



**Complete Proposal
To Discontinue**

**The Ash Villa South Rauceby
School**

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 19 OF THE EDUCATION AND
INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

PROPOSALS TO MAKE A PRESCRIBED ALTERATION TO A SCHOOL

6 May 2020

Contact details

This proposal has been published by Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ regarding the potential closure of the special school The Ash Villa South Rauceby, Willoughby Road, Greylees, Sleaford, NG34 8QA.

Implementation

The proposal is to discontinue The Ash Villa South Rauceby school with effect from 1 September 2020.

Objections and Comments

Any person or organisation may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the School Organisation Planning Team, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ or by emailing schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk to be received by the deadline of 3 June 2020.

Alteration Description

The proposal detailed in this document is to discontinue The Ash Villa South Rauceby with effect from 1 September 2020 due to concerns over the long term sustainability of the school.

Objectives and Reasons for Closure

The Ash Villa South Rauceby is a social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) special school which provides high quality education and courses to young people admitted to the integrated Ash Villa hospital unit. The school has a capacity of 13 and caters for pupils aged 11 to 18. The associated hospital unit has temporarily been closed since October 2019 due to the inability to attract the required consultant medical staff to operate safely. As such there are currently no pupils at the school.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) have confirmed that the Ash Villa hospital unit will not reopen on the current site in the current building. Without the care unit at Ash Villa there will continue to be no pupils for The Ash Villa South Rauceby school. Without the pupils the school cannot continue to operate.

It is the LA's statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to accommodate all pupils of all needs of statutory school age across the county of Lincolnshire. The LA must consider its duty to promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and assist every child to achieve their potential with the aim of enabling children to take up a school place in the local area. To help the LA meet these duties and restructure local provision they have the power to close all categories of maintained schools.

The objectives of this proposal relate to the long term sustainability of the school with no certainty over the supply of pupils for this specialist provision. The proposal is considered to be in the best interests of staff wellbeing and the efficient use of resources. Without the hospital unit open there will be no pupils attending the school which will not allow the school to set a balanced budget and staff are unable to practice in their chosen

profession. It is not considered reasonable to keep a school open and staffed in the long term with no pupils on roll.

Following careful consideration of how to secure a viable future for the school, Lincolnshire County Council (the Local Authority responsible for the school provision only), at the request of the Governing Body, made the difficult decision to consult on the closure of the school.

The Statutory Notice has been published to propose the discontinuance of The Ash Villa South Rauceby school for the following reasons:

- To comply with the wishes of the Governing Body.
- To support the best interests of staff. With no pupils at the school staff are unable to practice their chosen profession. This period of uncertainty is having a detrimental effect on staff morale and wellbeing. Staff at the school would potentially be given opportunities to work with existing providers and look for redeployment opportunities to secure their high quality specialist skills within the education sector wherever possible.
- With the confirmation from LPFT that the hospital unit will not re-open on the existing site and with no certainty over the supply of pupils, the school will not be able to set a balanced budget with the operating costs and a reduced income. Schools are not legally allowed to set a deficit budget without a realistic medium term plan showing how the deficit will be turned around.
- The Local Authority is required to review the number of school places annually. Place numbers are established based on demand for places, therefore if demand reduces or ceases, the number of places provided should reflect this position.
- It would not be considered reasonable to keep a school open long-term with no pupils as it is not viable. It would not be considered an efficient use of resources. The closure of the school would contribute to the provision of sustainable schools across the county allowing future funding to be used more effectively elsewhere.
- To enable the process to continue to the next stage and allow a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the Executive Councillor prior to the final decision being taken. This continuation of the process will allow more time for all potential alternatives to closure to be fully and robustly explored.
- To enable the statutory and legal processes to proceed in accordance with guidelines laid down by the DfE.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Provision and Displaced Pupils

Nationally it has been recognised that most young people with severe mental health problems do better when they receive care in their local communities with intensive support provided in their own homes, along with attending their own school. The Government are currently piloting this approach and NHS England are supporting such a pilot in Lincolnshire from April to October 2020. This new care model will mean that

children and young people who may previously have been admitted to the Ash Villa hospital unit will now, wherever possible, be treated in their own homes.

Whatever the outcome of the pilot in October 2020, Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) have confirmed that the Ash Villa hospital unit will not reopen on the current site in the current building. This is because the building is not fit for purpose and does not meet the new quality standards for such services prescribed by national policy.

The majority of pupils that access Ash Villa school are from outside of Lincolnshire. The LA will be able to meet statutory duties within existing provision already in place across the county and in neighbouring counties. The specialist staff at Ash Villa would be given opportunities to work with existing providers and look for redeployment opportunities to secure their high quality specialist skills within the education sector wherever possible.

As there are currently no pupils on roll at the school and the hospital unit will not reopen on its current site, there will be no pupils displaced should the school close. As per the NHS England pilot, young people who would have previously been admitted into the hospital unit will now receive care in their local communities with intensive support provided in their own homes, along with attending their own school. NHS England also have other inpatient facilities, the closest located in Nottinghamshire, this facility and any other inpatient facilities available should not have an overriding bearing on this consultation, as this consultation relates solely to The Ash Villa South Rauceby school and not the inpatient hospital unit. The hospital unit closure formed part of a separate consultation by Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Impact on the Community

The Ash Villa hospital unit admitted a maximum of 13 children at any one time from all over the county and beyond. The majority of pupils that access the school are from outside of Lincolnshire, so the impact on the immediate community would be minimal.

There will be no disruption to pupils or parents as there are currently no pupils on roll at the school.

The school provided no additional facilities to the local community, such as use of premises for clubs or events.

The LA has a good track record of redeployment of staff and will always seek to avoid redundancy not only to mitigate costs but also to reduce the human costs of redundancy.

The LA does not consider that there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that will arise if the school closes. The LA continues to be committed to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area and aims to ensure that such opportunities are open to all believing that this will be met by the remaining schools in the area.

School Site

The buildings do not belong to Lincolnshire County Council and are owned by LPFT, so the future of the school premises do not need to be considered.

Balance of denominational provision

The Ash Villa South Rauceby school is a non-denominational school and as a result there will be no impact on denominational provision.

Travel

The Ash Villa hospital unit provided beds to those who were admitted, the majority of who lived at the facility, therefore daily travel was minimal.

The NHS pilot will provide care in local communities and intensive support in the homes of young people with severe mental health conditions. This means there will be no change to the amount of travel a pupil would usually undertake if they continue to be educated at their existing school.

There are no children on roll at The Ash Villa South Rauceby school.

Consultation

In order for the school to close the LA must follow the necessary statutory legal processes as required by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and updated by the Education Act 2011 together with the guidance "Opening and closing maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (November 2019) issued by the DfE.

On 27 January 2020 a letter incorporating relevant information and reasons for the proposal was sent out to interested parties to commence a six week period of consultation. Responses to the consultation could be submitted online by completing a short survey, by letter or email. The deadline for responses was 9 March 2020. A copy of the letter commencing consultation was published on the County Council at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-pupil-support/school-organisation-planning

A public meeting was held at The Ash Villa South Rauceby school, Greylees, Sleaford on 26 February to provide more detail about the proposal and to provide interested parties with an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. However, no members of the general public attended.

All written responses received during consultation have been made available to the Executive Councillor for consideration and further details are confirmed in the decision report which can be found through the link below or by writing to request a copy. To summarise, there were four valid responses in total.

One response had no objection providing that the LA was able to provide quality education to allow children to flourish. The other three responses related mainly to the Ash Villa Hospital Unit, as opposed to the school. One of those supported the concept of the mainly community/home treatment service but they felt the proposal was not sufficiently adequate. A number of questions were raised surrounding the availability of alternative residential provision and where this would be located. Points were also raised about the impact of families dealing with someone with severe mental health issues within the home and questions were asked about how the new care model was performing.

There were no objections specifically about the closure of the school.

Under current legislation the LA is the decision maker for the proposal and is co-ordinating the statutory process before making a final decision in July 2020. The LA, as decision maker, must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process.

Project Costs

Should a decision be made at the end of this process to proceed with the closure of the school, there will be staff related financial implications resulting from the closure which will need to be determined; however re-deployment opportunities will be explored to maintain high quality specialist skills within the sector. Financial liabilities will need to be managed within available school reserve and the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Local Authority would also consider how future planned funding could be re-directed to contribute to the provision of hospital education across the county. There will be no capital costs associated with this proposal.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Provision

The closure of the school will not have a significant impact on SEND provision. The hospital unit is closed and without this unit there will continue to be no pupils for the school. Without the pupils the school cannot continue to operate.

Pupils with severe mental health problems will continue to attend their own school and will receive the necessary care and intensive support at school and at home. NHS England have alternative inpatient facilities. Within the past two years there has been as little as 3 pupils on roll at the school with a maximum of 11 out of a possible of 13.

Related Proposals

The proposal to discontinue The Ash Villa South Rauceby school is not related to any other statutory school organisation proposal.

What will happen now?

Any person may object to or make comments on this proposal by sending them to the School Organisation Planning Team, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, 51 Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ, by emailing schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk or online via www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-pupil-support/school-organisation-planning through a simple online survey.

At the close of the 4 week representation period (statutory formal consultation) on 3 June 2020 responses will be collated and analysed. A further report will be presented for an Executive final decision in July 2020 on the closure of the school. The representation period is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the decision maker.