

<p><b>LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT</b></p> <p><b>Meeting of the Executive</b> 15 November 2004</p> <p><b>Report from Director of Education Arts &amp; Libraries</b></p>	
For action.	Wards affected: ALL

**Report Title:           Review of Special Educational Needs  
Provision in Brent**

Forward Plan Ref: EAL-04/05-0057

## **1.0    Summary**

1.1    This report summarises the work which has been undertaken in reviewing special educational needs provision in Brent. It proposes a medium term approach to special school organisation and asks for Members' approval to undertake more detailed consultation. It also sets out recommendations for short term action.

## **2.0    Recommendations**

2.1    That Members endorse the general approach to the future organisation of SEN provision in Brent as outlined in this report and give approval for the second stage of consultation to proceed on that basis (see paragraph 3.31).

2.2    The following short term action is recommended

- i)     Proceed with building a 16-19 unit at Woodfield School, within existing capital budgets, for completion by September 2005 (see paragraphs 3.14, 3.26, 3.30).
- ii)    Establish more flexible use of the Hay Lane and Grove Park sites from September 2005, creating more capacity for placing pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism. Details of the arrangements will need to be drawn up in liaison with the headteachers of Hay Lane and Grove Park Schools. (See paragraphs 3.11, 3.12, 3.13).

- iii) Undertake further work to cost the accommodation requirements of Vernon House School to enable placement of pupils on a part-time and/or temporary basis from September 2005. (See paragraphs 3.14, 3.27).
- iv) Develop detailed proposals on the establishment of an additional Secondary Pupil Referral Unit and report back to members in early 2005 (see paragraphs 3.16, 3.17, 3.19).

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The SEN Best Value Review reported in December 2003. One of the key recommendations was that a review of special school provision be undertaken. In particular, the review report emphasised the need to urgently address the issue of surplus places in some special schools. The review recommended the expansion and re-designation of in-Borough provision to fit the needs profile, thereby reducing the need for out-Borough placements. The Best Value Review report was consistent with the findings of the LEA Ofsted inspection.

#### **Consultation**

- 3.2 A consultation document was published in May 2004 entitled 'Special Educational Needs Provision in Brent: The Case for Change'. It set out the Council's vision for improving provision to meet the special educational needs of children and young people in the Borough. It argued that there is a strong case for change to the current organisation of special school provision. It proposed that action needs to be taken both in the short term and long term to ensure provision in the Borough reflects the changing profile of Brent pupils with SEN. It proposed a strong and continuing role for special schools in meeting the needs of pupils with the most complex needs and that close collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools is essential to ensuring the best possible provision for pupils with SEN both in the mainstream and special school sectors. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The consultation document was circulated to,
  - headteachers and chairs of governors of Brent schools
  - trade unions
  - primary care trust
  - social services

The consultation period ran until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004. This was extended to the end of the summer term 2004 at the request of the Teachers Panel.

3.4 49 responses were received directly to the consultation as follows

Headteachers, staff, governors of mainstream primary and secondary schools	19
Headteachers, staff, governors of special schools	17
Other responses – parents, pupils, former governors, council officers	11
Teachers panel	1
Primary Care Trust	1

In addition, there were 78 letters of support attached to the response from Grove Park special school. 15 of these were from schools or other organisations and 63 were from parents, pupils or staff at Grove Park.

3.5 The key messages from the consultation were as follows

- i) The vast majority of respondents felt that there was a case for change. There was general agreement that in-Borough provision should meet a greater range of special educational needs and reduction in out-Borough placements should be the aim.
- ii) There was also overwhelming agreement that there should be a strong and continuing role for special schools. There was a great strength of feeling that the needs of pupils at Grove Park could not be effectively met in mainstream schools and the specialist provision and expertise provided at Grove Park should be retained.
- iii) The general vision presented in the document was accepted, at least in part, by most respondents. However, there was concern that more detail was required in order to form a clear view and that more extensive consultation should be carried out in forming the vision. Recurring themes were
  - opposition to any potential closure of Grove Park
  - the need for increased funding to resource SEN developments.
  - developments should ensure improved provision for all groups of children
  - parental choice should be maximised

- iv) There was a clear view that the key to improving inclusive mainstream provision lies in the development of staff expertise and the ability to recruit and retain specialist staff. The most common comments were:
- need for extensive training programmes for staff
  - need to target resources earlier to ensure effective early intervention
  - need for strong specialist services, provided from the LEA or special schools
  - need for improved availability of therapy provision
  - need for improved assessment and planning prior to admission and at times of transition
  - specific areas of provision requiring strengthening, particularly in relation to autism, sensory support, specific learning difficulties and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties
- v) In relation to provision for children under statutory school age, there was a general view that early intervention is crucial. However, reservations were expressed about the feasibility of developing fully inclusive mainstream provision for children below statutory school age, even with the opportunities arising from new Children Centre developments.
- vi) In relation to future organisation of special schools in Brent, there were mixed views about whether discrete primary and secondary provision is desirable. A number of respondents from Grove Park school commented that the all-age nature of the school was beneficial to students. There was some support for part-time or temporary placements in special schools but it was noted that more detail would be required on organisational, funding and resourcing implications around dual placements.
- vii) Most respondents favoured greater collaboration between mainstream and special schools, particularly in terms of staff training and professional development. There was a mixed view from respondents on the potential benefits of co-location of special schools and mainstream schools in the long term.

3.6 The full set of responses to the consultation are available for inspection.

### **Future Demand for Special School Places**

3.7 To assist in developing more detailed proposals, officers carried out an exercise to project the future demand for special school places in Brent. It will be appreciated that such projections can only be approximate and are based on a set of assumptions which may not hold in the long term.

3.8 In undertaking this exercise, the following factors were taken into account;

- i) The likely continuing trend for more pupils with moderate learning difficulties to have their needs met within mainstream schools rather than special schools.
- ii) The re-organisation of special school provision will mean less reliance on out-Borough special school placements and more Brent pupils attending Brent's own provision.
- iii) The impact of demographic trends on numbers of pupils with SEN. For the period 2004 until 2015 demographic growth of 15.40% is anticipated.

3.9 Currently there are 490 places in Brent's 5 special schools. It is projected that in 2015 that a similar number of places will be required, taking into account the factors outlined in 3.3.2 above.

### **Evaluation of Work Undertaken**

3.10 Taking into account the responses to the first stage consultation, the projections of future demand and financial considerations, the following broad conclusions have been drawn,

- i) there is a case for change and the status quo is not a desirable option.
- ii) sufficient special school places must be retained in the long term if the policy objective of reducing out-borough placements is to be met. However, surplus places in special schools must be minimised.
- iii) five special schools should be retained on their current sites, but consideration should be given to re-designation where required, to ensure a closer match with the profile of pupil needs.

- iv) alongside developments in special schools, provision for SEN in mainstream schools should be enhanced to support inclusion of pupils in mainstream, wherever possible.
- v) there is scope for much greater collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools for the benefit of all pupils.

### Preferred Approach

3.11 In light of the broad conclusions set out in 3.10, the following model for future special school provision in Brent is proposed.

School	Age Range	Pupil Needs	Site
Hay Lane	To be determined	SLD/PMLD/Autism/PD	Hay Lane/Grove Park.
Grove Park	To be determined	SLD/PMLD/Autism/PD	Hay Lane/Grove Park.
Manor	5-11	SLD/Autism	On current site.
Woodfield	11-19	MLD/SLD/Autism	On current site.
Vernon House	5-11	BESD	On current site.

3.12 Under this model, there would continue to be 2 special schools on the Hay Lane/Grove Park site, catering for the following range of needs.

- profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)
- severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- autism
- physical disabilities with associated learning and communication difficulties and/or exceptional medical needs (PD).

3.13 This would address the strong concerns expressed during the consultation in relation to any potential closure of Grove Park. Careful consideration would need to be given to the organisation of the 2 schools on the site to ensure that the full range of needs outlined in 3.12 could be effectively met. It is proposed that there would be clearly defined primary and secondary provision. The age range and designation for each school would need to be determined. Grove Park would need to meet a wider range of special educational needs than is currently the case.

3.14 There would also be implications for other Brent special schools as follows:

- i) Vernon House would be retained as a primary aged special school for pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. It is proposed that more flexible admission arrangements are

considered to enable part-time and temporary placements, in addition to a core of full-time permanent placements.

- ii) Woodfield would be retained as a secondary aged special school for pupils with learning difficulties. It is proposed, over time, that Woodfield would admit pupils with more complex learning difficulties and expand provision for autistic spectrum disorder.
- iii) Manor would be retained as a primary aged special school for pupils with learning difficulties. It is proposed that Manor is re-designated as a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, including pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. This designation would more closely reflect the current profile of needs served by the school.

3.15 In addition to special school developments, it is proposed that current mainstream SEN provision would need to be improved as follows

- i) Develop suitably resourced mainstream provision for pupils with physical disabilities to ensure that needs can be met in mainstream schools wherever possible and in accordance with parental preference. This would not be through separate 'unit' provision but through full disability access, therapy provision and a programme of professional development and specialist support. It is envisaged that there would be 2 designated primary schools and 2 designated secondary schools located north and south of the Borough, providing approximately 40 places in total.
- ii) Improve mainstream provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder who have mainstream curriculum needs. It is proposed that this would be achieved through enhancing specialist support services to provide receiving schools with support and training prior and during placement.
- iii) Establish an outreach service from special schools which would provide specialist advice and support to mainstream schools in relation to pupils with a range of complex special educational needs.

### **Provision for Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties**

3.16 It is also proposed that an additional secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is established. This would cater for secondary aged pupils with complex behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) whose needs cannot currently be met at the existing Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 PRU. The new provision would cater for pupils both with and without statements of special educational needs. The provision would

need to be carefully structured to provide a high level of support, supervision and access to therapy services.

- 3.17 The additional PRU provision would enable more pupils with BESD who have long term support needs to be educated in the Borough, thus reducing expenditure on expensive out-Borough placements.
- 3.18 Designating the new provision as a Pupil Referral Unit rather than as a special school would have the following advantages
- i) There would be a greater flexibility in admissions. Pupils without statements of SEN but who have high level support needs would be able to be placed in a Pupil Referral Unit without recourse to statutory SEN procedures.
  - ii) Existing Pupil Referral Unit provision in Brent is good. The new provision would form part of the Pupil Referral Service and, as such would fit into existing well-developed structures and management arrangements.
- 3.19 It is envisaged that a 40 place provision will be required. Work is being undertaken to identify a suitable site and ascertain capital costs. It is possible that a small scale provision could be set up from 2005/06 prior to a new PRU being established in 2006/07. A specific report on proposals for establishing additional Secondary Pupil Referral Unit provision will be brought to members early next year.

### **Accommodation Issues**

- 3.20 Much of the costs assessments set out in this section is based on desk based work, rather than site based feasibility studies. Information on suitability, condition of buildings and their sufficiency has been taken into account in making those assessments.
- 3.21 Whereas Manor and Vernon House schools have no major areas of unsuitability, Grove Park, Hay Lane, and Woodfield schools each has suitability deficits, which are summarised below:

#### **Grove Park**

The deficiency revolves around storage, poor circulation for wheel chairs and accessibility of WCs. The teaching accommodation affects the delivery of the curriculum, as fixed fixtures are substandard and environmental conditions (heating, ventilation) are deemed to be substandard.



## Hay Lane

The teaching areas are unsuitable particularly for pupils reliant on wheel chairs. There are no science laboratories within the school. The school is therefore unable to meet the curriculum requirements for a special school. The Hall is too small for the size of the school. The physiotherapy area is too small to accommodate the required equipment for pupils in the school. Given the growth in pupil numbers, movement around the school is increasingly constrained.

## Woodfield

The school's environmental conditions are unsuitable - ventilation and heating are deficient. The Art provision is substandard as equipment is not able to be accessed.

- 3.22 The LEA's Asset Management Plan shows that the combined need of patch repairs and maintenance is estimated at £1,055,000 as detailed in the table below.

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>AMP Condition Estimate</b>
Hay Lane and Grove Park	£450,000
Manor	£130,000
Woodfield	£375,000
Vernon House	£100,000
<b>Total Estimate Costs</b>	<b>£1,055,000</b>

- 3.23 The experience to date is that tender returns for schemes aimed at addressing condition needs within the AMP are at much higher prices than those estimated within the AMP records. The above figures should therefore be viewed with a level of caution.
- 3.24 The Hay Lane School capacity is 120 – this compares with an estimated capacity of 110 (PMLD/SLD pupils) when comparing the floor area with DfES area guidelines. A similar assessment for Grove Park School capacity points to a capacity of the order of 80 against a published capacity of 90. If the schools were to be, adapted, remodelled and improved, they should be able to provide for about 220 pupils. Although more extensive use of the site is possible raising capacity beyond 220 towards 300, the site would become overcrowded and the overall facility could become compromised. In the context of the deficiencies described above, a combination of newbuild and adaptations and remodelling would best address the schools' needs; however a complete newbuild may provide better value for money.
- 3.25 The LEA has insufficient resources in its 2004/05/06 Investment Plan to meet the costs of implementing school organisational and buildings

changes arising from the SEN Review. In its Expression of Interest for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, the LEA has indicated that it would need to rebuild Hay Lane, substantially refurbish Grove Park (with limited newbuild) and carry out improvements and modernisation at Woodfield School. In its Expression of Interest, the LEA has informed the DfES that the outcomes of the SEN Review and the Council's decision on a way forward would further influence the final shape of BSF schemes within the SEN sector. Later in October (or early November) the DfES will announce which LEAs will receive BSF support in this second wave, based on high indices of poverty (measured by Free School Meals) and low academic standards (measured by GCSE 5+A-C scores). It is possible that, subject to phasing, BSF resources may make a contribution to the overall capital costs of implementing the SEN Review thus helping reduce the funding gap.

- 3.26 Woodfield School is developing a scheme for accommodating 16-19 pupils. Subject to advice on costs and Members' decision, it is proposed to fund this scheme from slippages at Wembley Manor for which there is provision of £5m in the LEA's Capital Investment Plan. This measure would provide annual revenue savings which, once costed, can then be earmarked as a contribution to repositioning capital resources for the development of Wembley Manor schools schemes. Any shortfall in repositioning those resources would need to be met from Council's Capital resources.
- 3.27 It has been previously noted that Vernon House has relatively minor suitability and condition deficiencies. However additional accommodation for pupils on part-time and/or temporary placements would be required.
- 3.28 Whilst this report estimates the costs for the provision of facilities accessible to disabled students, there are opportunities for developing mainstream provision in schools as new schools come on stream.
- 3.29 At the time of drafting the report, work is underway to identify potential sites for setting up new Pupil Referral Units. A further report will be brought to Members on the outcomes of these investigations.

#### **Action Already Taken**

- 3.30 Steps have already been taken during 2003/4 to strengthen in-Borough SEN provision and reduce expenditure on out-Borough special school provision, as follows
  - (i) 10 full-time places for pupils with autism have been created at the new Fawood Children's Centre (previously Evan Davies nursery) from October 2004. An autism outreach service will also operate from the Children's Centre.

- (ii) 16 – 19 provision at Woodfield School has been established for a group of 7 students. This is currently situated in existing accommodation. This provision will be expanded over the next 2 years to provide 20 places. Additional accommodation will be required.
- (iii) An additional class for 7 pupils with autism has been set up from September 2004 at Hay Lane School.

All of these developments have contributed to retaining pupils within Borough, reducing expenditure on out-Borough placement costs and transport.

### **Further consultation**

- 3.31 It is anticipated that second stage consultation will be required on the more detailed proposals. Consultation will need to take place with head teachers, chairs of governors, trade unions, parents/carers, neighbouring authorities and relevant agencies such as the Primary Care Trust.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The revenue costs relating to all the proposals arising from the review will fall within the Schools Block. Revenue costs for designated provision for physically disabled students is estimated to be around £150,000 each. The costs of special schools and new special units will fall within the Individual Schools Budget (ISS) – the resources delegated to schools. Additional funding allocated to special schools and units will reduce the funding available to other schools. This will only be a significant issue if the extra funding is of such a size that the minimum guaranteed funding increase will apply to the other schools. This will not be calculable until much later in the budget process when the size of passporting and the ISB are known and funding formula changes have been agreed. However it is unlikely to be an issue.
- 4.2 The funding for an additional PRU would also need to be met from the Schools Block. It would be in the non-devolved element of the Schools Block and this could cause a problem if it resulted in the non-devolved element of the Schools Block increasing by a greater percentage than the devolved element. The Schools Forum would need to be consulted and DfES approval sought. Whether this is likely to apply will depend on the size of the passporting increase, which will not be known until November. An alternative would be to phase the new PRU into 2006/07 (full year revenue cost around £600k) and to have interim arrangements in 2005/06 at a lower cost (say £200k) that will not trigger the higher non-devolved increase. School Funding in 2006/07 will be on a different basis from 2005/06, with the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Budget and the creation of the new PRU is likely to be easier to achieve under the new arrangements.

- 4.3 The capital costs will be around £16 million for the Hay Lane/Grove Park site. There will also be cost of adaptation work at Woodfield and Vernon House.
- 4.4 It is expected that mainstream provision for physical disability would be incorporated wherever possible within the specification for new build capital schemes funded either through Building Schools for the Future or the Council's main capital programme and would not therefore incur further additional costs. However it is likely that there will be adaptation costs required to one primary school and one secondary school to enable designated provision in the north and south of the Borough.
- 4.5 A summary of estimated capital costs as shown below

	<b>£M</b>
Rebuild work at Grove Park/Hay Lane	16.00
Primary and secondary mainstream PD provision	0.50
Woodfield 16-19 provision	0.40
Vernon House – additional accommodation	0.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17.30</b>

It is envisaged that part of these capital costs would be met from the Council's Building Schools for the future programme once that has been agreed.

- 4.6 The revenue cost would be met from the Schools Block and would effectively reduce the funding available to other schools but would not result in extra cost to the Council's budget overall. The estimated impact would be.

	<b>£M</b>
4 units for physically disabled students	0.6
Specialist outreach services	0.3
New PRU	0.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.5</b>

Revenue costs would be phased in over 3 years. The above figures are indicative and would need to be confirmed through discussion with schools and services involved.

- 4.7 It is expected that the implementation of these proposals would lead to significant reductions of expenditure on out-Borough placements and associated transport costs.

## **5.0 *Legal Implications***

- 5.1 The proposals set out in this report are in line with national guidance as set out in the government SEN strategy 'Removing Barriers to Achievement'.
- 5.2 Any significant changes to alter a school's provision for SEN are subject to a statutory consultation process. In particular certain alterations including the establishment of new schools or PRUs, or the significant alteration of schools, or the establishment or discontinuance of provision for special educational needs, are all matters which require the statutory consultation process including approval by the School Organisation Committee.
- 5.3 Brent Local Education Authority is under statutory duty to provide for the education of all the children in its area including by providing for their special educational needs. In addition there is a statutory duty not to discriminate in the provision of education on the grounds of disability.

## **6.0 *Diversity Implications***

- 6.1 The proposals in this report are aimed at improving local provision for children and young people with a wide range of special educational needs from all areas of the community.
- 6.2 The aims of the proposals are to ensure that more children and young people with complex needs are able to be educated locally and that the educational provision they receive assists in developing their personal autonomy and ability to participate in a full range of activities in and out of school.

## **7.0 *Staffing/Accommodation Implications***

- 7.1 The proposals within the report are concerned with strengthening local SEN provision, building on the existing high level of staff skills. There will be no compulsory redundancies.
- 7.2 There are likely to be some changes to staff roles and responsibilities and possibly, location, arising from the proposals. Appropriate consultation will take place with staff and their representatives in relation to these changes and training and development opportunities made available to staff to support them in the change process.

### ***Background Papers***

- ***SEN Best Value Review Report***
- ***SEN Review: The Case for Change***
- ***Consultation Responses***

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