



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 20 APRIL 2023

PRESENT:

Kyna Adkins (Head Teacher, St Christopher's Special School), Alan Howe (Governor, Sutton on Sea County Primary School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Jo Slesser (Governor, Carres Grammar School, Sleaford), Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust) (Vice-Chairman) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery)

Officers in attendance:-

Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Geraldine Willders (Head of Service - School Strategy), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy) and Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Amy Stancer, Gavin Booth, Katie Grivil, Simon Morley, Stephen Hopkins, Lea Mason and Peter Tomlinson.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Frances Green for her contribution to the Forum following her resignation from the Forum. He also thanked Tony Warnock, Financial Services Manager for his work to support the Forum and schools funding matters for the benefit of Lincolnshire Schools and wished him well for the future.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 19 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4 BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION STRATEGY: UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Programme Manager – Children’s (SEND), which provided an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

The strategy was making significant changes to the exiting special education provision, creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils could attend their nearest special school, confident that their education and health needs could be fully met.

The Building Communities of Specialist Strategy commenced implementation in 2019 and would be completed by Spring 2025. Implementation was well underway with a number of capital schemes complete.

The Forum noted the key milestones for the capital programme which had been met in the reporting period:

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).

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The strategy when complete would create 527 new special school places across Lincolnshire schools. The Forum was assured that the strategy aspired to meet ‘all complex needs’ for Lincolnshire children. However, it was acknowledged that there would always be a small proportion of children requiring specialist intervention and a more specialist placement, for example, school for the deaf, and it was accepted to

be appropriate in these cases. It is hoped that the strategy would result in a reduction on the reliance of out of county placements.

- The £2m earmarked in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves would support the planned re-organisation of schools to increase places on a temporary basis through the policy, but thereafter the High Needs block would meet this cost, which was supported through High Needs block funding formula per place and other proxy funding.
- Despite the demands and increasing costs in this area, the strategy was considered to be more cost effective than requiring out of county placements and will support the financial sustainability of the High Needs block. The Forum were reassured that this was the most effective way to invest and manage specialist provision within the County, providing needs could continue to be met within the current arrangements. Officers were confident that costs met within the current needs block, although it was acknowledged that it was a demand-led and a watching brief would need to take place.
- Officers welcomed the DSG High Need block funding increase for 2023/24, including its share of the £2bn announced in the Chancellor autumn statement. Funding from 2024/25 hadn't been announced and that was a key component to the future financial planning. Uncertainty did lie ahead, but the authority was being proactive in its approach to manage the situation.
- The maintained Special Schools representative commended the team for their work on the project at Lincoln St Christophers school who has benefited from the strategy through the construction of a new primary school site. She also expressed gratitude for the new school and highlighted the benefits for the children.
- At this current time, additional proposals for future projects, in addition to the capital programme set out in Appendix A, had not been considered. A solid foundation had been established. Further DfE SEND capital funding would be required. Officers did acknowledge an increasing demand for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) cohort locally and the situation would continue to be monitored. The annual report – Special Educational needs due to be considered at the meeting of the Forum in June would provide further information on the position in relation to SEND provision. It was noted that the SEND Green Paper outcomes would be fundamental towards supporting sustainable High Needs blocks.
- The Forum commended the innovative transformational work undertaken in Lincolnshire as part of the strategy given the growing need for specialist provision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of this report and progress made in Year 4 of Implementation and any comments made be noted;
2. That the receipt of an update on Year 5 of implementation in April 2024 be agreed.

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5 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update by the Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, which provided information on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies and academy trusts, as set out in the report.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The Forum was informed that maintained and academy schools were funded through the same formulas. The Forum was also informed that the Department for Education grant funding to support Local Authority school improvement ended in 2022/23, but through the Council budget and recycled de-delegation funding, locality leads support could be maintained. It was acknowledged that the number of conversion would continue to be closely monitored, but currently the number of maintained schools had remained consistent for some time, therefore risks were considered low, and the Local Authority would continue to provide support to maintained schools.
- The Forum commended Lincolnshire County Council for their dynamic approach in prioritising Lincolnshire’s young people in both maintained schools and academies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Forum’s work programme, as set out at pages 33-34 of the agenda pack.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 1.40 pm