity to support a second storey in the future. The plans are typical of the new facilities in the high schools. The Executive Member for Children's Services told the Subgroup that the facilities were not going to be segregated units, and the children with SEN will be able to access the whole school.

A member asked if there would be the capacity to provide temporary respite from the classroom for children with SEN. The Programme Director explained that the plans were designed with the intention that children with SEN access as much mainstream education as possible. The Head of Education Services – Inclusion emphasised that the approach would be flexible. A member told the Subgroup that the impact on young people of moving from old to new buildings could not be underestimated. The Head of Education Services agreed, citing the significant reduction in behavioural incidents at the Castlefield Campus since it opened in January as an example.

The Subgroup discussed the residential facilities at Grange School. The Head of Education Services explained there was a lack of full time residential places within Manchester and it was currently necessary to seek the provision outside the city, which costs more and can mean families have far to travel. The intention is for the unit to be for young people aged up to 19. The Chair asked how the places would be allocated, given that they were likely to be popular. The Head of Education Services agreed that there would need to be clear criteria in place, and these are being developed. There would be residential accommodation for one member of staff per unit of five children.

The Subgroup discussed the plans for the sports hall at Grange School. The hall will be separate from the main school building and open for use by Cedar Mount High School and the wider community. The Subgroup sought reassurance that this wider use would not put the children with SEN at any risk. The Programme Director explained it will not conflict with the use by Grange School at all. The sports hall will be managed by Grange School, so it will also manage the safeguarding issues.

Decision:

To note the plans for the new buildings and facilities.

CYP/SEN/10/06 Update on the Implementation of Proposals

The Head of Education Services submitted a report which provided an update on progress on implementing the proposals relating to Ewing, Grange and Lancasterian Schools and the development of specialist resourced provision in mainstream schools.

A member noted that one of the primary schools that would have specialist resourced provision was Roman Catholic and asked whether this would affect the admission of non-Catholic children with SEN. The Head of Education Services explained that the Catholic admissions process allows and encourages intake of children from outside the faith and the local authority will be able to place children in the schools with resourced provision.

The Council's legal team had formalised agreements with the resourced schools which cover the timeframe for when the changes will happen and the funding for staff.

A member reminded the Subgroup that the report on progress that had been discussed at the previous meeting had said the parents of three pupils and Ewing School had not responded to attempts at contact and asked if any progress had since been made. The Head of Education Services said that it was too soon in the current term for this to have been followed up yet.

The Head of Education Services informed the Subgroup that Children's Services had commissioned Dr Caroline Bond, an Educational Psychologist at the University of Manchester, to conduct a piece of research on the transition, in which the children would be monitored over an extended period of time. The university had indicated that they thought it would be a significant piece of work, as currently there were few longitudinal studies similar to this. She offered to bring the specification of the research to the Subgroup once it had been finalised, which the Subgroup agreed. The Executive Member for Children's Services said that the piece of research would not simply give information on the impact of the transition, but may influence how the children being monitored are supported in the future.

Decision:

To add the specification of the piece of research Dr Caroline Bond has been commissioned to undertake on the transition of children to the work programme of the Subgroup.

[Councillor Shaw declared a personal interest in this item as a governor of Ewing School]

CYP/SEN/10/07 Implementation Plan for Ewing School

The Head of Education Services submitted the implementation plan for Ewing School. A member declared a personal interest as a member of the governing body of Ewing School. The Chair asked him to give the Subgroup an idea of the current feelings of the governing body. He explained that they had not yet met in the current academic year, but that they previously been subdued.

The review of staff was complete and all staff had indicated what they wanted to do following the closure of the school. Many were keen to move to the schools with resourced provision. A significant proportion are keen to move to Grange School.

The Head of Education Services explained that the task at hand now was to determine the timeline for the transition. Ewing School will officially close at the end of the 2011/12 academic year, which is ample time to formulate a detailed transitional move programme. The Executive Member for Children's Services added that the new facilities would be ready in most of the schools in advance of the closure of Ewing School. Only the schools that were being completely rebuilt as part of the building schools for the future programme would take longer.

Decision:

To note the report.

[Councillor Shaw declared a personal interest in this item as a governor of Ewing School]

CYP/SEN/10/08 Work Programme

The Subgroup considered the work programme. Members discussed which schools to visit and when. The Subgroup decided to replace the November meeting with a visit Webster Primary School and Barlow Hall Primary School. The facilities for the specialist resourced provision in these schools were scheduled for completion by October 2010.

The Subgroup requested that the Head of Education Services disseminate some information on the changes that had taken place in legislation and policy about SEN prior to the November visits.

Decision:

1. To visit Webster Primary School in Hulme and Barlow Hall Primary School in Chorlton in place of the November meeting of the Subgroup.
2. To request the Head of Education Services disseminate information on the changes in legislation and policy about SEN prior to the November visits.