

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

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	09 October 2020
Subject:	Update on the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy, approved by the Executive on 6 November 2018. The report summarises the progress made in Year 2 of implementation, within the Capital Build Programme and in all supporting system areas.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is requested to

1. review and comment on the content of this report and progress made in Year 2 of implementation.
2. receive an update on Year 3 of implementation in October 2021.

1. Background

In November 2018, the Executive granted approval to implement the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy. Implementation of this strategy commenced in January 2019 and will take place over the next five years with the final school changes being made in September 2024.

The strategy will make 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.

In order to achieve this ambition, the strategy will provide a locality-based, sector-wide approach to special education which will enable all special schools to meet the wide range of needs of pupils within their local community. As existing special schools are designed to meet specific designations of need, each school has obtained approval to change its designation to enable them to meet All Needs. In addition, the strategy will significantly increase the special school estate to address existing overcrowding issues and the growing demand, through capital investment

to support expansion, in line with projected need. The allocated capital investment will be utilised to improve premises and facilities, enabling each school to offer places to pupils from within their local communities with All Needs.

All special schools have been approved to make significant change to the type of need catered for and expansion where this has been identified and these are outlined in the strategy. All 14 special schools will be able to meet “all needs” once the strategy has been fully implemented.

2. Progress Update

2.1 Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 has been felt within this programme, as in all aspects of the Council's work. The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy is a multi-faceted and complex strategy incorporating the fields of education, construction and the Local Authority's statutory responsibility for the education of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Uncertainty and low confidence has been evident in the construction industry due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly within the supply chain. Schools have experienced unprecedented challenges as they have been required to provide a quality education to children in their home settings and at school and are now working to ensure all children can access their education in a Covid secure environment. The priority for the Local Authority (LA) and Special Schools during this pandemic has been the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable communities and this has inevitably affected agencies capacity to drive forward this programme.

However, implementation of the strategy including the capital build programme has continued with the same impetus and drive as it did in pre-lockdown, though it has been inevitable that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about delays on the construction schemes.

Boston Endeavour Academy commenced on site in March 2020, just as lockdown was introduced to the UK. Work has continued on site throughout this period, in line with Government guidelines and good progress has been made with a forecast two week delay to date.

All other schemes which are in pre-construction stage are forecasting a delay to commencing on site or for feasibility activities. Covid-19 has significantly impacted the way in which LA Officers, schools and partner agencies have been able to work together to drive the programme forward. Working practices have been reviewed and new ways of working have been devised and implemented in a short space of time, to minimise the impact on the programme as much as possible. Restrictions relating to Covid-19 and the safe access to schools have also impacted on the programme's timeline.

However, all schemes continue to progress and are in line for completion before the end of the five year strategic implementation period.

Please see Appendix A for the revised timeline of scheme completions.

2.2 Capital Programme

This section provides an update on the second year of delivery of the capital programme (October 2019 – October 2020).

Corporate Property has been commissioned to deliver this programme by Children's Services, and the directorates are working closely in partnership with schools and contractors to bring each scheme to fruition, despite the challenges presented due to the global pandemic.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will already have a sound understanding of the schemes which have obtained Executive Councillor approval through the Capital Appraisal process. The Committee has, to date, scrutinised the Boston Endeavour Academy and The Willoughby Academy schemes and provided their recommendation and support for both. The Eresby School scheme appraisal is also on today's agenda for the Committee's consideration.

Boston Endeavour Academy (formerly The John Fielding School)

In line with projected need, the Boston Endeavour Academy is being developed with a capacity of 140, providing an additional 84 special school places for children and young people in the Boston area.

The new school will provide 16 classrooms, specialist teaching spaces including science, technology, ICT and art, and a hall. The school will also benefit from a hydrotherapy pool, sensory and soft play rooms and dedicated therapy spaces. Externally there will be space for hard and soft surfaced play areas and sensory, horticulture and wildlife areas.

Following Executive Councillor approval in January 2020, work commenced on site in March 2020. Good progress has been made despite the impact of Covid-19 related issues upon the contractor and the availability of materials that has resulted in some delay. The completion date is programmed for July 2021.

Please see Appendix B for site progress photographs.

The Willoughby Academy, Bourne

In line with projected need, The Willoughby Academy will expand to a capacity of 148 on its existing site, providing an additional 68 school places. The additional capacity will be achieved by building a new block and remodelling of some existing spaces.

The new build accommodation block will provide six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small

group spaces and hygiene facilities. The existing school will undergo some remodelling work to provide 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.

Following Executive Councillor approval in August this year, construction is programmed to begin in October 2020 and complete in August 2021. Delays to construction have been brought about due to Covid-19 restrictions and an extension for further archaeological enabling works as a result of significant finds of historical interest which have challenged previous understanding of the Roman settlement in the area.

Please see Appendix C for photographs of items discovered.

The Eresby School, Spilsby

The Eresby School is subject to remodelling and development to provide improved facilities to enable it to deliver all needs education.

This will be achieved by the construction of a new block and remodelling of some existing spaces. The new build accommodation block will provide additional facilities including five classrooms, hall, ICT and science spaces as well as small group rooms, hygiene facilities and staff and meeting spaces. The existing school will also undergo extensive remodelling work to provide a design/technology and art room, a physiotherapy space, a visiting professional/therapy space, a parents' room, a hygiene suite, a disabled WC and staff/administration spaces.

Subject to Executive Councillor approval, construction is programmed to begin in January 2021 for completion in January 2022.

St Lawrence School, Horncastle

In line with projected need, St Lawrence School will expand to a capacity of 150 on its existing site, providing an additional 70 school places.

An options appraisal is currently being carried out to ensure a best value solution is identified after detailed survey information highlighted significant condition issues with the main school building. This report is hoping to be complete for September 2020 and the chosen option progressed into detailed design.

Proposed dates will be issued once a chosen design begins to be developed. The aim is for the works to be completed for the Autumn term 2022.

St Bernard's School, Louth

In line with projected need, St Bernard's School will be subject to an expansion to enable a minimum of 100 pupils to be educated on the existing site.

Detailed design work is in progress which will provide the school with a new teaching block and some internal remodelling of existing spaces. The proposed

new block will provide additional facilities including six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small group spaces, therapy and hygiene facilities.

It is intended that this scheme is completed by August 2022.

Lincoln St Christopher's School

As the Committee is aware, Lincolnshire's application for a new special free school submitted to the Department for Education in October 2018 was unsuccessful. An extensive options appraisal was undertaken to review the alternatives available to the LA, as demand analysis indicated the need for an additional 111 special school places for Lincoln city and the surrounding area. This report concluded that the most suitable option to ensure Lincoln City has sufficient special school places was to expand the current LA maintained St Christopher's School over two sites, with a new capacity of 333 overall. In order to ensure adequate space and facilities for this number of pupils, it would be necessary to develop a new primary facility on a second site (the former Usher School site, Skellingthorpe Road) with a capacity of 130 and provide extensive remodelling and development to the existing St Christopher's School to create a secondary provision with a capacity of 203.

All statutory processes were subsequently followed with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommending the revised proposal in January 2020. Executive approval for the revised proposal was granted in February 2020.

These projects are at an early stage and a feasibility report is in development to consider options for both sites. It is intended that the Primary School will be open for Spring term 2022 with the secondary school being open for Autumn term 2023.

St Francis Special School, Lincoln

St Francis Special School will be subject to remodelling and re-development to meet a capacity of 155 and provide additional facilities to enable it to deliver all needs education.

This project is at an early stage and a feasibility report is in development to consider options to provide facilities to meet requirements on the existing site.

Gosberton House Academy, Gosberton

Gosberton House Academy will be subject to remodelling and development to provide improved facilities to enable it to deliver all needs education.

This is the final scheme in the capital build programme and, as a result, pre-construction work has not yet commenced.

Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) Self Delivery Projects

The following schemes (excluding The Priory) have received Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) from the Department for Education (DfE) and self-

delivery by the Trust has been approved. The Local Authority has made additional financial contributions to the self-delivery projects to ensure all needs can be met at all CIT academies. Project Managers from Corporate Property and Children's Services regularly meet with the CIT team to monitor scheme progress.

Ambergate Sports College / The Sandon School, Grantham

Projected need dictates a requirement for a minimum of 229 places in the Grantham area with The Sandon School and Ambergate Sports College becoming one school operating over two sites.

During the design phase, CIT identified that the two sites would not be sufficient to deliver the 229 places required. Options are being considered for a third site to enable the school to effectively deliver education for 229 pupils and these will be explored in Autumn 2020. A report will then be produced highlighting the preferred solution for consideration by CIT and Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), with approval sought through the appropriate democratic process.

The Garth School and The Priory School, Spalding

In line with the approved strategy, these two schools will become one operating over two sites with a capacity of 177.

The Garth School project is being self-delivered by CIT and is programmed to complete in October 2020.

Corporate Property are delivering the project at The Priory School and are better suited to this as it is a more complex and high value scheme. This project is at an early stage and a feasibility report is in development to consider options to provide facilities to meet requirements on the existing site.

It is intended that this scheme is complete by September 2022. The amalgamation of these schools into one all needs school for Spalding will be facilitated in line with the completion date of The Priory School.

2.3 Children and Young People with Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)

The strategic vision for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs now forms part of the High Needs Strategy for Lincolnshire led by Mary Meredith, Service Manager for Inclusion and High Needs Transformation.

The High Needs Strategy is a ten-point plan of action which will seek to ensure children and young people with SEMH have access to the quality education in the most appropriate setting for their needs. It covers three broad areas:-

- Early intervention through a strengthened graduated approach,
- The introduction of clear practice standards within statutory SEND, and
- Support for step-down from special school to mainstream school.

As part of this strategic vision, and in order to meet rising demand for SEMH school places, capacity has been increased within the SEMH estate and the LA are now working with new independent partners, to reduce the reliance on home tuition.

2.4 Community Led Panels

The Design workstream was tasked with creating a mechanism for sector-led challenge to ensure that Lincolnshire children have access to the right education, health and care at the right time, in the right place as close to home as possible. At present, children and young people with SEND may be placed on Home Tuition or be educated in Out of County provision, as there are not enough school places or local special schools state that they cannot meet need. In order to ensure that this does not continue, it was agreed that each locality needed to ensure that all schools acknowledge ownership and responsibility for this group of children and should work together to ensure school places were available to all students as close to home as possible.

A model of delivery has been approved, namely the development of Specialist Community Led Panels for each locality to meet the needs of children and young people requiring a special school place at the right time as close to home as possible.

The panels will seek to identify a local special school place for the following cohort, through solution-focused discussion and peer challenge:

- A child/young person residing in Lincolnshire with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who is at the local special school setting but school states they are struggling to meet need.
- A child/young person has a recently finalised EHCP recommending specialist provision and, following consultation, the local special school feel unable to meet need.
- A child/young person has an EHCP and moves in from another area and local special school queries being able to meet need.
- A child/young person is identified as requiring an Out of County placement as local special school queries being able to meet need.
- A child/young person is at risk of permanent exclusion from a local special school.

The introduction of these panels has been delayed due to Covid-19, with schools having to prioritise the needs of their existing pupils. As schools fully re-open in September 2020, there will be a greater need to launch the Specialist Community Led Panels, therefore this aspect of the strategy will be implemented in the coming months.

2.5 Health

The Health workstream has successfully developed robust partnership working across the Local Authority, Health Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups to

ensure an effective health offer can be provided to all special schools. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between schools and health providers, which sets out clear expectations around provision has been approved and is ready to be launched in advance of the first all needs school opening in September 2021.

2.6 Specialist Equipment Contract

In order to ensure the most effective use of specialist medical and therapy equipment, all special schools have agreed to join the existing contractual arrangements held by the Local Authority with specialist equipment providers. All special schools have committed to joining the Specialist Equipment and this was unanimously approved at the Special School Project Board in July 2020. Prior to formal approval, a number of schools had already moved over to the contract and were enjoying the benefits of this arrangement.

2.7 Workforce Development

The Workforce Development workstream has designed the concept of a SEND Learning Platform: a sector-led approach to professional development which will ensure all pupils with SEND can access a quality education facilitated by skilled and knowledgeable staff. The group has been instrumental in creating a training model which can provide access to a high quality, evidence-based learning for those who work with children and young people with SEND.

This tiered learning platform proposes to utilise an existing LCC online portal to provide appropriately targeted access to a wide range of learning resources and training which will be available to all special school staff, both teaching and non-teaching. This is to ensure a culture of SEND awareness and inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life.

Acknowledging the excellent array of training and professional development already commissioned by LCC and also that which is available from other providers, the SEND Learning Platform proposes to bring together, into one place, the high quality training already available and utilise the skills and expertise of the Lincolnshire SEND Alliance to develop training provision where gaps have been identified. It will utilise a wide range of learning methods (e-learning, online resources and face to face training) to ensure equity and ease of access, in a geographically vast county.

It is proposed that the workforce development model will be implemented in a phased approach:

PHASE 1: Implemented by September 2021. In line with the immediate purpose of the project, ensuring the workforce within special schools is equipped and trained effectively to support the move to all through, all need.

PHASE 2: Once all special schools are accessing the SEND Learning Platform and have a workforce which is equipped and trained to effectively meet all needs, the

content of the platform will be made available to all mainstream schools and to parent/carers.

The SEND Learning Platform was approved by the Children's Services Directorate Leadership Team in September 2020. Approval for the model will be sought from the Executive Councillor and from the SEND Alliance Project Board. Once approval has been obtained, this work will be progressed with the support of LCC Commissioning Services.

3. Conclusion

Despite the unexpected challenges which have impacted the implementation of this multi-faceted and complex strategy, significant progress has been made across all aspects of the programme. New and creative ways of working have been developed and the strategy is still on course for full implementation by 2024.

The capital building programme has continued to progress despite the extensive impact of Covid-19, global uncertainty in the construction industry and a significant increase in health and safety requirements on building sites. Twelve of the fourteen schools are actively engaged in the pre-construction phase of their planned development in accordance with the projected timeline for the programme. Boston Endeavour Academy is now a live construction project and construction at The Willoughby School is due to commence next month. Whilst some delays have been inevitable as the LA, schools and our construction partners adapted to new ways of working, the whole strategic vision is on track to be implemented in five years from approval as set out in the original strategy.

In order for all schools to be all needs operational, the support systems of workforce development, health and SEND design must be established in readiness for implementation. These workstreams have made significant progress in the last 12 months: the Health Memorandum of Understanding has been approved and is ready to be established in each school as they begin to meet all needs; a workforce development model has been approved and is due to be implemented to benefit staff in special schools by September 2021; and Specialist Community Led Panels are ready for implementation once special schools have the capacity to engage in this valuable exercise. In addition, all special schools joined up to the Lincolnshire Contract for Specialist Equipment. This progress has been made against a backdrop of Covid-19 uncertainty and in an environment where priority had to be given to educating children in a safe and secure environment amidst a global pandemic.

4. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

On-going within Project Plan

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Outline Programme SEND July 2020
Appendix B	Boston Endeavour Academy Progress, August 2020
Appendix C	Bourne Willoughby Archaeology, August 2020

6. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Building Communities of Specialist Provision: Together in Lincolnshire Strategy	SEND Project Office

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