

Open report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Schools Forum
Date:	4th October 2017
Subject:	Alternative Provision Arrangements

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Lincolnshire's current and future Alternative Provision arrangements.

Recommendation(s):

The Schools Forum is asked to note the content of the report.

Background

1. Context and Background Information

Alternative provision is commonly defined as education outside school, arranged by local authorities or schools themselves. It can be something in which a young person participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the school site or the pupil referral unit (in Lincolnshire, Springwell Lincoln Academy) and not led by school staff. Schools are encouraged to use such provision to try to prevent exclusions, or to re-engage pupils in their education. Many secondary schools in Lincolnshire use AP in this way, dual registering pupils for behavioural intervention or to follow vocational pathways. Centres include Acorn Free School (Lincoln), Bridge House (Boston), First Steps (Boston), Build a Future (West Ashby), Good Apple (Gainsborough), Hill Holt (Norton Disney), and in N. Lincs, Fluent Coaching (Brigg).

The current Ofsted Handbook requires inspectors to *"find out how (AP) is monitored and evaluated, both day to day and over time. An inspector should visit the unit briefly to assess safeguarding procedures, the quality of teaching and how effectively the unit helps to improve pupils' behaviour, learning and attendance. The visit should be proportionate to the number of pupils who attend and the length of time they spend there.....Inspectors should give priority to visiting unregistered providers."*

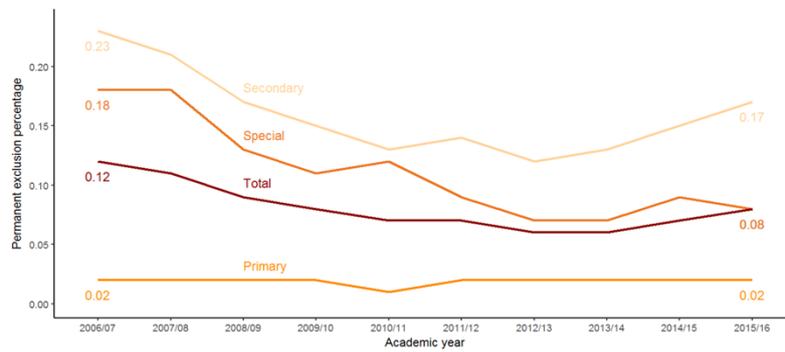
To support and guide those inclusive schools that commission AP to avoid exclusion and re-engage disaffected pupils, LCC has published 'Alternative Provision Guidance for Commissioners', downloadable from www.lincolnshirechildren.net within the Inclusive Lincolnshire microsite. In light of the Ofsted advice above, it is particularly important for schools (and LAs) to follow this guidance closely when commissioning unregistered providers.

An imperative for LCC is to ensure that a supply of high quality, local and affordable AP is always available for Lincolnshire schools so that pupils at risk can benefit from vocational opportunities and through them a positive post-16 pathway. Vocational learning is proven to have a key role in securing positive outcomes for vulnerable learners with research confirming that its benefits extend beyond the courses themselves; underachieving pupils also make accelerated progress in maths and English when re-engaged through work-related learning. (e.g. Dearden et al. 2003).

A 2013 policy briefing paper from the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) confirms the demise of 14-16 vocational learning in England and the negative impact of this on mainly disadvantaged learners. "The decision to remove entirely most of these (vocational) qualifications from the performance tables created a powerful incentive for schools to stop offering vocational courses, even where they have genuine value for young people." In the IPPR poll, 66% of Headteachers said they were reducing their vocational offer despite the fact that 77% felt that it was 'motivational for young people'. The government itself has advised that "there may be pupils for whom the most appropriate qualifications are those not included in the league tables." (DfE, 2012, *Qualifications for 14-16 year olds and performance tables.*)

It is reasonable to connect this narrowing of the curriculum with the rising trend of permanent exclusions from secondary schools and therefore to view the strengthening of vocational learning as a key element of an evidence-based inclusion strategy.

The number and rate of permanent exclusions have increased since last year



The overall rate of permanent exclusions has increased from 0.07 per cent of pupil enrolments in 2014/15 to 0.08 per cent in 2015/16.

Crucially, a recent change in DfE policy also supports such a strategy. Ofqual has now approved Level 1 and Level 2 'Technical Awards', for first teaching in September 2017. These will count in performance tables from 2019 and mean that schools will no longer be penalised for offering an inclusive KS4 curriculum. Headteachers are therefore much more likely to seek high quality vocational learning opportunities for those who may be dis-engaged by the narrowly academic. Such opportunities are generally sourced within alternative provision settings.

Maintaining and strengthening Lincolnshire's vocational sector will necessitate a degree of investment with a challenging financial context (school budgets) another factor currently undermining it. To this end, a tender process will begin in January 2018 with successful vocational providers (DfE registered only) benefitting from the stimulant of an LCC contract and schools for the first time in recent years having access to 'free' vocational learning places – part time or full time – when they can demonstrate that they have followed the Lincolnshire 'Ladder'. (See *Referral to AP*, below) Those schools that choose not to follow the Ladder to secure LCC commissioned places will be able to operate in the same way that they have in the past, purchasing places as required through service level agreements with their preferred providers.

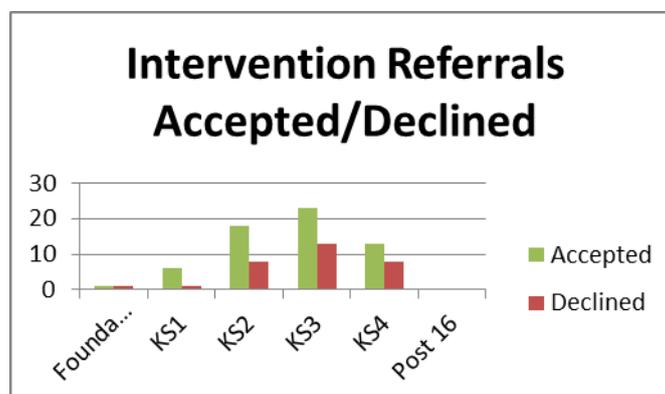
This vocational learning offer is, then, designed to provide secondary Headteachers with a further positive alternative to exclusion. Like any responsive strategy, 'Inclusive Lincolnshire' continues to evolve as its efficacy is tested in the field. Whilst the number of permanent exclusions in Lincolnshire fell for the second consecutive year in 2016-17, the gains have been predominantly in the primary phase and we must acknowledge and respond to the fact that more work needs to be done to develop the secondary strategy.

Referral to AP

For the academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18, LCC has commissioned 252 places for Springwell Lincoln Academy (of Wellspring Academy Trust) to provide education for all permanently excluded pupils or those referred through the Lincolnshire Ladder for either an intervention place (KS1-3) or an 'Alternative (KS4) Pathway' place. The distinction is important in that KS1-3 pupils are dual registered, they maintain contact with home school and ultimately return there after a period of intervention. KS4 learners, on the other hand, do not return to the mainstream and, from September 2017, will be single registered as Springwell pupils. (This is a change from last academic year, when they were dual registered. It reflects advice from LCC's legal team as well as the views of Headteachers).

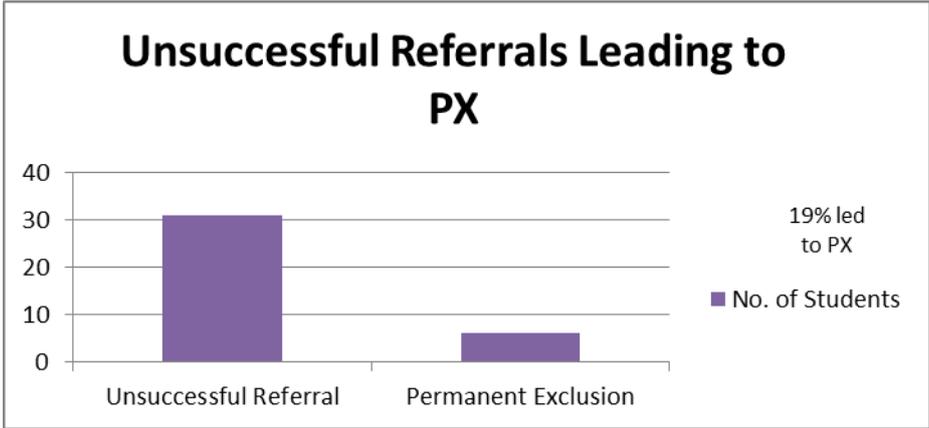
In protecting the capacity of PRU places, the 'Ladder' is a crucial mechanism. A multi-agency panel meets fortnightly to review all referrals, KS1-4, and ensure that pupils have been screened for unmet learning needs, that they have benefitted from evidence-based intervention and reasonable adjustment and that the Behaviour Outreach Support Service (or equivalent for schools who use their own behaviour specialists) has been engaged and agrees that the referral for intervention place or KS4 Alternative Pathway is appropriate.

The process is robust. Schools must submit LCC's Signs of Safety modelled Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) and a BOSS report detailing precisely what has been done to promote a pupil's social and emotional learning. Panel reviews the referral, PSP and BOSS report. Comprising headteachers, Springwell SENDCos, BOSS and PRT officers, members need to see evidence that there has been a screen for unmet learning needs, that there are no hidden communication difficulties (often the cause of problematic behaviour); in short, that the school has done more than pursued a course of escalating sanctions and that the Ladder has been followed. A behaviour or sanction log is therefore insufficient as evidence, however colourful.



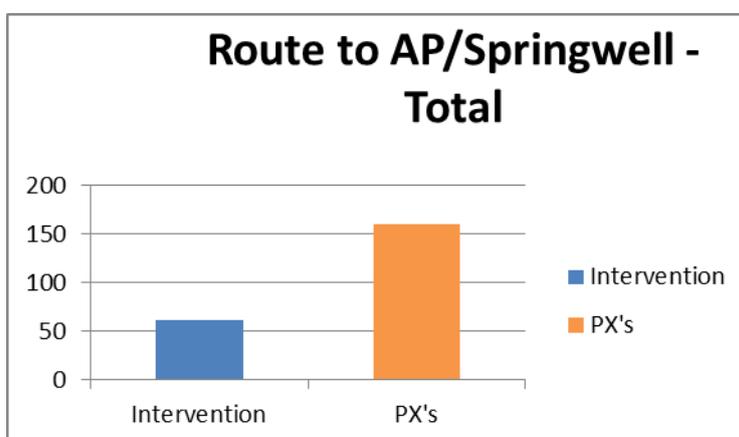
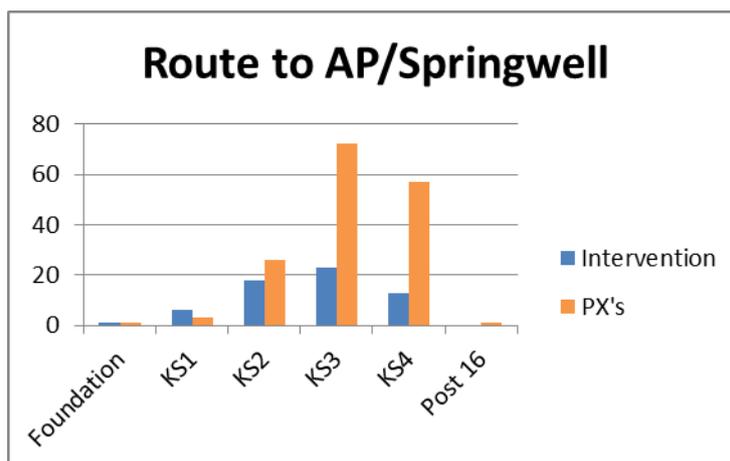
During 2015/16, 61 referrals to panel were accepted and 31 declined. The number of declines decreased during the course of the year, reflecting a growth in awareness and constructive feedback from panel.

Clearly, a risk is that Headteachers make the decision to permanently exclude when a referral for AP is unsuccessful. Indeed, there are times when panel is advised that an unsuccessful referral will lead to permanent exclusion. However, this was by no means the most common outcome, reflecting the commitment of many Headteachers to Lincolnshire's aspiration of zero exclusions.



AP places must only be for pupils as an alternative to permanent exclusion when all else has failed. They are not, in this regard, 'early' intervention places. Early intervention needs to happen within mainstream schools, not outside them, as the 2017 exclusion guidance emphasises. ("Early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place.") The core function of the panel is to promote evidence-based inclusive practice by insisting always on evidence of evidence-based early intervention. The 'Inclusive Lincolnshire Toolkit', promoted through Headteacher briefings, was written as a guide to support this.

Engagement with the Ladder can be measured by comparing the number of pupils who are permanently excluded, effectively bypassing the Ladder, with the number that access AP via the Ladder, without the need for a permanent exclusion. Here, the difference between secondary and primary phases was marked in 2016-17 and a key aim of the current academic year is to engage secondary schools more positively in the process. For as long as pupils are both accessing intervention/ KS4Pathway places *and* being permanently excluded, PRU capacity will remain a pressing and costly concern.



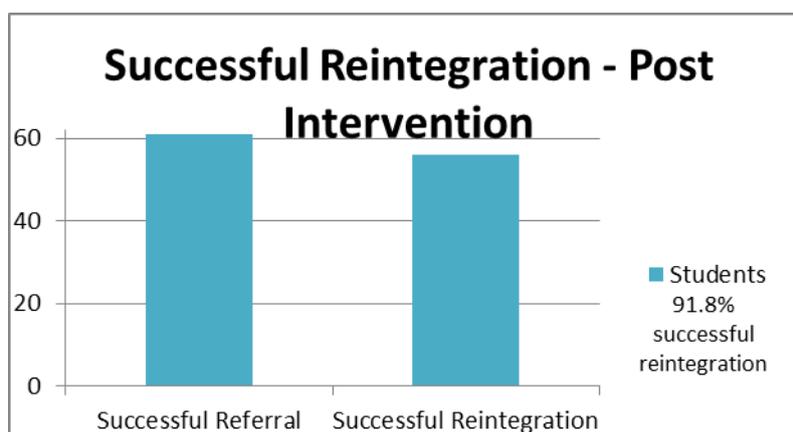
Reintegration of permanently excluded pupils

A PRU should operate as a 'revolving door' with permanently excluded pupils accessing education on the sixth day in order for the LA to discharge its legal duty, but reintegrated back into a new mainstream school at the earliest possible opportunity. There are of course inherent challenges. If a pupil is found to have previously unidentified SEND and is successfully referred for EHC assessment, then the SEND consultation process can be lengthy if schools repeatedly state that they cannot meet need. Equally, there may be a wait for a special school place – an issue that is currently being addressed through LCC's SEND Review. Further, pupils may be highly anxious about a return to the mainstream. Of all the challenges in the exclusions field, reintegration is the main one. When this stalls, centres fill quickly and the potential impact on the High Needs budget is very significant.

Springwell Lincoln Academy uses Doyle's school readiness scale to assess whether permanently excluded pupils are 'school ready'. Names are then shared with the PRT and reintegration procedures are as follows:

One	Two	Three	Four and five	Six	Induction
Executive SENDCO shares list of school ready with PRT	Centre Lead confirms date of placement meeting with PRT	PRT and CL attends family meeting and preferred schools are identified	PRT informs CL when school has been identified	Admission meeting is held and start date agreed	Pupil is supported by BOSS and others, as per PSP
Centre Leads (CL) make referral to BOSS – via PRT	having agreed with family	All reintegration packs from SPLCA now received by PRT	Admission meeting at new school is scheduled by PRT and CL invited	PSP meeting and support for induction agreed (BOSS, CL, Headteacher)	PSP is reviewed, as agreed.
PRT contacts centre lead to organise placement meeting with family	BOSS begins work with pupil	PRT approach schools identified by family		Review dates agreed	Pupil taken off Springwell roll at end of dual-reg period.

Pupils who access KS1-3 intervention places must also be reintegrated with an adapted version of the procedure above also applying to this cohort. Placements are generally about 16 weeks in length, but may be extended or shortened according to a pupil's response to intervention.



13 non-returning Alternative Pathway KS4 pupils have been included in the table above. Nonetheless, it remains the case that most KS1-3 pupils have successfully returned to their home schools (or in some cases a special setting). Where reintegration was unsuccessful, the pupil was in most cases Year 9.

Support Services

LCC has commissioned a range of services to strengthen best practice in early intervention and thus limit the need for AP and any subsequent reintegration.

BOSS, already mentioned, went live in September 2016. It provides a bespoke service for all schools in Lincolnshire, building their capacity to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils at risk of exclusion. The BOSS offer now includes:

- Awareness training for whole schools, individual staff teams, and/or individual staff, including lunch time supervisors about attachment and restorative approaches
- Advice and guidance about behaviour management
- Specialist training events delivered by qualified trainers
- Bespoke training packages at request. These training packages are tailor made for individual schools, clusters, federations and academies
- Mentoring, coaching, advice and practical intervention to develop a whole school approach to managing behaviour
- Targeted transition and re-integration support for managed moves
- Re-integration support and plans for schools when pupils return to mainstream education from alternative provision
- Targeted restorative support, provided by a qualified restorative practitioner
- In partnership with Restorative Solutions, a pilot project developing whole school restorative practice

The Working Together Team (WTT) was commissioned to provide educational support for pupils whose special needs, in this context specifically behavioural difficulties, relate to autism, with or without a diagnosis. The service follows a tiered model of support, the first tier being a single consultation when there are concerns about a pupil. If further intervention is required, schools can refer for specialist support from a WTT practitioner who then devises a programme similar to PSP around the Signs of Safety model of '*working well*'; '*not working well*' and '*what needs to happen next*'. This draws from a wide range of established and research-led approaches and interventions. Schools are expected to deliver programmes with on-going consultation, assessment, training and review from the WTT specialist teacher.

The pupil reintegration team (PRT) The work of this LCC team has been remodelled to support the aspiration of zero exclusion. Formerly, PRT caseworkers and officers managed the permanent exclusion process, reactively. That work continues since there are still, unfortunately, permanent exclusions to casework. However, the core function of the team has now changed completely with the focus on prevention; on embedding the Ladder across all Lincolnshire Schools. This

involves, for example, advising at PSP meetings, engaging hard to reach families in the PSP process, liaising with colleagues in BOSS, providing governor training on the Ladder, responding to daily calls for advice, feeding AP panel decisions back to Headteachers, managing the AP referral process and working with Springwell partners to track AP placements and to reintegrate permanently excluded pupils back into mainstream at the earliest opportunity.

The PRT has also introduced for 2017/18 Collaborative Headteacher Inclusion Panels (CHIPS) – a significant investment that is, again, designed to provide secondary Headteachers with an alternative to permanent exclusion.

Collaborative Headteacher Panels (CHIPS)

Whilst the benefits of a 'fresh start' for a pupil can be over-stated, there is no question that managed moves do work well for some, particularly where relationships in the home school have become toxic or when a serious 'one-off' incident has occurred.

LCC's managed move protocol was published at the end of 2015/16. For a pilot year, 2016/17, it was agreed that the council would fund transport for managed moves, where the new school was not the nearest to home address, since the cost of transport had prevented such a protocol from operating effectively in the past.

A DMT decision was made at the end of 2016/17 to extend and develop this pilot for another two years, acknowledging that council support for transport has the potential to incur significant cost. (The projected cost for the academic year 2017/18 for those that will still have a transport entitlement is £89,165.10. This is of course the initial projected cost and does not take account of any new students embarking on a managed move in 2017/18 and beyond.)

The PRT is in the process of establishing Collaborative Headteacher Inclusion Panels (CHIPs) across the localities, to enable schools to further develop partnership working. As a full and effective partner in the panels, the PRT will provide robust challenge and direction to schools to ensure that the use and implementation of managed moves are subject to scrutiny and peer review. The goal for the CHIPS will be to build on 2016-17 learning, consolidate and structure the process and see an increase in successful moves, guarding against the risk of managed move saturation.

The first panels have been established in Lincoln, cluster protocols agreed by participants and a meeting schedule is in place. Further discussions are underway in the Grantham area to consolidate local arrangements. By Christmas 2017, the goal is to have established CHIPS across the entire county, as below:

Greater Lincoln
North Kesteven Academy
Sir Robert Pattinson Academy
Branston Community Academy
Cherry Willingham Community School
Lincoln Castle Academy
Lincoln Christ's Hospital Academy
Lincoln St Peter and St Paul's Catholic Voluntary Academy
The Priory City of Lincoln Academy
Lincoln Priory Academy LSST
Lincoln The Priory Witham Academy
Lincoln University Technical College
West Lindsey
Market Rasen De Aston Academy
Welton William Farr C of E Academy
Caistor Yarborough Academy
Caistor Grammar Academy
Gainsborough Academy
Gainsborough Queen Elizabeth's High School
Boston
Boston Haven High Academy
Bosoton Grammar Academy
Boston High School Academy
Thomas Middlecott School
Barnes Wallace Academy
Stickney The William Lovell C of E Academy
East Lindsey A
Alford Queen Elizabeth's Grammar Academy
Alford John Spendluffe Academy
Louth King Edward VI Grammar School
Louth and Mablethorpe Monks' Dyke Tennyson College
Louth Cordeaux Academy
Somercotes Academy
East Lindsey B
Horncastle Queen Elizabeth's Grammar Academy
Horncastle Banovallum School
Skegness Grammar Academy
Skegness Academy
Spilsby King Edward VI Academy
Old LeakeThe Giles Academy

South/North Kesteven
The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's
Corby Glen The Charles Read Academy
Grantham The Priory Ruskin Academy
Grantham The King's Academy
Grantham Kesteven and Grantham Girls' Academy
Grantham Walton Girls' Academy
Welbourn Sir William Robertson Academy
Sleaford Carre's Grammar Academy
Sleaford Kesteven & Sleaford High Academy
Sleaford St George's Academy
South Kesteven/South Holland
Bourne Academy
Bourne Grammar Academy
The Deepings Academy
Spalding Grammar Academy
Spalding High School
Donington Thomas Cowley High Academy
Long Sutton The Peele Community College
University Academy Holbeach
Stamford Welland Academy
Spalding Academy

Of course, some Headteachers may wish to join different clusters, or they may wish to access more than one where this is appropriate, geographically. Carol Duncan will negotiate with schools in the North and Tracey Robinson the South.

A changing AP landscape

The council's aspiration to invest in the vocational sector to further reduce secondary exclusions has already been noted. This is by no means the only significant development within the sector. During 2016-17, Wellspring Academy Trust successfully converted the Mary Knox in Lincoln, formerly part of the Teaching and Learning Centre, to create Springwell Lincoln City Academy (SPLCA). The academy's satellite sites are currently spread across the localities in Gainsborough (Longwood House), Boston (Carlton Rd), Baumber and Mablethorpe (the Monks Dyke Tennyson College site from October 2017 – currently mobiles).

This is, however, an interim arrangement with Wellspring having secured approval to build four free schools in Lincolnshire. Mary Knox will operate as the MAT's Lincolnshire headquarters with stand-alone free schools opening in Mablethorpe (formerly MDTC/Youth centre site), Lincoln (adjacent to Myle Cross/Giles Academy sites), Spalding (in the former sixth form centre of Spalding Gleed/Academy) and Grantham (a new build on the old Grantham LTLC site).

Contract Management

DfE *High needs funding: alternative provision* (Sept 2015) advises that Local Authorities must "encourage good quality AP that helps pupils and students achieve their full potential and not sustain poor quality AP." (p4) The council therefore has a duty to ensure that performance is evaluated and commissioning decisions reflect the outcome of this.

LCC contract management processes are designed to ensure that the performance of AP commissioned by the LA, currently exclusively WAT, is monitored and evaluated. Led by the contract management board, these meetings are to be held at the end of each half term and will utilise the Council's Joint Evaluation Toolkit (JET) system. The JET adopts a balanced scorecard approach to manage the performance and risks of contracted services delivered, evaluating the quality of service provided against the associated costs to assist LCC in determining if the service provides value for money and improves outcomes for children and young people.

Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

Background Papers

None

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