



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

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 October 2023
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; Together in Lincolnshire Strategy, approved by the Executive on 6 November 2018. The report summarises the progress made between October 2022- October 2023, within the Capital Programme and in all supporting system areas.

Actions Required:

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are invited to note the contents of the report.

1. Background

The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy was developed in response to the Department for Education (DfE) requirement of all Local Authorities (LA) to review provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in order to ensure that there are sufficient good school places which meet the changing needs of pupils with SEND. The review required local authorities to work in close collaboration with special schools and parent/carer groups to co-produce a strategic plan which delivers sustainable, good quality provision to meet current and future needs.

In November 2018, the Executive granted approval to implement the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy. Implementation commenced in January 2019 with the final school changes being made by Spring 2025.

The strategy is making 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. The allocated capital investment will improve premises and facilities, enabling each school to offer places to pupils from within their local communities with a wider range of needs.

All special schools have committed to making significant changes to the type of need catered for and expansion where this has been identified and these are outlined in the strategy. All fourteen special schools will be able to meet 'all complex needs' once fully implemented.

The SEND Education Partnership and SEND Governance Board has oversight of strategic implementation to ensure equity of provision and accountability within the programme.

1.2 Programme Update

1.2.1 Capital Programme

The Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy commenced implementation in 2019 and will be completed by Spring 2025. This has a slight delay from the original completion date of late 2024 due to design and procurement challenges on three individual schemes within the programme; these issues have now been addressed and the timeline amended. (See Appendix A).

The programme is nearing the end of implementation, with the majority of capital schemes complete and supporting operating systems well established. Governance is well established with budget and progress reviews taking place monthly and reporting to members of the Corporate Leadership Team and Portfolio Holder on a bimonthly basis.

1.2.2 Progress Overview

The Council has made significant progress in the delivery of the Strategy. There are currently nine SEND schools completed, offering special education to children and young people with a wide range of needs and disabilities. A further two schemes are in construction and two schemes are in detailed design/enabling works stage.

- Boston Endeavour Academy
- Bourne, Willoughby Academy
- Spilsby, The Eresby School
- Louth, St Bernard's School
- Spalding, Tulip Academy Waterside Campus
- Lincoln, St Christopher's Primary

The following schools have been redeveloped by the governing Academy Trust as part of the Council's capital programme.

- Grantham Ambergate Sports College
- Spalding, Tulip Academy Springview Campus
- Grantham Sandon School

The following schools are in construction:

- Lincoln St Christopher's Secondary School
- Horncastle St Lawrence School

The following schools are in detailed design phase:

- Lincoln St Francis School
- Gosberton House Academy

The key milestones for the capital programme met in this reporting period are:

- Official Opening for The Eresby School, Spilsby
- Official Opening for St Bernard's School Louth
- Official Opening for Lincoln St Christopher's Primary School
- Official Opening for Tulip Academy, Spalding
- Construction commenced for Lincoln St Christopher's Secondary School
- Rebuild of Horncastle St Lawrence School completed with demolition of former school pending
- Self-delivery project including remodelling and new hydrotherapy pool for The Sandon School Grantham completed
- Feasibility and design process commenced for Lincoln St Francis School and Gosberton House Academy (delayed due to procurement challenges)

For images of the completed and live capital schemes, please see Appendix B.

1.3 Progress by Scheme

1.3.1 Boston Endeavour Academy

Boston Endeavour Academy was the first all needs special school to open as part of this programme, having been officially handed over to the Community Inclusive Trust and welcoming its first pupils on 6 September 2021. The school was officially opened by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 13 May 2022.

This new school is now accommodating 147 pupils, an increase of 91 places since the beginning of the capital development.

The new school provides 16 classrooms, specialist teaching spaces including science, technology, ICT and art, and a hall. The school also benefits from a hydrotherapy pool, sensory and soft playrooms and dedicated therapy spaces. Externally, there are hard and soft surfaced play areas and sensory, horticulture and wildlife areas and a sensory courtyard which is enjoyed by staff and pupils throughout the school day.

1.3.2 The Willoughby Academy, Bourne

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the Priory Trust took place on 10 December 2021. The new block was officially opened by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 6 May 2022.

Due to the capital investment programme, the capacity of this school has increased from 80 to 141, creating an additional 61 places.

The new build accommodation block provides six classrooms, hall, specialist secondary teaching spaces including science and technology, as well as small group spaces and hygiene facilities. Remodelling work to the existing school has provided additional 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.

1.3.3 The Eresby School, Spilsby

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the David Ross Education Trust took place on 9 May 2022. The new block was officially opened by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 26 May 2023.

A phased increase of a further 10 places will take place during the 2023-24 academic year.

The new build accommodation block provides improved facilities including five classrooms, hall, ICT and science spaces as well as small group rooms, hygiene facilities and staff and meeting spaces. The remodelling work to the existing school has provided a design/technology and art room, physiotherapy space, visiting professional/therapy space, parents' room, a hygiene suite, a disabled WC and staff/administration spaces.

1.3.4 St Bernards School, Louth

All construction work has now been completed and handover to the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation Trust took place on 12 September 2022. The new block was officially opened by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 9 June 2023.

The school is now accommodating 101 pupils, with an increased capacity of 12 places being made available in the first year of opening.

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

1.3.5 Tulip Academy, Spalding

In line with the strategy, The Priory School and The Garth School successfully merged to become Tulip Academy on 1 September 2022. All construction work on both the Springview and Waterside Campus has been completed with handover taking place on 7 July 2023. The new block was officially opened on 7 July 2023 by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE.

The Waterside Campus will now be subject to further development as part of the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme.

Tulip Academy is currently meeting the needs of 212 pupils, an increase of 84 places across the course of the capital programme.

1.3.6 Lincoln St Christopher's School

Construction of the new primary school on Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln is now complete, with handover taking place on 3 April 2023. This scheme completed two months ahead of schedule. The primary school will be able to accommodate a minimum of 130 pupils and has high-quality, state of the art facilities including a hydrotherapy pool.

The new school was officially opened by Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE on 23 June 2023.

Main works have commenced at the secondary school. In order to ensure the existing site can continue to offer an education to pupils during the construction period, some Key Stage 2/3 pupils have temporarily relocated to the primary site, leaving a maximum of 80 pupils at the current site so intrusive building work can be completed safely.

Once all works are completed St Christopher's School will be able to accommodate 333 pupils, increasing Lincoln City and the surrounding area's special school provision by 111 places.

1.3.7 Horncastle St. Lawrence School

Construction of the new St Lawrence School is now complete and due to open to pupils in October 2023 (pupils will return to the new school after half term). The scheme is due to complete in December 2023, with demolition of the current school and car park works left to complete.

Once complete the new school will have an increased capacity for a further 70 pupils since the start of the strategy's implementation.

The new school will provide 17 classrooms, three of which are specifically designed for pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) with hoists and sensory corners, a new hall and studio allowing the school to offer rebound therapy, physical education and dining for all pupils, therapy spaces including soft play, sensory and physiotherapy, life skills and social recreation spaces and calm and group spaces. The new block will also provide hygiene facilities, a staff workspace, offices and meeting rooms.

The whole school site will be redesigned to provide improved drop off and pick up facilities for the pupils, increased parking provision for staff and visitors ensuring all vehicles can be accommodated on the school site. Reorganised and improved outdoor play spaces will include a sensory garden, horticulture, formal and informal sport pitches and zones for trim trails and outdoor exercise equipment.

1.3.8 Ambergate Sports College and The Sandon School

Construction of the Ambergate site completed early in the programme and pupils are enjoying the much-improved facilities.

Development of The Sandon school is now also complete. The Community Inclusive Trust has self-delivered this project with assistance with significant funding from the Council and it includes the internal remodelling of classroom spaces and a new hydrotherapy pool.

Further expansion of the Ambergate site is currently being considered, with feasibility being undertaken on the West Grantham Church of England Primary Academy – Upper School which is now empty as the school has relocated to the lower school site. As this site is located adjacent to Ambergate Sports College, there is the option to developing this site to provide additional capacity for the Grantham area in the future. Any further decisions relating to this expansion will be subject to Executive approval at an appropriate time.

1.3.9 Lincoln St. Francis Special School

Feasibility and design have commenced to provide a special school which can meet a wider range of needs for 150 pupils. Enabling works have been completed including improvements to car park and minibus drop-off area.

Delays to this scheme have arisen due to the need to change preferred contractor during the design process. The original contractor submitted costings beyond budget viability, so the scheme was retendered, and a new contract awarded. The design has been revisited with the new contractors and mains works are due to commence in early 2024.

1.3.10 Gosberton House Academy

Feasibility and design have commenced to provide a special school which can meet a wider range of needs. As with St Francis, there has been a delay to this scheme due to the need to change preferred contractor during the design process. The original contractor submitted costings beyond budget viability, so the scheme was retendered, and a new contract awarded. The design has been revisited with the new contractors and mains works are due to commence in early 2024.

1.4 Budget Position

Budget realignment undertaken in 2022 saw an increase in the financial envelope for the programme to £101.835m, to address inflationary increases due to global economic instability. This increase was funded through the DfE High Needs Capital Allocations for 2022/23 and 2023/24, which enabled the Council to commit to completing the programme and honouring their commitment to the strategy.

This budget remains under regular review through the programme governance structure, and, at present, the allocated budget remains sufficient to complete the programme.

As the programme nears completion and only two schemes are still to enter main works contract, financial risks decrease though it should still be noted that inflation remains high and costs within the construction industry have not fully stabilised.

1.5 SEND Support Structures

1.5.1 Reorganisation Policy and Expenditure

A SEND School Reorganisation Policy is in place to ensure all special schools, subject to reorganisation, receive equitable and fair funding to meet all reasonable additional costs. It provides a formalised approach to the funding of special school reorganisations to support the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for the children of Lincolnshire. It addresses situations when, as part of its strategic planning of school places, the Council asks a school / academy to expand and take in additional pupils above their agreed capacity temporarily or expands permanently.

Through the development and implementation of this policy, it has been possible to provide a fair and standardised level of funding during this transition period to those schools that the Council wishes to expand permanently and this applies to both maintained and academy special schools.

Through support received by the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum, the Council earmarked £2.000m from the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves underspend to fund the school reorganisation policy during the transition phase. Additional place funding will be supported through the earmarked funding and the High Needs block.

The £2.000m commitment supports the following:

- Fixtures and fittings for the fifty-five new classroom spaces in accordance with the special school's reorganisation policy.
- New building space / loose furniture through the SEND capital programme, such as installation of new sensory and soft playrooms, medical intervention spaces and specialist teaching facilities.
- Additional recruitment costs.
- Ad hoc Decant costs.
- A commitment to support workforce development for the sector that is to be rolled out to mainstream schools also.
- The remainder will fund the increase in banded funding to support the intakes of additional pupils. This requirement will be met through a blended approach of remaining monies from the reserve and High Needs block funding.

All schools have either received their full allocation or have been informed of their initial allocation if their building work is not yet complete.

Committed School Reorganisation Expenditure to date

	Total Costs (all schools to date)
Classrooms	£523,875
Loose Furniture	£603,311
Recruitment	£118,190
Relocation / Decant	£85,955
Pupils Numbers	£178,909
Legal	£6,243
Workforce Development	£168,575
Total to date	£1,685,058

1.6 Workforce Development

The workforce development learning platform was commissioned on 10 February 2022 via a Public-to-Public Collaboration Agreement, under Regulation 12(7) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 between Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Wolds Federation as lead agency for the SEND Alliance. Service Specifications have been approved and signed and contract management governance established.

In June 2022, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report on the implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy, providing Members with information on the learning platform and activity levels to date. A further update was included as part of the annual review of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy in October 2022.

Since this report, Tier 1 of the SEND Learning Platform has been launched to all special schools. Tier 1 modules have also been launched to all mainstream schools, though this has been staggered over a number of weeks to generate interest from schools and to ensure each module receives sufficient publicity in its own right.

Since the launch of the platform, 4,099 modules (3,301 Induction, 798 Tier 1) have been completed across 214 Lincolnshire schools. There has been a rise in both SEND and mainstream schools using the modules to form part of their Inset Day training which is a positive outcome, as this promotes inclusivity across the whole school. Modules have consistently been rated 84% Very Good or Good (15% Average, 1% Poor).

By the end of October 2023, the SEND Learning Platform will be available to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. With the support of the Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF), parents, carers and families will be able to register with LPCF where they will be provided with a log in for the learning platform. This exciting initiative will enable those who care for children and young people with SEND to access Induction Tier resources and training on a range of SEND issues and conditions.

1.7 Health Offer

The work of the Health Workstream, tasked with ensuring all special schools can meet the needs of children and young people with complex medical needs, remains ongoing. The capital programme has ensured that all completed schools have the facilities to meet complex medical needs and space for medical and therapy professionals to provide interventions in these settings, thereby reducing the need for pupils to attend appointments outside of the school settings.

The completed special schools work collaboratively with professionals from a range of specialisms, in their settings, offering regular clinical interventions and reviews for pupils and their families.

Medical and Therapeutic Professionals offering interventions in completed special schools include:

- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Specialist Teachers for Sensory Impairments
- Children and Young People's Nursing Team
- Rapid Response Respiratory Service

Once the programme is completed, it is expected that this provision will be extended beyond the existing professionals and will incorporate a number of other clinical services.

This provision is supported by a collaboratively developed Memorandum of Understanding.

The workstream is also responsible for developing a system whereby all special schools have the capabilities and confidence to meet the needs of children and young people with the most complex medical needs and those who are long-term ventilated. Senior Officers from the Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and Health Provider Trusts have agreed, in principle, that all children in Lincolnshire should be able to attend a special school as close to home as possible, if required, once it is safe to do so. This workstream is currently developing an infrastructure and guidance framework which will ensure this is possible, in a clinically safe manner.

1.8 Specialist Equipment

In order to ensure the most cost-effective use of specialist medical and therapy equipment, special schools have been invited to join the existing contractual arrangements held by the Council with specialist equipment providers.

The existing providers (Nottingham Rehab Supplies (NRS)) have maintained the community equipment provision for the special schools across Lincolnshire since April 2020, taking over from Arjo Huntleigh.

Between the period of April 2022 – March 2023, a total of 11 special schools (Aegir Community School, Boston Endeavour Academy, Eresby School, Tulip Academy, St Lawrence School, Sandon School, St Bernard's School, St Christopher's School, St Francis School and The Willoughby School) have utilised the equipment service spending a total of just over £41k. This breaks down to £7.4k spent on scheduled servicing and repairs, along with a £33.8k net spend on equipment. In total, there were 688 scheduled services carried out by NRS, along with 165 equipment deliveries and 70 equipment collections during this period.

The financial impact of the centralised service is substantial, with schools saving from 30% to 70% on the maintenance of equipment against the previous provider, with further long-term savings in the form of new equipment at a much-reduced rate. As an example, Arjo Huntleigh were charging the schools £396.00 a year to service their hoists, whereas the NRS charge just £50.00 a year for the same service.

Over the next 12 months, the service will be expanded to incorporate all special schools. The service will also be promoting the availability of recycled non-contract specials to the schools which are available at no cost.

1.9 Specialist Community Led Panels

Specialist Community Led Panels were launched in summer 2021 in the Boston and South Holland localities and have subsequently been phased in across the other localities. Attendance at these panels is good, with representation from health and social care services, along with education, the Council and Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum at most meetings. The panels are chaired by special school head teachers and are proving effective in ensuring children and young people with SEND are placed in the right education setting for their needs.

Each locality has a number of examples of children and young people with SEND whose current setting expressed an inability to meet need and were at risk of requiring independent non-maintained special school placement who, with the support of those professionals involved, have been able to remain in their existing setting.

2. Conclusion

Children's Services strongly believes this capital infrastructure investment will not only achieve greater outcomes for Lincolnshire pupils, but also be an important financial decision in managing the pressures within the High Needs block by way of reducing expenditure relating to some expensive and unnecessary out of county specialist placements. On occasion, Lincolnshire families are presented with the difficult option of out of county placements due to the lack of capacity in local special schools. This is both unfair on children and families and expensive to the Council when needs could be met in a more local provision. It is important for Lincolnshire to continue securing value for money within these demand-led budgets and within the finite funding resource available. By enabling pupils requiring specialist support to go to their nearest suitable school, the LA will be able to

achieve operational efficiencies, improved pupils’ wellbeing and reduce expenditure through its delivery of home to school transport arrangements.

The financial impact of investing now at a capital level will have a positive impact on the Council's financial position long-term, both on the High Need's block and the Home to School Transport budget.

The strategy was collaboratively developed to ensuring a sufficient supply of special school places for children and young people with SEND, local special schools which can meet the needs of all pupils in their local community, a reduction in the travelling time for pupils with SEND by enabling them to attend a special school as close to home as possible and for our children and young people with SEND to be educated locally, bringing value and a sense of belonging to their local communities. Only by ensuring that the capital programme is fully completed can the Local Authority be confident it will achieve its strategic vision.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Capital Programme Timeline
Appendix B	SEND Strategy Update Images

5. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Building Communities of Specialist Support; Together in Lincolnshire Strategy	Building communities of specialist provision (lincolnshire.gov.uk)

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