

**PROPOSAL ON THE FUTURE OF THE BOARDING PROVISION AT
THE ST FRANCIS SPECIAL SCHOOL, LINCOLN (FINAL DECISION)**

**COMMENTS FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

At a meeting on 5 March 2021, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee considered the report and agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor.

Janette Davey, Head Teacher, and Fran Crowther, Educational Consultant, from The St Francis Special School attended the meeting to answer questions from the school's perspective.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, when the following points were confirmed:

- The request to close the boarding provision had come from the Governing Body of the school and was supported by the Head Teacher.
- The boarding provision was part of the school's educational offer to develop skills for independence and was not intended to be for respite care purposes. There would be no reduction in respite care provision accessed through social care assessments available to families as a result of the closure of the boarding provision.
- Respite care was an assessed need children would have had identified in their education, health and care plans, but this is no longer the case.
- There is no waiting list for respite care. Strut House is accessed by a number of the children at the school for respite care and this would continue.
- A child's needs were identified through their education, health and care plan and the boarding provision was not included in the plans.
- Developing skills for independent living was now part of the curriculum across all special schools and incorporated into day to day teaching.
- The funding allocated for the boarding provision was £582,568 for 2020/21, with a cost per place of £72,821. This was a significant spend on a small number of children, which children in other parts of the county did not have access to.
- The closure of the boarding provision would ensure there was an equitable offer of provision across all special schools in Lincolnshire which was one of the aims of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.
- It was appreciated that this was very emotive for staff who had invested a lot of time in the boarding provision and were passionate about supporting the children at the school. It was hoped that the staff could be redeployed elsewhere in the school or across the Local Authority.
- It was recognised that this would be a loss to parents and children who valued the social experience offered by the boarding provision.

- Boarding provision had been offered in six week blocks. The boarding provision was available for four nights a week, and two nights a week were offered to children on rotation.
- The need for the boarding provision was no longer as crucial as it used to be due to a shift in the dynamic of the type of needs of the cohort and number of children, and the change in the curriculum.
- The registration of Wickenby House as a children's home in June 2020 was a temporary arrangement during the Covid-19 pandemic. Only one child had been placed at Wickenby House so far during the pandemic.