



Open Report on behalf of Martin Smith, Assistant Director – Children’s Education

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools’ Forum
Date:	06 October 2022
Subject:	Alternative Provision Arrangements

Summary:

A summary of the Alternative Provision (AP) arrangements in Lincolnshire 2021/22

Recommendation(s):

The Schools’ Forum is invited to note and comment on the contents of the report and address any questions to the officers in attendance.

1. Background

Since the launch of the ‘Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy in 2017, the Local Authority has delivered its alternative provision (AP) through its commissioned arrangements at Springwell Academy and Build a Future (BaF). The commissioned alternative provision enables the Local Authority to deliver its duty to provide education six days after a permanent exclusion and also provide provision for educational settings as part of proactive preventative support via the Lincolnshire’s Ladder of Behavioural Intervention.

The Local Authority also has commissioning arrangements at Pilgrim Hospital School. This alternative provision provides short term placements for a pupil’s medical condition, which requires a higher level of support than their school can provide through reasonable adjustments.

Alternative Provision

The Local Authority commissions 252 places within Springwell Academy. This is across four purpose-built centres that are situated within the four localities. Springwell Grantham is located on New Beacon Road, Springwell Alternative Lincoln, on Macaulay Drive, the Mablethorpe building is a refurbishment of the old Monk's Dyke Tennyson site and Spalding was formerly the South Holland Post 16 Centre. These settings provide a relational, nurturing, and caring educational environment with staff that have expertise in supporting and teaching pupils with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

Due to the reduced rate of permanent exclusion, in 2021 the Local Authority was able to utilise 18 of the 252 commissioned places at Springwell as Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) special school places for primary aged children. These places have been utilised to meet the needs of pupils with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans that were waiting for an SEMH special school place. This has avoided the need to access costly out of county or independent settings for these pupils.

The Local Authority commissions most of its secondary alternative provision places at Build a Future. This Key Stage 4 (KS4) (13-16 years olds) provision has been in place since autumn 2018 for pupils permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion. Like Springwell, Build a Future is an integral part of the Ladder. The setting offers a guaranteed 75 pupil places per annum under a block contract payment, with scope for 50 additional pupil places spot purchased at the point of need. Lincolnshire County Council therefore has scope to place a maximum of 125 KS4 pupils at Build a Future each year via this commissioned route. The service has been operating out of two centres, Hubbert's Bridge (covering the South) and West Ashby (the North). The owner, Keys, has committed to relocating from Hubbert's Bridge into higher quality premises. Therefore, this academic year (2022/23) will see all referrals going to the West Ashby while Keys are awaiting authorisation from the Department of Education (DfE) to open the new site at Elm Grange.

In addition to the Local Authority's commissioned arrangements there are a range of legally compliant alternative provision placements in Lincolnshire that, while not contracted by the Local Authority, are available for mainstream headteachers to access independently should they wish to make their own arrangements rather than follow the Ladder.

The Local Authority commissions 80 places at the Pilgrim Hospital School. This alternative provision provides short term placements for a pupil's medical condition, which requires a higher level of support than their school can provide through reasonable adjustments.

The Ladder

Lincolnshire's Ladder of Behavioural Intervention was introduced to provide educational settings with proactive support that enables mainstream settings to meet pupil's SEMH needs. The Ladder provides steps and support to ensure early intervention is proactively implemented, avoiding escalating needs that then subsequently require suspension or permanent exclusion. The Ladder continues to be embedded across the County.

The Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT) continue to be the Local Authority's key involvement overseeing the Ladder and maintaining high quality application of the process, alongside headteachers. They are also responsible for providing training, advice, information and casework support to educational settings and families in relation to suspension and fixed term exclusions.

The Ladder continues to show positive impact within Lincolnshire. The take up of places via the Ladder is showing a return to pre-pandemic numbers appearing to indicate schools returning confidence in the intervention offer:

16 Week Intervention Placements				
	Foundation & KS1	KS2	KS3	Total
17/18	14	24	27	65
18/19	20	32	24	76
19/20	25	23	11	59
20/21	17	17	6	40
21/22	13	29	16	58

While at times a small number of pupils will require more specialist support and provision, the positive outcomes for children as a result of accessing inclusive education are well documented, leading to increased social, academic, employment and life opportunities. Enabling pupils to return and remain in mainstream provision results in their improved and increased positive achievements and outcomes. There is clear evidence that the Ladder, and within this the ability of our alternative provision partners to deliver interventions that make a difference, is not merely delaying the inevitable of permanent exclusion. With 90% of pupils with no permanent exclusion a year after intervention, this is slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels and extremely positive.

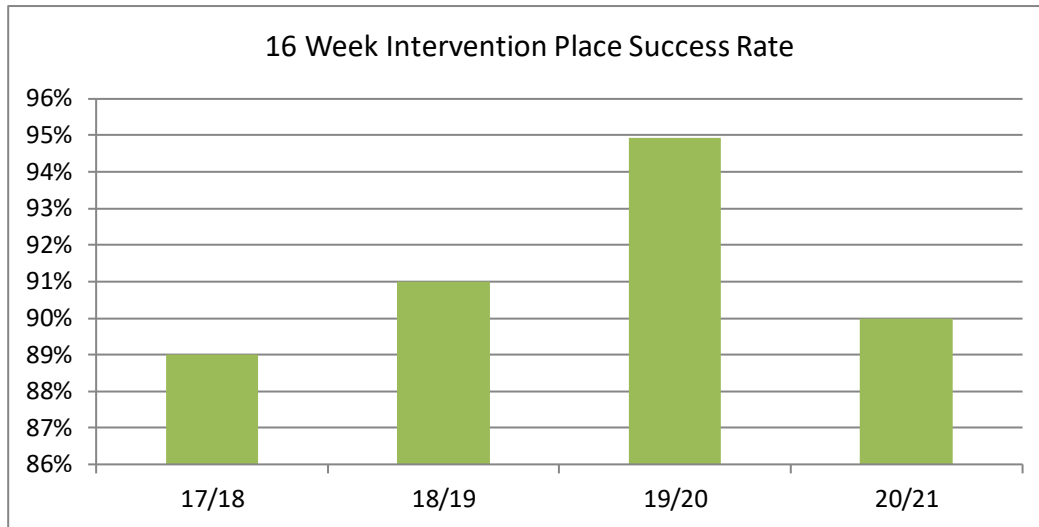
However, this drops significantly, to less than half, when considered alongside the proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion and no transition to a specialist setting a year after intervention placement.

Lincolnshire, as per the national picture, is seeing an increase in the number of children educated in special rather than mainstream schools. However, concerningly, we are seeing a significant discrepancy in relation to children with SEMH needs. The England average sees 0.2% more pupils with SEMH needs in mainstream primary schools and 5.5% more in mainstream secondary schools than Lincolnshire. There is a significant 10.8% higher percentage of pupils in Lincolnshire with SEMH needs in special schools, which is more than double the England average. This is the first time, since the introduction of the SEND reforms, that the highest primary need in Lincolnshire maintained special schools is defined as SEMH; nationally, it ranks third behind Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Specific Learning Difficulty. SEMH as the primary need ranks second in independent sector placements in Lincolnshire behind Autistic Spectrum Disorder (38% v 46%). This is placing unsustainable pressure on our specialist settings and potentially reducing the opportunity for positive achievements and outcomes for these children and young people.

A Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Strategy is being developed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to set out our aims and strategic direction over the next three years to support this concerning trend and its potential negative impact on our children and young people. This will sit alongside Lincolnshire's Transformation work and the High Needs Strategy.

Proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion a year after intervention placement:

16 Week Intervention Place Success Rate	
17/18	89%
18/19	91%
19/20	95%
20/21	90%



Proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion and no transition to specialist setting a year after intervention placement:

16 Week Intervention Place Success Rate	
17/18	68%
18/19	67%
19/20	63%
20/21	43%

	Accepted referrals	PX outcome	Special outcome
17/18	65	7	14
18/19	76	7	18
19/20	59	3	19
20/21	40	4	19

While the Ladder continues to demonstrate positive impact, it is important that strategically the key steps within the Ladder are retained. However, as with any intervention or process it is equally important to ensure it continues to evolve so that it remains **up to date and relevant**.

For the start of the new academic year (2022/23) the DfE has published two new documents that underpin the Ladder:

The Ladder is underpinned by current statutory guidance on permanent exclusion and suspensions (*Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies*

and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England) and its companion piece on behaviour (*Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff*). These updated documents were published in July 2022 for adherence to from the start of the new academic year. The Ladder has therefore been updated accordingly to remain in line with the current legislation.

Lincolnshire’s Transformation work and the High Needs Strategy have been embedded within the steps of the Ladder with reference to the support that educational settings can and should be accessing via Ask SALL (SEND Advice Line Lincolnshire), the Inclusion Toolkit and Valuing (V)SEND assessment tool. Lincolnshire’s Early Help offer has also been referenced and the value of early assessment to identify holistic needs and the steps needed to meet these needs and prevent needs escalating and deteriorating.

The Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) contract was concluding, and the service has been retendered from September 2022. The specification within the new contract continues to focus on the role BOSS plays within the Ladder and support for children and young people at risk of exclusion. However, there is an additional key focus on supporting mainstream settings with early identification, intervention, and support through a robust universal training offer. Schools can access this directly from BOSS. It will be expected that this offer has been accessed, implemented, and embedded within the school prior to any referrals for direct targeted intervention. There is also a focus on BOSS working closely with partners within robust multi-agency working to maximise positive impact. The involvement of BOSS will further embed the supported reintegration for pupils back into their mainstream setting. Working with the PRT and the alternative provision provider to maximise the setting’s ability to meet the pupils needs and therefore provide improved opportunities, achievements and outcomes for the pupil going forward.

The fee for intervention placement continues to be adjusted every year in line with AWPU increases.

Exclusions and Suspensions

The **national picture** is via data that is available on suspensions and permanent exclusions within the 2020/21 academic year across state-funded schools in England.

The rate of exclusions is the number of permanent exclusions as a proportion of the overall school population in the 2020/21 academic year. The rate of suspensions is the number of suspensions as a proportion of the overall school population in the 2020/21 academic year.

This sees Lincolnshire higher than the national and East Midlands picture in relation to permanent exclusions, while lower in relation to suspensions. This was a year that lockdown occurred within.

	Rate of Exclusions	Rate of Suspensions
National	0.05	4.25
East Midlands	0.05	4.40

Lincolnshire	0.07	3.94
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As we have progressed out of lockdown, in 2021/22, as the first year schools have been open all year, we are able to consider the **local data** In Lincolnshire more fully. While also appreciating the impact of the pandemic on pupils and their education and development.

It is extremely positive to see that permanent exclusions in total are lower than they were in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Testimony to the hard work and commitment by all involved. When breaking this data down, it is extremely positive to see that permanent exclusions in Primary have remained very low with a significant decrease from 2017/18 and continued decline from 2018/19. Secondary have remained similar to the number of pupils in 2018/19, which is an increase from 2017/18.

Permanent Exclusion Comparison - School Type					
	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Primary	26	16	7	10	11
Secondary	93	105	55	71	102
Special	0	2	1	0	1
Total	119	123	63	81	114

However, the data around suspensions is concerning in 2021/22. This sees a dramatic increase from pre-lockdown years and clearly an area of consideration as we move into the new academic year.

No. Suspensions per Academic Year	
17/18	5089
18/19	5308
19/20	4002
20/21	3198
21/22	7543

2021/22 Suspensions by Term	
Term 1	907
Term 2	1347
Term 3	1061
Term 4	1302
Term 5	1361
Term 6	1565

Highest reasons 3 Reasons for Suspension			
2017/18	1.	<i>Other</i>	26%
	2.	<i>Persistent disruptive behaviour</i>	19%
	3.	<i>Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult</i>	18%
2018/19	1.	Other	25%
	2.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	22%
	3.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	18%
2019/20	1.	<i>Other</i>	28%
	2.	<i>Persistent disruptive behaviour</i>	19%
	3.	<i>Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult</i>	19%
2020/21*	1.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	40%
	2.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	27%
	3.	Physical assault against a Pupil	20%
2021/22	1.	<i>Persistent disruptive behaviour</i>	49%
	2.	<i>Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult</i>	25%
	3.	<i>Physical assault against a Pupil</i>	17%

* New Category reasons added in 20/21 and up to three reasons could be selected per Suspension

A suspension may be used to provide a clear signal of what is unacceptable behaviour as part of the school's behaviour policy and show a pupil that their current behaviour is putting them at risk of permanent exclusion. However, where suspensions are becoming a regular occurrence for a pupil there should be consideration as to whether suspension alone is an effective sanction for the pupil and rather, what additional strategies need to be put in place to address behaviour and the underlying factors that are causing the behaviour.

With nearly half of suspensions in 2021/22 for persistent disruptive behaviour this will need to be an area of development and focus in the coming academic year. While the take up of places via the Ladder is showing a return to pre-pandemic numbers, this valuable resource is available, alongside the new universal offer from BOSS, to support schools. To ensure the maximum positive impact of accessing alternative provision in Lincolnshire, the Local Authority is completing a review that will identify existing successful inclusive support and practices and inform how our alternative provision can best be developed to enable schools to remove barriers and improve targeted SEMH support and inclusion for our children and young people.

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

In September 2021, the EBSA Pathway was launched to provide schools and other stakeholders with clarity about how to respond to the challenge of pupils presenting with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). When attendance is compromised because of EBSA, or any medical issue, there is a statutory duty for both school and Local Authority to deliver education. The Pathway provides clarity around steps to be taken and in relation to roles and responsibilities; including what schools can expect of the LA and vice versa.

Without accurate early identification of needs, mitigation of school stressors and effective interventions, the cycle of EBSA can quickly become self-perpetuating. The Pathway focuses on facilitating a 'step-change' in how pupils are supported with their mental health and wellbeing when that drives school avoidance. It incorporates the use of the ATTEND Framework as a tool to identify the underlying reasons for absence, drawing up a Pastoral Support Plan that is then kept under regular review.

In November 2021, the EBSA casework team was formed to provide consultation, support, training and advice to education settings. The team has delivered training to school staff, across all phases of education, and to a range of children's workforce teams both within the council and external agencies. The training is aimed at increasing the skills and knowledge of all practitioners working with children and young people who may have EBSA so that there is a strong and consistent response to their needs. The casework team is collaborating with the SEND Advice line workers (Ask SALL) and they have jointly facilitated 'huddles' where schools can seek advice and guidance to 'problem solve' where they have students who require support due to EBSA.

Since the implementation of the Pathway, 171 young people have been referred to the Medical Support Panel. 67% have been supported to remain in their mainstream school. This includes comprehensive advice and recommended actions to settings and follow-up case consultation. The Pathway will continue to be reviewed and evaluated over the coming academic year to support its development.

SEND / AP Green Paper

On 29th March 2022, the Government published the SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time, a consultation on the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision system in England. The consultation set out proposed reforms to the SEND and alternative provision system that seek to address three key challenges:

- poor outcomes for children and young people with SEN or in alternative provision
- navigating the SEND system and alternative provision is not a positive experience for children, young people, and their families and;
- despite unprecedented investment, the system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families.

The consultation ended on 22nd July 2022.

The work and development that the Local Authority completes and takes forward will sit alongside the Governments plans within the SEND / AP green paper and be reviewed as the green paper develops into updated legislation and guidance.

Conclusion

Lincolnshire continues to be committed to improving outcomes for children and young people through the offer, access and availability of high quality support and provision. Lincolnshire's alternative provision arrangements appear to be appropriate and robust with a review taking place to ensure the provision continues to develop to meet the changing landscape and effectively and efficiently provide excellent provision and practice.

The Ladder continues to show positive impact as we adjust post pandemic, with the Local Authority leading on the co-production of an SEMH Strategy to support pupils to access fully inclusive education.

The EBSA Pathway has seen a positive start during 2021/22 and this will continue to be reviewed and evaluated over the coming academic year to support its development.

The Pupil Reintegration Team are providing robust support to settings around exclusions and suspensions, and this will continue to be developed to maximise positive impact. When linked with wider support Teams, including the newly re-tendered BOSS contact, they will continue to support schools to ensure exclusions are only taken when absolutely necessary and as a last resort. Enabling schools and the Local Authority to continue to improve overall exclusions data and pupil's access to an appropriate education and improved outcomes.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The report provides information and an update relating to the alternative provision in Lincolnshire in 2021/22. The report does not relate to any decision or proposal.

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	None

7. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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