



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Lincolnshire Schools' Forum</b>
Date:	<b>20 April 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy: Update</b>

**Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Schools' Forum with an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

The report summarises the progress made in year 4 of strategic implementation, within the Capital Build Programme and in all supporting system areas.

**Recommendation(s):**

Schools' Forum is required to:

1. Review and comment on the content of this report and progress made in Year 4 of implementation.
2. Agree receipt of an update on Year 5 of implementation in April 2024.

**1. Background**

The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy was developed in response to the Department for Education (DfE) requirement of all Local Authorities (LA) to review provision for pupils with SEND in order to ensure that there are sufficient good school places which meet the changing needs of pupils with SEND. The review required local authorities to work in close collaboration with special schools and parent/carers groups to co-produce a strategic plan which delivers sustainable, good quality provision to meet current and future needs.

In November 2018, the Executive granted approval to implement the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy. Implementation commenced in January 2019 with the final school changes being made by Spring 2025.

The strategy is making significant changes to the existing special education provision, creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils can attend their nearest special school, confident that their education and health needs can be fully met. The allocated capital investment will improve premises and facilities, enabling each school to offer places to pupils from within their local communities with a wider range of needs.

All special schools have committed to making significant changes to the type of need catered for and expansion where this has been identified and these are outlined in the strategy. All fourteen special schools will be able to meet 'all complex needs' once fully implemented.

The SEND Education Partnership has oversight of strategic implementation to ensure equity of provision and accountability and fairness within the programme.

## **2. Programme Update**

### **2.1 Capital Programme**

The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy commenced implementation in 2019 and will be completed by Spring 2025. This is a slight delay from the original completion date of late 2024 due to design and procurement challenges on three individual schemes within the programme; these issues have now been addressed and the timeline amended. (See Appendix A).

Implementation is well underway with a number of capital schemes complete and supporting operating systems in place. Governance is well established with budget and progress reviews taking place monthly and reporting to members of the Corporate Leadership Team and Portfolio Holder on a bimonthly basis.

### **2.2 Progress Overview**

The key milestones for the capital programme met in this reporting period are:

- Official Opening for Boston Endeavour Academy
- Official Opening for Bourne Willoughby Academy
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Spilsby The Eresby School, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Louth St Bernard's School, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Merger of Spalding Priory and Garth Schools to form Tulip Academy
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Tulip Academy – Waterside Campus, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Completion of new school - Lincoln St Christopher's Primary School.
- Construction commenced Lincolnshire St Christopher's Secondary School.
- Construction commenced of rebuild at Horncastle St Lawrence School.

- Self-delivery project including remodelling and new hydrotherapy pool for The Sandon School Grantham and agreement to develop a solution for site constraint at Ambergate/Sandon to include Bluecoat Meres Upper school site.
- Feasibility and design process commenced for Lincoln St Francis School and Gosberton House Academy (delayed due to procurement challenges).

For images of the completed and live capital schemes, a pictorial presentation will be shared during Schools' Forum.

### **2.3 Risk Summary**

The programme is subject to on-going risks around supply chain and inflationary pressures; in part related to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and Brexit, but also linked to the conflict in Ukraine and the rising inflationary rate which are impacting on an industry-wide basis.

The economic climate has been severely impacted by the following challenges, which have subsequently impacted the delivery and cost of the SEND Capital Programme.

- Inflation running at a record high since the 1970's.
- Labour cost increases
- National insurance rise
- Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Stopping of the use of cherry diesel – Increased price of plant usage and fuel associated
- Wholesale utilities increase – Increasing the production costs of materials.
- Fuel prices increases – increasing production and transportation costs.
- Loss of labour resource following the impacts of COVID and Brexit
- Brexit implications - affecting material imports from the EU plus a shortage of lorry drivers affecting the transportation of goods.

Corporate Property continue to monitor inflationary rises within the construction industry and provide Children's Services with regular reports on the impact this is having on the special school's capital programme. The cost of construction for 'All Work' rose 11.2% in December 2022 compared to one year prior, according to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Whilst it is reassuring to note that the rate of inflation is reducing, it is important to reinforce that this reduction is compared against the steep rates of inflation that were evidenced in 2021, which were unprecedented, so the base rate for comparison in 2021 was already significant. The month on month change from December 2022 – November 2022 was a decrease of 0.8%.

At the last update to Schools' Forum, the programme budget had been £87.1m, to reflect the requirements of the programme. The increased risks from the global economic environment for remaining schemes and challenges facing individual schemes due to their building conditions, an emerging need to improve transport access, and provision of outside learning areas, the programme budget has increased to £101.8m. This increase in

budget has been funded by the DfE High Needs Provision capital allocation awarded for the period 2022-24 (£16.8m).

Overall, inflation caused by economic and market conditions are anticipated to see the SEND programme costs increase by £11.8m overall, which is significant (including schemes in contract and future schemes). The programmes ambitions however need to be fulfilled and delaying future schemes would see revenue and capital costs increase further. The DfE capital allocations to 2024 will provide sufficient funding to fully implement the programme/strategy.

It is important to note the complexity and magnitude of this programme and appreciate the aspirations of Lincolnshire County Council and its commitment to such a transformational scheme. Embarking on a capital programme which seeks to enhance and improve thirteen school sites over five years whilst transforming the special school system to add much needed capacity, eradicate excessive journeys and reduce unnecessary out of county placements is ambitious and trail-blazing. Delivery a capital programme of this magnitude during a climate of a global pandemic, withdrawal from the European Union, conflict in Ukraine and inflation at its highest level in almost 50 years has proved to be exceptionally challenging but the programme remains on track and funding to address the inflationary impact has been secured.

## **2.4 Progress by Scheme**

### **Boston Endeavour Academy**

Boston Endeavour Academy was the first all complex needs special school to open as part of this programme having been officially handed over to the Community Inclusive Trust and welcoming its first pupils on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

Boston Endeavour Academy was officially opened by Cllr Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022; an event which was attended by many local dignitaries including Mr Matthew Warman, MP for Boston and Skegness. Those who attended this event were given a tour of the school, accompanied by pupils and a Ghostbuster, who also enjoyed the celebration.

This new school is now accommodating 126 pupils as part of its phased increase, with September 2023 seeing the school move to capacity of 142.

The new school provides sixteen classrooms, specialist teaching spaces including science, technology, ICT and art, and a hall. The school also benefits from a hydrotherapy pool, sensory and soft playrooms and dedicated therapy spaces. Externally, there are hard and soft surfaced play areas and sensory, horticulture and wildlife areas and a sensory courtyard which is enjoyed by staff and pupils throughout the school day.

### **The Willoughby Academy, Bourne**

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the Priory Trust took place on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

The new block was officially opened by Cllr Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022; an event which was attended by many local dignitaries, members of the local community, school staff and governors, parent/carers and pupils.

Due to the capital investment programme, the capacity of this school has increased from 80 to 135, creating an additional fifty-five places so far. The number of places commissioned by the Council will increase to a minimum of 148 by September 2023, as part of the agreed phased increase.

The new build accommodation block provides six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small group spaces and hygiene facilities. Remodelling work to the existing school has provided additional therapy spaces and a medical inspection room to ensure the school can offer, in conjunction with health providers, a robust health offer to all children and young people with SEND in the local area.

### **The Eresby School, Spilsby**

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the David Ross Education Trust took place on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Phased increase of the additional sixteen places is taking place during the 2022/23 academic year.

The new build accommodation block provides improved facilities including five classrooms, hall, ICT and science spaces as well as small group rooms, hygiene facilities and staff and meeting spaces. The remodelling work to the existing school has provided a design/technology and art room, physiotherapy space, visiting professional/therapy space, parents' room, a hygiene suite, a disabled WC and staff/administration spaces.

A formal opening is planned for May 2023, and this will be facilitated jointly by the Council and the Academy Trust; this is later than initially planned due to minor defects requiring resolution after handover.

### **St Bernards School Louth**

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation Trust took place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Officers have agreed with the Academy Trust the timeline for increased capacity, with the additional twelve places to be made available during the 2022/23 academic year.

The new block and remodelling will provide enhanced facilities including six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small group spaces, therapy and hygiene facilities.

A formal opening is planned for June 2023 and this will be facilitated jointly by the Council and the Academy Trust.

### **Tulip Academy, Spalding**

In line with the strategy, The Priory School and The Garth School successfully merged to become Tulip Academy on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. All construction work at the Springview Campus was completed in 2021, as a self-delivery scheme, and construction work (the Council scheme) is now complete at the Waterside Campus, with handover arranged for early April 2023.

The Waterside Campus will now be subject to further development as part of the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme and when complete, Tulip Academy will have capacity to meet the needs of a minimum of 202 pupils.

A formal opening for the new block is planned for July 2023 and this will be facilitated jointly by the Council and the Academy Trust.

### **Lincoln St Christopher's School**

Construction of the new primary school on Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln is now complete, with handover taking place on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023. This scheme has been completed 2 months ahead of schedule. The primary school will be able to accommodate a minimum of 130 pupils and has high-quality, state of the art facilities including a hydrotherapy pool.

A formal opening for the new school is planned for July 2023.

Enabling works at the secondary site are complete with main works commencing in May 2023. In order to ensure the existing site can continue to offer an education to pupils during the construction period, some Key Stage 2/3 pupils will temporarily relocate to the primary site, leaving a maximum of eighty pupils at the current site so intrusive building work can be completed safely.

Once all works are completed St Christopher's School will be able to accommodate 333 pupils increasing Lincoln City and surrounding area's special school provision by 111 places.

### **Horncastle St Lawrence School**

Buildability for the Horncastle scheme has been particularly challenging, with the site presenting significant problems with its existing condition. Design options were re-considered after detailed survey information highlighted significant condition issues with

the main school building, which placed an unexpected financial pressure on the scheme. As a result, the proposal to rebuild the school on the existing site was approved.

Planning and Executive Approval for the new-build St Lawrence School scheme was approved in August 2022 and construction commenced in September 2022.

The new school will provide seventeen classrooms, three of which are specifically designed for PMLD pupils with hoists and sensory corners, a new hall and studio allowing the school to offer rebound therapy, physical education and dining for all pupils, therapy spaces including soft play, sensory and physiotherapy, life skills and social recreation spaces and calm and group spaces. The new block will also provide hygiene facilities, a staff workspace, offices and meeting rooms.

The whole school site will be redesigned to provide improved drop off and pick up facilities for the pupils, increased parking provision for staff and visitors ensuring all vehicles can be accommodate on the school site. Reorganised and improved outdoor play spaces including a sensory garden, horticulture, formal and informal sport pitches and zones for trim trails and outdoor exercise equipment.

### **Ambergate Sports College and The Sandon School**

Construction of the Ambergate site completed early in the programme and pupils are enjoying the much-improved facilities.

Due to the successful Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) application granted by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) a new Hydrotherapy pool is under construction on The Sandon school site, as a condition of the funding allocation. The Community Inclusive Trust are self-delivering this project with assistance and significant funding from the Council.

Further expansion of the Ambergate site is currently being considered, with feasibility being undertaken on the West Grantham Church of England Primary Academy – Upper School which is now empty as the school has relocated to the lower school site. As this site is located adjacent to Ambergate Sports College, there is the option to developing this site to provide additional capacity for the Grantham area in the future. Any further decisions relating to this expansion will be subject to Executive approval at an appropriate time.

### **Lincoln St Francis Special School**

Feasibility and design have commenced to provide a special school which can meet a wider range of needs for 150 pupils. Planning for development of the parking area has been submitted for approval and capital approval is pending. Work on this scheme is due to commence during the summer break 2023.

Delays to this scheme have arisen due to the need to change preferred contractor during the design process. The original contractor submitted costings beyond budget viability, so the scheme was retendered, and a new contract awarded.

## **Gosberton House Academy**

Feasibility and design have commenced to provide a special school which can meet a wider range of needs. As with St Francis, there has been a delay to this scheme due to the need to change preferred contractor during the design process, The original contractor submitted costings beyond budget viability, so the scheme was retendered, and a new contract awarded.

### **2.5 SEND Support Structures**

#### **School Reorganisation Policy and Budget**

A SEND School Reorganisation Policy is in place to ensure all special schools, subject to reorganisation, receive equitable and fair funding to meet all reasonable additional costs. It provides a formalised approach to the funding of special school reorganisations to support the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for the children of Lincolnshire. It addresses situations when, as part of its strategic planning of school places, the Council asks a school / academy to expand and take in additional pupils above their agreed capacity temporarily or expands permanently.

Through the development and implementation of this policy, it has been possible to provide a fair and standardised level of funding during this transition period to those schools that the Council wishes to expand permanently and this applies of both maintained and academy special schools.

The policy takes into consideration all circumstances whereby schools are faced with additional costs such as removal costs, loose classroom equipment, IT resources and other such expenditures to ensure they can meet all complex needs for an increased number of pupils.

Through support received by the Schools' Forum, the Council earmarked £2.000m from the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves underspend to fund the school reorganisation policy during the transition phase. Additional place funding will be supported through the earmarked funding and the High Needs block.

The £2.000m commitment will support the following:

- Fixtures and fittings for the fifty-five new classroom spaces in accordance with the special school's reorganisation policy.
- New building space / loose furniture through the SEND capital programme, such as installation of new sensory and soft playrooms, medical intervention spaces and specialist teaching facilities.
- Additional recruitment costs.
- Ad hoc Decant costs.
- A commitment to support workforce development for the sector that is to be rolled out to mainstream schools also.



- The remainder will fund the Increase in banded funding to support the intakes of additional pupils. This requirement will be met through a blended approach of remaining monies from the reserve and High Needs block funding.

All schools have either received their full allocation or have been informed of their initial allocation if their building work is not yet complete.

### **Committed School Reorganisation Expenditure to date.**

	Total Costs (all schools to date)
Classrooms	£533,400
Loose Furniture	£566,331
Recruitment	£120,420
Relocation	£72,630
Pupils Numbers	£148,030
Sundries	£6,243
Workforce Development	£148,030
	<b>£1,447,053</b>

## **2.6 Workforce Development**

The workforce development learning platform was commissioned on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 via a Public-to-Public Collaboration Agreement, under Regulation 12(7) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 between Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Wolds Federation as lead agency for the SEND Alliance. Service Specifications have been approved and signed and contract management governance established.

Agreements are in place between the SEND Alliance and Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership to utilise their existing platform and all requirements and regulations regarding Information Assurance and Governance have been addressed to ensure compliance.

A summary of progress made in the reporting period is as follows:

- Authors have been instructed from the following sectors:
  - Educational Psychologists
  - Therapy Services
  - Intensive Interaction
  - Nuture UK
  - Education Endowment Foundation
  - LEAD Hub
  - Bishop Grosseteste University
  - Lincoln University
- Deployment agreements have been issued by the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation to all collaborating parties and agreements are in place.

- Induction level content has been developed, quality assured and uploaded onto the SEND learning platform.
- Induction Level launched to all special schools in December 2022
- Induction Level launched to all mainstream schools in March 2023
- Tier 1 content has been developed and quality assurance completed.
- In first 3 months, over one thousand modules were completed by Lincolnshire special schools including:
  - 286 Types of SEND
  - 173 Working with Professionals
  - 168 Respecting Individuals
  - 155 Awareness of a Neuro-Typical Child
  - 122 What is Inclusion?
  - 96 SEND Code of Practice
- As of most recent Contract Management Meeting for SEND Workforce Development (Dec'22), feedback on modules is positive.
  - 83% of users rated the quality of modules as very good or good.
  - 82% of users rated the suitability of modules as very good or good.
  - 76% of users rated the usability of modules as very good or good.

In the next reporting period, the SEND Workforce Development Platform will be launched fully across the sector and to parent/carers of children and young people with SEND. Tier's 1 and 2 will also be live for the sector to access.

## **2.7 Health Offer**

In order for all special schools to meet all complex needs, it is imperative that each school can meet the needs of children and young people with more complex medical conditions. At present, the only school with an on-site specialist nursing team is Lincoln St Francis which is the designated profound and multiple learning disability/physical disability school for the county. In order to enable children to access their local special school, there needs to be a robust and equitable health offer available to all schools. To implement this requirement, a SEND health workstream has been established, made up of Officers from the Local Authority, Health Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure an effective health offer can be provided to all special schools.

This partnership workstream has been responsible for the development and implementation of the SEND Strategy Memorandum of Understanding. This document sets out the partnership expectations and responsibilities of both the special school and health providers to ensure the health offer is implemented and maintained. A memorandum of understanding has been co-produced by the workstream's key stakeholders and is currently going through each organisation's governance processes.

The workstream is also responsible for developing a system whereby all special schools have the capabilities and confidence to meet the needs of children and young people with the most complex medical needs and those who are long-term ventilated. Senior Officers from the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Council and Health Provider Trusts have agreed, in principle, that all children in Lincolnshire should be able to attend a

special school as close to home as possible, if required, once it is safe to do so. This workstream is currently developing an infrastructure and guidance framework which will ensure this is possible, in a clinically safe manner.

## **2.8 Specialist Equipment**

In order to ensure the most cost-effective use of specialist medical and therapy equipment, all special schools have now joined the existing contractual arrangements held by the Council with specialist equipment providers. All special schools are now part of the Lincolnshire Community Equipment Service, which enables them to order directly through the Council's contractual arrangements. If specialist equipment is deemed to be required by a therapy professional (such as Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist) this will be prescribed and the school can order direct. They receive monthly invoices for the equipment they order, and, on its return, the school receive a refund for the cost of the equipment. This contract also covers the servicing and maintenance of specialist equipment within the school.

In the first year of the contract, the Council have received positive feedback from all the SEND Schools on the service provided by NRS over the past year. As well as being delighted with the service provided by NRS, significant cost savings have also been identified by all partners. They report being particularly pleased with the response times from NRS where, for example, emergency repairs are completed within a four-hour timeframe.

There was a spend of £0.006m on routine servicing over the last complete financial year (2021/22), which demonstrates a 67% saving against the costs proposed previous providers for the same period. Furthermore, all partners have been able to access preferential equipment pricing which has been used extensively during the past year, with just over £0.009m being spent on new equipment. One example of these savings is where St Francis have had replacement hoists provided at a price of 36% less than the retail cost. In addition to this, if the equipment is no longer required it can be returned to NRS and they receive a full credit of the cost back.

## **2.9 Specialist Community Led Panels**

Specialist Community Led Panels were launched in the summer 2021 in the Boston and South Holland localities and have subsequently been phased in across the other localities. Attendance at these panels is good, with representation from health and social care services, along with education, the Council and Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum at most meetings. The panels are chaired by special school head teachers and are proving effective in ensuring children and young people with SEND are placed in the right education setting for their needs.

Each locality has a number of examples of children and young people with SEND whose current setting expressed an inability to meet need and were at risk of requiring independent non-maintained special school placement who, with the support of those professionals involved, have been able to remain in their existing setting.

### **3. Conclusion**

Children's Services strongly believes this capital infrastructure investment will not only achieve greater outcomes for Lincolnshire pupils, but also be an important financial decision in managing the pressures within the High Needs block by way of reducing expenditure relating to some expensive and unnecessary out of county specialist placements. On occasion, Lincolnshire families are presented with the difficult option of out of county placements due to the lack of capacity in local special schools. This is both unfair on children and families and expensive to the Council, when needs could be met in a more local provision. It is important for Lincolnshire to continue securing value for money within these demand-led budgets and within the finite funding resource available. By enabling pupils requiring specialist support to go to their nearest suitable school, the Council will be able to achieve operational efficiencies, improved pupils' wellbeing and reduce expenditure through its delivery of home to school transport arrangements.

The fiscal impact of investing now at a capital level will have a positive impact on the Council's financial position in the long-term, both in terms of the High Need's block and Home to School Transport Budget.

The strategy was collaboratively developed to ensuring a sufficient supply of special school places for children and young people with SEND, local special schools which can meet the needs of all pupils in their local community, a reduction in the travelling time for pupils with SEND by enabling them to attend a special school as close to home as possible and for our children and young people with SEN to be educated locally, bringing value and a sense of belonging to their local communities. Only by ensuring that the capital programme is fully completed can the Council be confident it will achieve its strategic vision.

In order for all schools to be all complex needs operational, the support systems of workforce development, health and SEND design must be established in readiness for implementation and considerable progress has been made with these support systems. As a result, it has been possible for the completed schemes to operate as all complex needs schools and welcome children and young people with a wider range of needs.

### **4. Consultation**

#### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

As the capital programme progresses towards completion, financial risk decreases as only two schemes are still to be finalised and fully costed. Realignment of the budget to include DfE capital allocation spanning 2022-2024 has assured the completion of the programme and addressed ongoing risks relating to increasing inflation.

The revenue allocation for schools reorganisation is well managed and projections indicate the allocated funding will be sufficient to resource all settings within the programme.

Decision making for the strategy is based on a foundation of sound governance with multiple opportunities for scrutiny and challenge. This Council led programme has robust project management with strong key stakeholder involvement, spanning both Children's Services and Corporate Property directorates.

All capital schemes are subject to scrutiny by Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee prior to approval by the Council Leader, before main works contracts can be progressed. This ensures all schemes are subject to enhanced scrutiny considering suitability and value for money.

The SEND Strategy Governance Board, chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Portfolio Holder, reviews each scheme on a bi-monthly basis to monitor progress and any emerging risk issues.

As a collaboratively developed strategy, the SEND Education Partnership has oversight of strategic implementation. It provides the rigorous review of the programme, strategic leadership and is accountable for risk management and monitoring progress.

Corporate Property also undertake rigorous and regular reviews of the Capital Programme with Monthly Programme Board with the Assistant Director, monthly individual Project Review Board, fortnightly Project 'core team' meeting with Head of Service and fortnightly technical team meeting with Head of Service.

**5. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Special Schools Capital Programme Timeline March 2023

**6. Background Papers**

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Building Communities of Specialist Provision: Together in Lincolnshire	<a href="#">Building communities of specialist provision – Overview - Lincolnshire County Council</a>

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