

City of Wolverhampton Council

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Date	19 January 2023
Report title	Commissioning of High Needs Places for September 2023
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Summary

This paper explains the process and rationale for agreeing the high needs places which are to be commissioned for September 2023.

Decision

Members of the Schools' Forum are asked to note:

1. The high needs places already agreed and reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the 18 November 2022.
2. The timetable of work underway to complete the consultation on places for September 2023 which is due January 2023.
3. That a further update on established pupil data and progress with the Transformation project will be provided after Easter 2023.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the members of Schools' Forum with an update regarding the commissioning of high needs places which are being commissioned for the academic year 2023-2024.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 High Needs funding is managed via an annual planning cycle which is described in High needs Funding: 2023 to 2024 Operational Guidance published by the Department for Education. A detailed timetable is contained in Section 19 of the Operational Guidance but the key stages are summarised below.

- 2.2 There are two points at which the local authority can influence their funding for the following year, Stage 1 and Stage 4:

1. 18 November 2022 - deadline for local authorities to submit their 2023 - 2024 high needs place number changes and requests to the ESFA (Education Skills and Funding Agency) for Further Education and Post 16 providers, academies and local authority hospital education.
2. December 2022 - Department for Education publishes 2023 to 2024 DSG allocations for schools, central school services and high needs block allocations.
3. January 2023 – The 2023 to 2024 high needs place change notification outcomes are published.
4. January 2023 - Deadline for local authorities to submit the final 2023 - 2024 authority proforma tool (APT) to ESFA. This covers all mainstream maintained schools and academies: including pupil numbers on the October 2022 census in resourced provision (RP); and special educational needs (SEN) units to support the calculation of funding for occupied and unoccupied places.
5. February 23 - Review of, and amendments to, education, health and care (EHC) plans must be completed by 15 February for pupils moving into, or between, schools in that calendar year.
6. February 2023 - 2024 budgets issued to maintained mainstream schools, special schools and PRUs.
7. March 2023 - Publication of the 2023 to 2024 high needs place numbers for schools and colleges.

8. 31 March 2023 – review of and amendments to, education, health and care plans for pupils moving into post 16 providers, or between post 16 providers, in the new academic year.

3.0 Consultation on Place Numbers

- 3.1 Consultation with high needs providers commenced in early October with priority being given to academies, post 16 providers and the hospital school (see Stage 1 above).
- 3.2 The feedback from the meetings has been captured on a proforma which contains a wider range of information than previously considered (see example at Appendix 1). These meetings are intended to be the start of an ongoing dialogue between Commissioning, the Providers, Senstart, Education Operational Teams and the wider Partnership regarding future trends and needs in order to inform a future Commissioning and Sufficiency Plan for Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in our City.
- 3.3 All high needs providers have been consulted for the submission date of 18 November 2022. Following consultation with colleagues, the place changes for the maintained settings will be submitted in January 2023 (Stage 4). Relevant reports agreed between Commissioning and School Business and Support will be submitted to Children’s Leadership Team and Schools’ Forum.

4.0 Approach to Place Planning

- 4.1 It is acknowledged and owned by our Education Partnership that the key to successful commissioning and the effective use of resources is a thorough understanding of the needs of the children, young people and families in the local area. This when combined with robust, reliable data will allow the generation of a Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy for SEND which will demonstrate the high needs of pupils and the required services and provision to deliver against those identified needs.
- 4.2 The conversations with our Providers for the ESFA return resulted in key messages or Key Line of Enquiries being presented with the most prominent including:
 - Increased complexity of children and young people.
 - Early intervention needed in Early Years/Mainstream to reduce demand for Special Schools.
 - Increased consultations from OOC authorities.
 - Need for Post 16 move on establishment that would include preparation for adulthood and life skills.
 - Capacity in resource bases and special schools

These key Line of Enquiries are captured in the “You Said We Did” document which is referred to in Section 6.0 of this report.

- 4.3 Over the last 18 months a change and improvement programme to deliver the SEND Written Statement of Action requirements has been implemented across the SEND agenda which in turn is improving what we know about the needs of our children and young people and more importantly what we know about those pupils in our early years settings. This will enable a future forecast of trends and needs to be established by Commissioning together with School Business Support to change our reactive approach to place planning to a more proactive consultation, planning and Partnership Send Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy endorsed by all Partners.
- 4.4 An important part of the change and improvement programme has been the need to improve data and what we know about the future trends and needs of our children and young people with SEND. Significant progress has been made in this area which is still being improved and the appendices at 2,3,4 gives a demonstration of how we are collating data and information to inform future commissioning and place planning.
- 4.5 However, we are not there yet and whilst we plan a Transformation Project to achieve our ambition to be proactive and not reactive, we already know that we have a need to manage expectations regarding more special school places and the need for possibly more Resource Bases in our mainstream provision to mitigate the demand for special school places. This is being further endorsed by our Inclusion Agenda and Graduated Approach Agendas.
- 4.6 In light of the above transformation work needed, the approach this year has been to maintain the status quo unless our Special Providers have agreed to increase places within either their current building capacity or on a condition that any capital requirements are presented to the Council and able to demonstrate a value for money option as opposed to Out of City provision costs.
- 4.7 This does not preclude the option to place children in a setting in line with the SEND Code of Practice.
- 4.8 On a positive note which will aid our ambition there is a good news story; there is additional capacity focussed on SEND which has been put in place as a result of a restructure of the Commissioning Team. This has to date secured a Senior Commissioning Officer, two Commissioning Officers (one was a teacher), one Service Development Officer and a yet to be appointed Quality Assurance Officer. This has never been in place for SEND, so this is a very positive message to all our Partners in particular our Head Teachers.

5.0 Agreed Place Changes

5.1 With respect to the formal return to the ESFA (Education Skills and Funding Agency) submitted 18 November 2022, the following changes were included:

- a. Westcroft Special School – increase of 10 places in Primary;
- b. Aldersley High Schools increase of five places (yet to be confirmed as substantial change);
- c. Pine Green Academy – reduction of 10 places;
- d. Juniper Training – minus 76 places (challenge that this provision is located in Staffordshire);
- e. City of Wolverhampton College- increase of four places;
- f. Wolverhampton Vocational College – minus five places;
- g. Penn Hall Special School – increase of eight plus 10 new places in new post 16 provision;
- h. St Martins Resource Base – 20 places. (Resubmitted due to late submission of Deed of Variation last year).

5.2 These submitted changes will be confirmed or otherwise in January 2023. Other changes agreed include:

- a. Tettenhall Wood increase to 164 (including Hubs).

6.0 You Said/We did

6.1 As part of Commissioning’s conversations with our Headteachers and their staff, commissioning gave a commitment to capturing their ongoing issues/concerns in a “you said/ we did” paper which is attached as Appendix 5.

6.2 There has been an attempt to respond positively to some of the actions listed in this paper but most of the areas raised are more of a “we are going to do” response at this time as they need to be captured in the Transformation agenda referred to earlier in this paper. However, it is a record of the issues raised which can be reported back to this forum as and when timetabled.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation Proforma

Appendix 2 - SEND Performance Dashboard

Appendix 3 - SEND Partnership Dashboard

Appendix 4 - School SEND Census Dashboard - April Edition

Appendix 5 - “You Said, We Did” Document