

Decision Maker: HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Date: THURSDAY 18TH JULY 2019

Title: SPECIAL FREE SCHOOL: INFORMATION PAPER

Contact Officer: Debi Christie, Head of Service: Special Educational Needs
Education, Care and Health Services, London Borough of Bromley
Tel: 020 8461 7896 E-mail: debi.christie@bromley.gov.uk

Ward: Borough-wide

1. SUMMARY

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to receive this information report on the Special Free School programme in Bromley.

2. REASON FOR REPORT GOING TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

To be considered under JSNA Section 4: Children and young people with established needs

3. SPECIFIC ACTION REQUIRED BY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD AND ITS CONSTITUENT PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Report provided for information. LB Bromley and Bromley CCG are the lead agencies in the local area.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy

1. Related priority: [Delete as appropriate] Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children with Mental and Emotional Health Problems

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Total savings: Not Applicable:
 4. Budget host organisation:
 5. Source of funding:
 6. Beneficiary/beneficiaries of any savings:
-

Supporting Public Health Outcome Indicator(s)

Not Applicable:

4. COMMENTARY

4.1 BACKGROUND

- 4.1.1 The London Borough of Bromley (LBB), NHS Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and Bromley Parent Voice (BPV) share a strong and clearly stated commitment to improving the education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The commitment is implemented through effective joint governance (SEND Governance Board) which is driving and sustaining rapid improvement. Bromley aspires to provide outstanding services for children and young people which keep them safe, give them the right help at the right time in their lives and which achieve positive outcomes for their journey into adulthood.
- 4.1.2 The SEND Strategic Vision and Priorities 2018 – 2019 includes Priority 3: A suitable range of local specialist provision is available to meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs. The proposed establishment of a new special free school and centre of excellence is in pursuance of this priority area.
- 4.1.3 In summer 2018, the DfE launched the next wave of free school bids inviting Local Authorities to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for a special school (no more than one) which:
- demonstrates local need;
 - helps manage pressure on High Needs Funding;
 - does not create new provision for children who would otherwise be attending a mainstream school.

4.2 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FROM BROMLEY

- 4.2.1 Bromley's EOI sought to establish a 54-place junior special school for children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and associated learning difficulties such as high anxiety and/or behaviour that challenges.

5. SUFFICIENCY OF PROVISION

- 5.1 Nationally and locally, there has been a significant increase in the number of children with a complexity and severity of needs which warrant an education, health and care (EHC) assessment and EHC plan which determines the special educational provision the child needs. Children's needs and the overall increase in the child population are resulting in more children requiring special education provision.
- 5.2 Bromley has responded by expanding its good local special schools and developing additionally resourced provision (ARP) in mainstream schools, creating 236 additional places since 2010. However, there is a gap in local provision for children with ASD and associated learning difficulties. This cohort of children is well-provided for in Key Stage 1 (through special schools ARPs) but three of the ARPs are in infant schools so a significant number of children (currently 66) are placed in non-maintained and independent schools from the

age of 7. Once settled, most children remain in that placement until they leave educational provision at age 19 or 25.

- 5.3 Glebe School (secondary special school) has been expanded to provide for children with a higher level of need including ASD. However a gap remains at Key Stage 2. Bromley's free school proposal, therefore, focuses on filling that gap and developing a pathway through primary and into secondary education.

6. PARENTS' VIEWS

- 6.1 Parents consistently highlight the gap in local provision for children with ASD and some parents report feeling that their children are not always welcome in the local community and within local schools. They point out that lengthy home to school travel can be particularly distressing for children with ASD. Parents also want provision which supports and develops children's wider development, including health, care and social needs, by provided integrated therapies and wrap around activities outside the school day. This proposal offers the opportunity to develop such provision locally so that children can grow up and go to school within their local community.

7. COST

- 7.1 The average cost of a specialist placement in a non-maintained or independent day school is £37,000 compared with £27,000 for similar state maintained special schools locally. Developing local provision to meet the needs of this cohort of children is, therefore, also cost effective, particularly if children then remain in local secondary education.

8. LOCATION

- 8.1 To support the EOI, the LA is asked to identify a proposed location and site and the DfE advises that preference will be given to proposals where the site offers value for money and the timely opening of the provision.
- 8.2 Bromley owns the site and building for the Hawes Down Centre (Hawes Lane, West Wickham) which is part of a campus with Hawes Down Primary School (which has an ARP) and Glebe School offering synergy with the aims for the proposed provision. In addition to the potential benefits of its location, the site is available and is likely to need little adaptation. Langley Park Primary School occupied the site until August 2018 (while their new building was completed) and the ESFA had carried out works to form classrooms. At the same time, the building has been used by voluntary sector groups providing short breaks for children with SEN/D so there are sensory and soft play facilities installed.

9. OUTCOME OF THE SUBMISSION

- 9.1 Bromley Council was notified by the DfE in March 2019 that it was one of 39 local authorities nationally that had been successful in its bid to be part of the joint special and AP free school wave. Only five London boroughs are included in this wave (Bromley, Bexley, Newham, Kingston on Thames, and Richmond on Thames).

- 9.2 Interested Academy Trusts (“proposer groups”) now have the opportunity to submit an application to open new schools in these areas based on specifications written by the local authorities. Trusts have until the end of September to submit their bids to the DfE.
- 9.3 Evaluation of the bids will take place in the Autumn and will be made in partnership with the DfE and the local authority. Bromley Council plans to fully include the CCG, Bromley Parent Voice and the local area Autism Partnership in the evaluation process.
- 9.4 The successful Trusts will not be announced until Winter 2019/20.

10. ENGAGEMENT EVENT

- 10.1 An engagement event for Trusts interested in bidding to provide the new special free school was held on 22nd May at the Hawes Down Centre. There were 32 attendees 17 of whom were representing 7 individual Trusts. Presentations were made by the local authority and Bromley Parent Voice to expand on the vision in our specification.
- 10.2 By being based at the Hawes Down Centre, attendees were able to tour the proposed site for the new school. Representatives from across the local area were also in attendance and took part in a networking opportunity with the interested Trusts to finish the event.

11. NEXT STEPS

- 11.1 A further engagement event is planned for 4th September to provide interested Trusts with more information on our proposal to create a Multi-Agency Centre of Excellence at the Hawes Down Centre as well as the role and requirements of an additionally commissioned outreach service which will be developed with the successful Trust to complement the support services already available in Bromley.
- 11.2 The Centre of Excellence will coordinate and deliver a range of support, advice activities and training to children and young people with autism and their families. It will address the gaps in the local area identified by parents and families including social opportunities and training for parents in partnership with professionals. It will deliver the action plan from the Autism Partnership Group which will provide support and oversight of the Centre to ensure it can respond to changing needs in the borough and complement services and support already available.
- 11.3 The event will also provide an opportunity for interested Trusts to meet with parent and local area representatives to ensure their views help shape their bids.

12. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities are amongst the most vulnerable in the Borough. Our ongoing work to develop and improve services is monitored by the SEND Governance Board to ensure its impact in improving outcomes.

13. IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS, BOARDS AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING ANY POLICY AND FINANCIAL CHANGES, REQUIRED TO PROCESS THE ITEM

SEND Governance Board continues to report to the Children’s Executive Board as part of its formal governance arrangements.

14. COMMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LB BROMLEY

Bromley local authority, Bromley CCG and our partners are committed to ensuring that children and young people aged 0 to 25 years, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well supported and empowered to lead full and rewarding lives.

Comments are welcomed from the Health and Wellbeing Board on the proposal to establish a special free school and centre of excellence in order to further improve the services and support available to children and young people with SEND and their families.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial, Legal implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	N/A