

Agenda Item 10



Regulatory and Other Committee

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

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	11 October 2018
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

In September 2016, the Local Authority introduced the Ladder of Intervention and with that, additional resources for Headteachers seeking to avoid permanent exclusion. The final step of the Ladder is, broadly, time limited intervention placement within Springwell Alternative Academy, for KS1-3 pupils, or referral into an alternative pathway for KS4. This may be for part or all of the week.

During 2016-17, the only Alternative Provision (AP) available to schools was that provided by Springwell Alternative Academy. However, in October 2017 a proposal to broaden that offer was agreed by Schools' Forum. Without revisiting the detail of that paper, there were two main reasons for this. First, the Springwell commission of 252 places was insufficient. Historically, the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) had gone over PAN by approximately 80 places and this ran the risk of destabilising a setting that was funded and staffed for a smaller cohort. Secondly, it was agreed that work-related learning rather than additional PRU places would enrich the AP landscape and that high quality providers, some of whom were long-established in Lincolnshire as part of 'Solutions 4' arrangements, should have the opportunity to bid for an LCC contract.

The CMAT Alternative Pathway

The tender process began in January 2017 and concluded in July. In the meantime, since a gap in provision for vocational learning and a shortfall of places had been identified, the Local Authority commissioned Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) to provide 45 work-related learning places for Y9-11 pupils. CMAT subcontracted Specialist Education Support Network (SESN), First

Steps (in Boston) and Build a Future (West Ashby) to deliver this service. Since these were all at the time unregistered providers, no placements were full-time and pupils remained on the roll of their home schools. CMAT provided robust quality assurance against independent school standards and RAG rated reports were shared with the LA every term. CMAT also managed the admissions process, facilitated information sharing; placement planning and regular pupil-level review.

The service was well received by schools, as evidenced by a stakeholder evaluation undertaken in June 2018.

School CMAT Pathway Survey: Key Findings



In July 2018, Build a Future successfully secured the five year vocational learning contract (outlined above) and CMAT is currently working with both the LA and the provider to ensure a smooth transition from interim arrangement to long term contract. All of the pupils formerly placed by CMAT with an alternative pathway provider have now transferred into Build a Future provision. This process has been greatly helped by the fact that during the summer, First Steps ceased trading and Build a Future now rent that site, as 'Build a Future Boston'. This meant of course that settled First Steps pupils did not have to move centres.

In order to secure the LCC contract, Build a Future had to first register as an independent school and CMAT were instrumental in enabling them to achieve this status. A full section 5 Ofsted inspection will follow this academic year and clearly it is strategically vital for the LA that the outcome of this is positive. If Build a Future is not deemed Good, then the LA will not be able to place the required number of pupils. CMAT will therefore continue to support Build a Future as they prepare for

full inspection, after which the trust's contractual agreement with the LA (and Build a Future) will end.

Springwell Alternative Academy Free School Project

The vocational learning contract is without doubt an important strategic development, but LCC's principle AP partner remains Springwell Lincoln City Academy, of Wellspring Academy Trust (WAT). This relationship brings with it significant investment in that WAT has secured Department for Education approval for four purpose-built alternative free schools in Lincolnshire – sited at Mablethorpe (a refurbishment), Spalding (another refurbishment) Lincoln (new build) and Grantham (new build). However, whilst work is underway on all of these sites, the project has been hampered by numerous DfE delays, and Springwell has had to operate much longer than anticipated out of temporary and less than optimum accommodation.

To illustrate the difficulties, only last July the DfE advised that the Spalding site would not be ready for September 2018, after Springwell had recruited staff to that site. This meant that temporary accommodation had to be found at short notice, on this occasion in the shape of Boston Youth Centre. Increased costs have resulted from crisis management such as this and whilst LCC has been assured that these will be met in full by the DfE, the impact on learners cannot be compensated.

Springwell's other centres are currently located at Baumber, Lincoln, Gainsborough and Mablethorpe. Castles Education (20 places) and Bridge House (10 places) have also been subcontracted by Springwell to provide some additional KS4 capacity, in lieu of free school build completion.

Despite these challenges, Springwell has worked with the LA to deliver the Ladder of Intervention and this has been instrumental in driving down the rate of permanent exclusion of pupils from Lincolnshire schools. The data below confirms that most KS1-3 pupils who access intervention placements within Springwell go on to be successfully reintegrated back into their mainstream schools, following 16 week placement in a centre.

2017-18 Intervention Places		
	KS1-2	KS3
Referrals Accepted	38	24
Still on Intervention	17	10
Successfully Reintegrated	18	12
PEX, post intervention	3	2

At KS4, pupils are not referred into AP for intervention (since this would only disrupt a mainstream KS4 programme of study) but rather to pursue alternative courses in settings more suited to their needs. Placements may be for part or all of the week. The referral pattern of pupils into AP via the Ladder in 2017/18 was as follows:

2017-18 KS4 Alternative Pathway	
CMAT alternative pathway	45
Springwell alternative pathway	18

The CMAT pathway was the LA's preferred choice for 'pre-excluded' pupils because the LA had to reserve its Springwell places for permanently excluded young people since they could not legally be placed full-time in what were then unregistered settings. 51 KS4 pupils were permanently excluded during 2017-18 so this remained the main route into alternative provision. It is hoped that this balance will shift this academic year as the Ladder further embeds and inclusive practice within the secondary sector strengthens.

The primary sector has already reached that tipping point with the number of primary pupils permanently excluded last year (27) less than the number placed for intervention (38). The same cannot be said for KS3 with 50 pupils permanently excluded compared to 24 placed for intervention.

The figures suggest that the ambitious goal of a zero exclusion Lincolnshire remains a work in progress, though those schools that did fully engage with the Ladder proved that it does provide Headteachers with a viable alternative to permanent exclusion, when schools can evidence that the referral for AP comes only after school-based intervention and support has been exhausted. There is no bypassing the robust panel process and whilst this means that referrals are declined approximately 50% of the time, and sometimes this results in a permanent exclusion, it ensures that the Ladder has integrity and that the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy is not about facilitating off-rolling or promoting alternative provision, but about driving inclusive policy and practice.

Conclusion

This year's arrangements for AP, taking into account all of the above, are as follows:

Option	Year	Provision outline	Cost	Provider
16 week intervention	1-6	Intensive behaviour support to re-track and enable successful reintegration back to home school	£1,373.50 (50% AWPU)	Springwell
16 week intervention	7-9	Intensive behaviour support to re-track and enable successful reintegration back to home school	£1,931.00 (50% AWPU)	Springwell
Alternative pathway	9	Re-engagement through work related learning, 1-3 days per week. All pupils dual registered with home school which monitors & reviews progress. Length of placement flexible & subject to review	Pro-rata AWPU	Build a Future

Alternative pathway	10-11	Re-engagement through work-related learning, 1-5 days per week. Placements usually for entire key stage allowing completion of vocational courses. Pupils dual registered with home school	Pro-rata AWPU with exception that if placements are 5 days, then 4.5 AWPU is withdrawn since school supports placement	Build a Future
Alternative provision	10-11	<p>Single registered placements. Only available to schools that have first invested in their own AP through the commissioning of a local provider. (One long term or the equivalent if part-time.) Parents must agree in writing to move from a school roll.</p> <p>It is not possible to move pupils from a dual registered LA funded place to a single registered one. Pupils who access a dual registered place via the Ladder will remain on the school roll.</p> <p>If referral is made to panel for single registration place because school has invested in AP, then PSP, BOSS advice etc. must still support the referral. That is, the steps of the Ladder still apply.</p> <p>No single registration places are available for Y9 pupils even if the school has invested in its own AP. The door back to mainstream needs to remain open.</p>	<p>Transfer of AWPU and all pupil-led funding, e.g. FSM, IDACI, prior attainment</p>	Springwell, Build a Future

Note: Maintained school cost recovery will be through a recharge, which will be actioned by the Schools Finance Team. Academies schools will be raised a sales invoice for payment.

Clearly, not all pupils are placed within AP via the Ladder and these options. As already established, most secondary pupils take up places because they have been permanently excluded from their schools. The challenge for the LA and the sector this academic year is to shift that balance so that capacity is effectively managed, and placement into an AP is part of a graduated process, the Ladder, not the negative terminal point of a punitive process.

Of course, Headteachers reserve the right to permanently exclude, but permanent exclusion must always be a 'last resort', according to statutory guidance. The Ladder defines what a 'last resort' looks like in Lincolnshire and enables mainstream schools to collaborate with AP providers in the best interests of vulnerable pupils. It is a generous offer, a challenge to the mainstream sector and a vitally important work in progress.

Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

November 2018

Background Papers

This report was written by Mary Meredith, Service Manager - Inclusion who can be contacted on 01522 554549 or mary.meredith@lincolnshire.gov.uk.