



To Staff, Parents/Carers and other interested parties

30 September 2020

Dear Consultee,

Consultation on the future of the boarding provision at The St Francis Special School, Lincoln.

The St Francis Special School is currently designated as a special school with boarding provision (with capacity for up to 8 pupils), although there are currently no pupils in the residential part of the school. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), in collaboration with the school, is today commencing consultation on the long term future of the school's boarding provision which has been temporarily closed since March 2020. This does not affect the main St Francis School daytime provision.

This letter sets out the reasons for this proposal, the process involved, where to direct any questions and how you can have your say to help inform the decision. If the process continues through to the later stages then it is proposed that the final decision on whether or not the boarding provision of the school remains open will be made by the Local Authority (LA) in March 2021. If agreed, the change would come into effect at the end of August 2021 (the implementation date).

The Governing Body have requested that the LA consider ending the boarding designation of the school to enable the residential accommodation to be included as part of the LA's wider considerations regarding the future of care provision for young people and the positive opportunities it might provide. As part of the consultation the LA will be exploring the possibility of how that part of the school buildings could have increased usage to benefit more young people through a wider residential offer for short breaks, along with other possible opportunities it may present. An option to explore further is the opportunity to link this proposal with the potential to improve both short breaks and children's homes in the wider Lincoln area to help support some of our most vulnerable young people within their local communities.

It would also address any concerns over the long term sustainability and financial viability of the current residential provision if it were to be brought back into use as it was before, as only those on the roll of St Francis School were able to access it. The model of having residential provision as part of a special school is being used far less both locally and nationally. Many special schools now have established links with other provision (rather than part of their own provision), enabling young people to have the potential to access appropriate residential care that they may need (subject to a social care assessment) from a wider range of sources if required, whilst independent learning is now successfully embedded into the curriculum. The possible co-location of short breaks provision with an existing school is a successful model in other areas and is one of the options the LA wish to explore further as part of this process.

There are currently no pupils boarding at the school and boarding house staff are temporarily deployed into other positions on an informal basis within the school. It is not considered reasonable to keep the boarding provision open and staffed in the long term with no pupils, as it is not financially viable or considered to be the best use of resources. We also wish to be able to support those staff as best as possible in securing employment within roles that suit their skills and personal preferences, through the opportunities that may become available should the proposal go ahead. There would also be an opportunity to reallocate financial resources back into the system to the benefit of young people.

Due to no pupils currently boarding at the school there will be no pupils displaced should the boarding provision be discontinued as part of the school.

The timescale for the consultation and the decision making process is set out below. This letter marks the beginning of Stage 1.

STAGE 1	STAGE 2*	STAGE 3*	STAGE 4*	STAGE 5*
Consultation	Publication of Statutory Notice	Representation Period 4 Weeks	Final LA Decision	Implementation
30/09/2020 – 04/11/2020	17/12/2020	17/12 – 21/01/2021	March 2021	September 2021

*These stages may only take place if a decision is taken to progress beyond the current stage. The process could be stopped at any stage. Please also note that the dates/months shown (other than for Stage 1) are for indicative purposes only and may be pushed back if required.

If the process progresses to Stage 2 then a notice will be published in the local press and at the school's entrance in December. That notice would formally confirm the proposal and there would be a 'complete proposal' made available, which is a document that sets out the reasons for the proposal in more detail and will be shaped by feedback from Stage 1. It would also mark the beginning of a 4 week representation period (Stage 3). This would be a further opportunity for all interested parties to have their views considered regarding what will be a more detailed and formal proposal at that time, and responses will be considered when determining the final decision in March 2021 (Stage 4).

Have your say

It is important that the LA gather and consider all views prior to making a decision on how to proceed.

We welcome your comments on this proposal which will need to be submitted by 4 November 2020 (inclusive). Responses can be either submitted via a simple online survey (link provided through the website below), or in writing. A response form is available on request from the School Organisation Team or from St Francis School. If you wish to submit a paper response form they should be returned by the deadline to either the school office or directly to the School Organisation Team using the contact details provided.

If you would like to discuss these proposals further before responding, then please contact the School Organisation Team at the LA using the contact details provided below in writing, on the phone, or with an email. Or, **if you have a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer and wish to attend an online information event then please register your interest by emailing us at schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk**. Further information and a link to the meeting will then be provided by email on how to join us. The information event will be an opportunity to hear from representatives of the school and LA about the proposal and to ask questions.

Wednesday October 14th 2020 (please check website for any updates before attending)

3.30pm – Information session for school staff only

6.30pm – 8pm – Virtual Information session for parents, carers and other interested parties

Notes from the event will be published afterwards including all questions and answers. All event details and copies of all documents related to this proposal, including a link to the survey, will be made available online at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-pupil-support/school-organisation-planning.

School Organisation Team contact details: email schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk, telephone 01522 553392/554834/553535, or write to School Organisation Planning Team, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ.

Yours sincerely



Matt Clayton
Admissions and Education Provision Manager
Children's Services
Lincolnshire County Council