



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

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	18 April 2024
Subject:	Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy: Update

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 5 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 5 of implementation.
2. Agree receipt of an update on Year 6 of implementation in April 2025.

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 Summer 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 is improving premises and facilities, enabling each school to offer places to pupils from within their local communities with a wider range of needs. 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 Summer 2025. This is a 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).

2.2 Progress Overview

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

- Official Completions:
 - Boston Endeavour Academy
 - The Eresby School
 - St Bernard's School
 - Tulip Academy (Waterside Campus)

- Official Opening Ceremonies:
 - St Christopher's Primary School
 - Tulip Academy (Waterside Campus)
 - St Bernard's School
 - The Eresby School

- Continuation of works, including demolition of main block, at St Christopher's Secondary site.
- Continuation of works, including full school rebuild, at St Lawrence School.
- Completion of works to St Francis School car park and enabling condition works to ensure building is fit for main works.
- Design progression for St Francis School and Gosberton House Academy.

2.3 Risk Summary

The programme remains subject to on-going risks around inflationary pressures and site conditions as the construction industry settles after a period of economic instability. The economic climate has been severely impacted by a range of challenges, which have subsequently impacted the delivery and cost of the SEND Capital Programme.

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 current programme budget of £101.8m is expected to remain sufficient to complete the whole SEND programme.

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 6th September 2021. This new school is now accommodating 147 pupils in line with the planned expansion programme.

The 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 10th December 2021.

Due to the capital investment programme, the capacity of this school has increased from 80 to 141, in line with the agreed phased increase.

The new 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 9th May 2022. Phased increase of the additional sixteen places has taken place, in accordance with the agreed expansion approach. The official opening of the new block took place on 26th May 2023.

The new 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.

St Bernards School, Louth

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation Trust took place on 12th September 2022. The agreed expansion plan supported an increase of twelve additional places made available during the 2022/23 academic year. The official opening took place on 9th June 2023.

The new block and remodelling has provided enhanced facilities including six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small group spaces, therapy and hygiene facilities. Enhanced facilities were also provided to The Maples residential facility.

With regards The Maples residential facility, it is intended this will become part of the council's overnight short breaks offer as it amends its scope of provision. Preparation for Adulthood will become part of the special school's day curriculum offer, with overnight short breaks provision at The Maples extending to a full-time 3-bedded facility. This has been approved by the council's Executive Member and will be implemented from September 2024.

Tulip Academy, Spalding

In line with the strategy, The Priory School and The Garth School successfully merged to become Tulip Academy on 1st September 2022. All construction work at the Springview Campus was completed in 2021, as a self-delivery scheme, and the Waterside Campus completed in April 2023. The official opening for the new block on the Waterside Campus took place on 7th July 2023.

The development of Tulip Academy has enabled capacity to increase to 212 places, in line with the agreed phased expansion. The Waterside Campus is currently subject to further development as part of the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme.

Lincoln St Christopher's School

Handover of the new primary school on Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln took place on 3rd April 2023, with the official opening event on 23rd June 2023. The primary school can now accommodate 130 pupils and has high-quality, state of the art facilities including a hydrotherapy pool.

The secondary site is currently under construction with a proposed handover planned for October 2024. Demolition of the main school has been completed along with the opening of the remodelled Block 1, enabling the school to continue offering an education to pupils during the construction period.

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. This increase in pupil numbers has already commenced with capacity at the primary site.

Horncastle St Lawrence School

The rebuilding of St Lawrence School is due for completion by early May 2024. The new school has been handed over and the external works to transport arrangements and formal play space is in the final phase of construction. The new school can accommodate a further 80 places which have been filled in line with the council expansion plan.

The new school provides seventeen classrooms, three of which have been 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 also provides hygiene facilities, a staff workspace, offices and meeting rooms.

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

Grantham Additional Needs Federation: 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 has been built on the Sandon school site, as a condition of the funding allocation. The Community Inclusive Trust have successfully self-delivered this project with assistance and funding from the Council. Both schemes have been completed and the schools have merged to form Grantham Additional Needs Federation (GANF), as of 1st January 2024.

Further expansion of the Ambergate site continues to be 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 available funding and 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. Construction of the improved parking area has been completed, along with condition works to ensure the building is fit for development.

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. Final design has been completed for this scheme and costings due for consideration in May 2024.

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. Final design has been completed for this scheme and costings due for consideration in May 2024, with submission for Executive Approval in July 2024.

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.

Table 1: Committed School Reorganisation Expenditure (to date)

	Total Costs (all schools to date)
Classrooms	£523,875
Loose Furniture	£594,847
Recruitment	£118,190
Relocation / Decant	£79,060
Pupils Numbers	£178,909
Legal	£6,243
Workforce Development	£168,575
	£1,669,698

2.6 Workforce Development

The workforce development learning platform was commissioned on 10th 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.

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.

The service has currently uploaded 16 training modules that are free to access for all Lincolnshire Schools and parents and carers. The content has been created by SEND sector experts and quality assured by Leaders in the industry. Alignment of the resources developed by the Service with an existing trusted learning resource management system

(Virtual College) used by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LCSP) offers the most efficient and effective method to deliver the partners' shared aims, objectives and outcomes under the Building Communities of Specialist Provision strategy.

The current contract was awarded for 5 years, starting in 2022. The first year was for development of content. The second year focusing on marketing and engagement for SEND Schools, Mainstream Schools and parents and/or carers.

The workforce development platform was extended to parents and carers in October 2023 and this has been well-received within the SEND community. Access to this platform for parent/carers is through membership of the Lincolnshire's Parent Carer Forum (LPCF) who have worked closely with the workforce development providers to market the provision to families. Feedback from the parent and carer community who have engaged in the learning have rated the project at 92% Good or Very Good.

Creation and release of the content to SEND and Mainstream Schools has been successful with 302 Schools actively engaging with the learning platform and 6,847 modules being completed with a feedback rating of 85% Good or Very Good overall.

The following graphs identify how the number of modules completed each week continues to rise as the project gains momentum:

Table 2. Cumulative Modules

This shows that the number of modules completed (blue line) has continued to rise above the trend line (green dotted line) for the past 6 months.

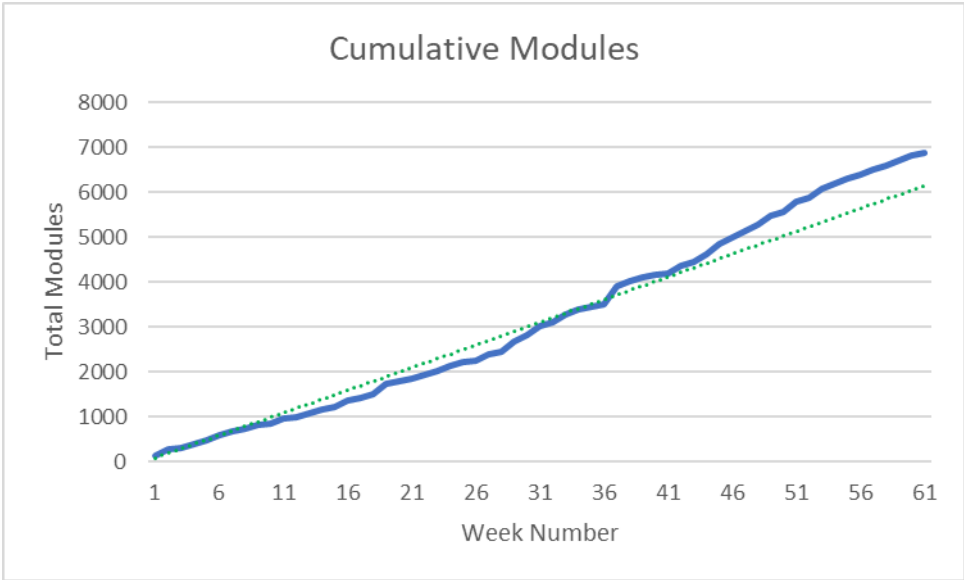
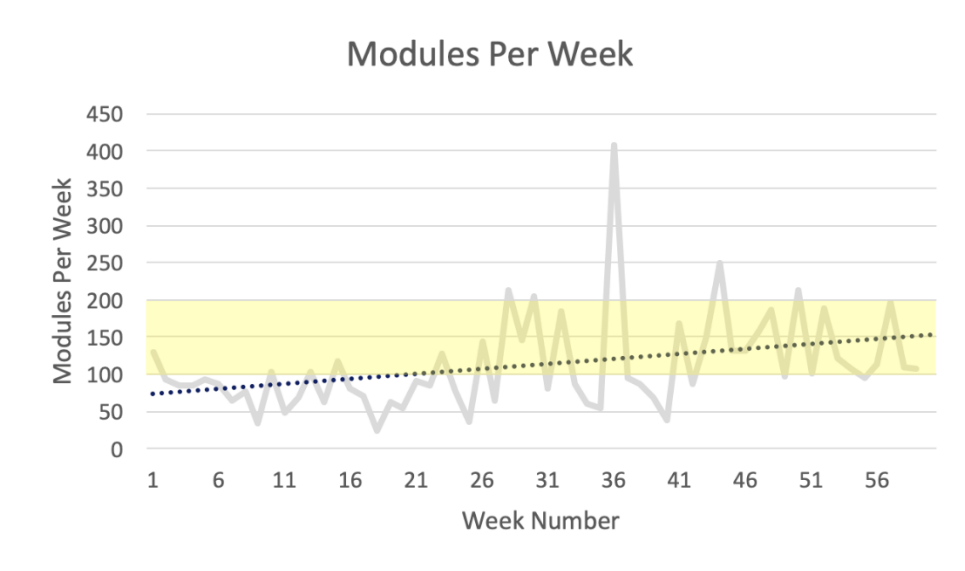


Table 3. Modules Per Week

This trend is also apparent in the Modules Per Week graph. The highlight zone shows that the project regularly has 100+ modules completed per week and the trend line continues to rise.



The whole SEND workforce development project is still relatively new and has been released in phases. This means some schools have only had knowledge of its existence for a year, and although the engagement figures are positive, with good engagement from 83.57% of schools, there are some schools only just becoming aware of the material. Further marketing is planned by the workforce development providers.

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 previously the designated profound and multiple learning disability/physical disability school for the county, whilst others have a varied offer when it comes to meeting the needs of children and young people with medical needs. In order to enable attendance at their local special school, there needs to be a robust and equitable health offer available to all children and young people.

In this reporting period, a new task and finish group has been established with membership from the Integrated Care Board, United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust and Lincolnshire County Council, to drive forward the development of a county-wide system where all special schools have the staffing, skills and confidence to meet the needs of children and young people with the most complex medical needs and those who are long-term ventilated. A proposed model of provision has been developed and submitted as a Case for Change to the Children and Young People’s Integrated Transformation Board, with approval to proceed to a Business Case granted. This Business Case is in development and will be put forward for approval in the coming months.

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. As part of the Lincolnshire Community Equipment Service, special schools are able to order directly through the Council's contractual arrangements, providing better value for money. 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.

It has been another busy year for the community equipment service with the contracted provider, NRS Healthcare, conducting nearly 900 activities across all special schools up to the end of March 2024. There has been a spend of just over £44k for this financial year, with £7.8k spent on routine servicing, with the remaining £37k on the delivery and collection of new and replacement equipment.

The service has again received positive feedback from all participating schools, who have reported substantial savings in all service aspects. Schools are experiencing a 30% to 70% reduction in equipment maintenance costs compared to the previous provider, with additional long-term savings due to the procurement of new equipment at significantly lower rates. For instance, a previous provider charged schools £396.00 annually for hoist servicing; the current provider cost is just £50.00 per year. Further examples of the savings which schools have achieved this year include:

- Provider A quoted a school £89 for a chair inspection and basic repairs, but NRS completed the same task for just £10.50.
- Provider B quoted a school £149 for a visit and repair of a ceiling track hoist, whereas NRS charged only £10.50.

The year ahead will see the start of a large project at St Francis to install 14 new ceiling track hoists in the refurbished classrooms. LCES are also working with Children's Commissioning Team to expand the contract to the St Francis PD Outreach equipment. From April 2024 the wheelchair service will be managed by the LCES team, with clinics being held in schools to minimise disruption to children. Consultations have already taken place with parent groups for feedback on the existing service.

3. Conclusion

As the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy reaches the final year of its implementation, focus will turn to the outcomes expected to be delivered by this significant investment. An increase of 527 places in the special school estate will enable the council to continue to meet its statutory duty of sufficient school places for those with SEND. However, this strategy has been implemented in a period of unprecedented growth

in the need for SEND school places, both nationally and locally. A recent report to Schools' Forum from LCC's SEND Service outlined the following:

"In 2022 there was a 9% increase nationally in the overall number of EHC Plans (from 2021) whilst in Lincolnshire the increase was lower at 6.5%. Throughout 2023, Lincolnshire experienced a further **7.8% increase** in the number of currently maintained EHC Plans from 2022.

The number of *new* EHC Plans issued in 2022 increased by 7% nationally whilst in Lincolnshire there was a 1.02% *decrease* in the number of *new* EHC Plans. In 2023 Lincolnshire has issued a further 1073 new EHC Plans which is a **30% increase** on the number of new Plans issued in 2022."

(Lincolnshire County Council Schools Forum Report: Supplementary to the Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities June 2023, 18th January 2024)

Whilst the council continues to complete the £101m capital programme that has resulted in the modernisation of Lincolnshire's 'all needs' Special Schools, including an extensive range of new buildings as well as refurbished premises, the places are being filled as quickly as they are made available. There is also a risk to the integrity of the strategic commitment to educate children and young people with SEND within their community and *as close to home as possible*. The greater the distance children have to travel, the more burden it puts on them and their families as well as the significant pressure on the Council's Home to School Transport Budget.

Children's Services strongly believes this capital infrastructure investment will not only achieve greater outcomes for Lincolnshire pupils, but will also 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.

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 meetings 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 April 2024

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	Building communities of specialist provision – Overview - Lincolnshire County Council

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