

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	Reading Schools Forum		
DATE:	19 March 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	7
TITLE:	Head Teachers / School's Forum short life working group on SEN finances		
SERVICE:	Education & Children's Services	WARDS:	All
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

1.1 This report summarises the progress of the SEN sub group.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

2.1 To note the content of the report

3 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Council has strategic aims to establish Reading as a learning city and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit, to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all. Education and the funding of education is a key factor in the achievement of this aim.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 A group has been formed to look at addressing the 2015/16 budget gap of circa £0.9m on the high needs block.

5 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

5.1 The group has met twice now. We have agreed Terms of Reference for the short life working group. These are:-

1. To reach a view, with recommendations, to put to school's forum, about what changes need to be considered in order to make structural changes that deliver a saving of around 1 million pounds year on.
2. Explore and make proposals as appropriate, to school's forum, if the structural budget savings can be achieved via allocating resources from within the SEN High Needs Block, in a different way. This may require rethinking how we deliver services / provision, what to keep and where to redesign.

5.2 Key issues raised and discussed to date.

1. We will need to clarify and/or reconsider the admissions criteria for our current specialist settings.
2. Lack of funding in Key Stages 3 and 4 for students with ASD and how do we build additional resource to meet the increase demand for specialist provision that cannot be provided by Blessed Hugh.
3. Pattern of service delivery. For example we have ASD services that are not connected and offer no specialist outreach services to schools. We spend over 2 million on EBSD services (eg, Cranbury College, Behaviour Support Services, Phoenix, The Haven and Holybrook) but the services are not joined up and exclusion rates are high. Is this effective spend especially in the light of 12 new places at High Close at a cost of £48K per place due to lack of provision in Reading?
4. Balance between part time specialist provision with specialist outreach support going to host school locally (via cluster) provided vs new specialist full time provision to meet demand.
5. Training for teachers and how schools can receive specialist support that makes a difference with regard to ASD and EBSD.
6. Do we have too many vacancies in our specialist provision and are the costs per place realistic?

5.3 Consequently the discussion so far has represented a balance between:-

- the longer term issues such as quality of current provision and service delivery to meet need and range and pattern of specialist provision as it currently exists
- what can we save from the High Needs Block to meet a 900K structural saving.

5.4 We have begun to work our way through the High Needs Block - 'projects, posts and departments' with a view to make £900K structural savings.

5.5 A proposal is being considered to begin a short life piece of work to look at how we rationalise and reshape the provision and delivery of our ASD and EBSD service delivery and provision from 2 to 19. This will include parents and early years as we need to include in this scoping:-

- what do we need and how should it be delivered and what would it look like

- what we currently have in place. This included pattern of provision, specialist services and preventative services
- what are the gaps between what we have and what we wish for.
- what savings can we make to create new provision / resources?

5.6 At our third meeting it is hoped that we will have agreed the proposals we would wish to take to School's Forum for potential structural savings of £900K.

