

APPENDIX A

Written Responses in the Consultation Period on the future of the boarding provision at The St Francis Special School

Questions received during the consultation period and responses provided:

1. It was stated that in the SEND review they want all the Special Schools to be of the same format – Why?

The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy was widely consulted on in 2018 and 2019 and adopted by the council last year, with significant capital investment to support its implementation through large scale building work at special schools across Lincolnshire which has now begun. The details and reasons for this approach, including why there is a desire for all provision to have the same offer and provide equality across the sector can be found through <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-disabilities-send/send-support-schools/1>

The purpose of the strategy (which has been consulted on, approved and endorsed by the governing body of St Francis School) is to ensure all pupils have access to an equitable and fair education provision. Children and young people should be able to attend their local special school confident that their education, health and care needs can be met, regardless of where they live in the county. Those children living in localities with previously lesser provision at their local special school will no longer have to face inequality across the sector. Therefore all special schools need to have an equitable offer to ensure that all children who require special school have a comparable experience. All special schools do not have to have the same format but they do have to have a comparable offer to avoid the necessity for a child having to travel excessive distances to access an appropriate education in a different locality to ensure that their needs are met.

2. St Francis School has always been unique, why try to make it like other schools? Yes we have been very fortunate to have the Residential provision but this is a large part of what makes the school 'Outstanding'. The service offered by Lorraine and her team is second to none, the opportunities provided and independence the pupils gain is irreplaceable. The pupils' self-esteem and confidence grows throughout the term. For many it is the only opportunity they get to socialise outside of the school or home environment. Lorraine and her team offer vital support to a number of families who would fail without it.

The school had moved away from offering the boarding opportunity to young able-bodied young people in Post 16 as it was recognised many of those young people were mixing out and about in their local communities and did not have the need for such a protected environment offered by the residential facility. The facility, until it was closed due to COVID restrictions, was used by the young people with more complex physical / cognitive needs.

The school OFSTED does not also inspect the residential provision. The residential inspection is a separate process.

The purpose of the strategy is to build communities of support around each special school, within every local community, not limited to those schools that have a residential facility. As more children with all needs attend their local school, opportunities to socialise outside of the school environment will expand. The residential facility currently offers this only to pupils at St Francis but the strategy has been developed so the offer of opportunities for social time can be extended to all children and young people with SEND in their local communities regardless of which school they attend. All special schools are keen to review their extra-curricular offer which can provide these opportunities without there needing to be a residential facility.

The statement that St Francis has always been unique is contradictory to the approved strategy. Children who attend St Francis currently receive an offer beyond all other special school students. This needs to be addressed to ensure equity and fairness for all.

- 3. Is it fair that our pupils have to miss out because other schools don't have a residential provision? Our pupils come up through the school with the expectation and anticipation that they will get to board. It is one of the few areas where they can take control of their environment and have a valuable say in the planning of their activities and time. It is their home from home.**

For the past two years, St Francis School has been in a Federation with St Christopher's School. Despite being Federated the young people at St Christopher's School are not able to use the St Francis residential provision. There are many young people there with very complex needs who would benefit from the use of the residential area if it came under a boarder short breaks arrangement, including weekends and holidays.

Nearly all other special schools provide these opportunities as part of their day curriculum, without the need for overnight stays. The pupil's voice is heard throughout the day curriculum and skills such as activity planning through student councils are well established. These opportunities should be available to all during the school day.

- 4. Boarding at St Francis School is available to all pupils not just those who tick certain boxes, is it fair that our pupils from a stable home miss out on the opportunities provided by Residential?**

Under the short break arrangements pupils needs would be assessed, it is not about the type of home a young person comes from.

Short breaks can be provided by local authorities through the use of their powers under: section 17(6) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation as part of a range of services in order to discharge their general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need; and section 20(4) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation 'for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare'. Before making, and when reviewing, a decision about whether to provide accommodation under section 17(6) or section 20(4) of the 1989 Act there should be a careful assessment of the child's and family's needs.

Whilst it is available to all students at St Francis, it is not currently available to students from other special schools.

- 5. Are you aware of the state that some of our pupils come from other outside agencies in the mornings? The pupils don't get the same level of care and we don't believe the staff may have the same level of knowledge of the pupils that our staff have.**

On the occasion where this is a problem, the classroom staff would address this and in the first instance wash/change/shower the young person, then work with the family to support them moving forward to improve this situation and/or work with the social care team to arrange for more support /advice in the home.

Any safeguarding concerns should be addressed through the appropriate channels.

6. Do other outside agencies offer provision to the more complex pupils with a range of needs and have the necessary qualified staff on site?- be that nursing or other.

Other agencies e.g. Strut cater for more complex needs and would have the necessary nursing input where necessary. On the rare occasion, when a pupil with the most complex needs, has boarded in school e.g. with a tracheostomy, additional community nursing support was brought in to support the child, over and above the school nursing team.

7. How has this been implemented in the Schools 5 year Development Plan – to say there was an Extraordinary meeting held by Governors in September 2020 is a little misleading as surely this process has been on-going for some time?

On the 15th September, the Governors considered the residential area for the first time in this way with it being closed due to the COVID situation, with the area being registered as a Children’s Home and the opportunity becoming available to work with LCC to extend its use.

8. It has never been mentioned in the SDP – WHY?

The school has never been in the situation where it could consider extended use of the provision until now. It requires social care funding to make this possible.

9. With the new building work due to take place next year in / around school was this ‘closure’ also included in those plans?

No, the plans for the SEND capital programme building work due to take place as part of the building programme for the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy have not included the residential accommodation of the school. If the residential offer of the school were to close then it may be possible to consider it as an option to add into those plans, but that is not the intention at this time and plans for the building project of the school are pursuing options without the need for the residential accommodation.

10. How is the layout of school going to change to accommodate potential outside agencies if this goes ahead?’

In order to meet all needs, additional spaces will be developed within the school to ensure adequate working premises for visiting professionals and therapists. The capital build strategy will enhance existing facilities, not remove current provision. Part of the SEND capital building project defines what the school accommodation will look like for ALL NEEDS schools across the County. At present, the possible plan is to build out from the physio area and use the area for two more classrooms, alternative space, close to the entrance for easier access, and is proposed for use by outside visiting therapists. There is also space included for nursing provision. Therapy and the nursing team managers have been involved in these discussions.

11. Car parking is already causing issues with residents along neighbouring streets – are more parking areas going to be made available for the use of staff working in the new facility?

We do not yet know what the residential facility might become if it is not continued in its current form. If it were to become something else then car parking would be factored into any option considered. Car parking and access is also something that is being considered already for the main school separately from this proposal, as it forms

an important element of the main St Francis School building project as part of the SEND capital programme. Current proposals for St Francis within the special schools strategy will see parking facilities improved significantly.

12. Will those using the facility have the run of school grounds etc. out of school hours?

If a separate organisation were to take on those facilities then as with any co-located school site there would have to be secure separation and a formal agreement in place should there be a desire to have shared facilities that could benefit the young people accessing the provision.

13. How will the security of the school be maintained during core school hours for students on site?

All facilities would be kept secure in accordance with Ofsted requirements and standard operating procedures adopted by schools and shared facilities at sites across the country. Clearly defined and secure boundaries would be in place with the necessary policies and procedures to protect the wellbeing and safeguarding of all staff and pupils