

Division(s): Abingdon South Also of interest across wider Abingdon area
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**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES
- 9 FEBRUARY 2015
FINAL REPORT ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE
COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION RESOURCE BASE AT
CALDECOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL, ABINGDON**

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. This report follows a local consultation and a statutory notice period relating to the county council's proposal to close the Communication & Interaction Resource Base located within Caldecott Primary School, Abingdon.
2. The consultation document (attached at Annex 1) was sent out locally from 19 September 2014 to 17 October 2014, with the help of Caldecott Primary School who distributed it to parents and other groups. The statutory notice (attached at Annex 2) was published by the Local Authority, in the Abingdon Herald newspaper on 12 November 2014 and expired following 4 weeks of formal consultation on 10 December 2014. In accordance with legislation the notice was also posted at the school entrances and sent to the local library. A copy of the full proposal (attached at Annex 3) and the notices were sent to the governing body, county council teams, local councillors and made available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.
3. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice lies with the Cabinet or can be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families. In meeting as 'decision-maker' the Cabinet or Cabinet Member must have regard to government guidance and statutory timescales otherwise a decision can be referred to the independent Schools' Adjudicator for reconsideration. The decision must be made within 2 months of the close of the notice period.

Background

14. Resource Bases are facilities hosted by mainstream schools to provide specialist support and interventions to children with special educational needs. Communication and Interaction is a term used for children and young people who have particular difficulties with understanding what is being said and social interaction. This includes children with speech, language or social communication difficulties and those with autism and Asperger's syndrome.

15. The resource base hosted by Caldecott School was originally established for children with speech and language needs, and from 2010 it broadened to include children with autism.
16. The number of pupils in the base has reduced over time and in 2012-13 there were only 3 pupils, all in year 6. Since September 2013 the base has been empty. There is another Communication and Interaction Resource Base in the South of the county at St Andrew's CE School in Chinnor and pupil numbers there have remained in double figures.
17. The number of all primary pupils across the Abingdon area has risen and this trend is forecast to continue. This means that Caldecott Primary School has increased its pupil intake from September 2014. While the resource base is empty, the school is using the classroom space to meet the increasing demand for places at the school.

The Proposal

18. The County Council proposes to close the Resource Base run by the SENSS team which is located within Caldecott Primary School. The reasons for this are:
 - The lack of demand for places in the resource base over recent years and increasing demand for school places at Caldecott Primary School have prompted this recommendation.
 - The existence of the specialist provision at St Andrew's CE Primary School in Chinnor is meeting local needs.
 - The impact of earlier interventions, the breadth of specialist advisory support and the increasing expertise in schools and partnerships in the local area are also factors contributing to lack of demand for specialist places at Caldecott.
 - There is NO reduction in budget. Services are being deployed to intervene earlier and empower schools to meet the needs of pupils now and those who will join the school in the future.

Representations

19. One response was received to the initial consultation, in support of the proposal in principle because of the need for mainstream teaching space and the underuse of the accommodation.
20. No responses were received to the statutory notice.

Legal background

14. The removal of SEN provision is subject to statutory procedures, as set out in "School Organisation: Maintained Schools. Guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (The Guidance) published January 2014. When reaching a

decision, Cabinet Member must have regard to The Guidance, in particular paragraphs 19 – 25.

15. In terms of reaching a decision all proposals should be considered on their merits but the following factors should be borne in mind but are not considered to be exhaustive. The Decision Maker should consider the views of all those affected. Details of the consultation should be included in the proposals. The Decision Maker must be satisfied that the consultation meets statutory requirements. If the requirements have not been met, the Decision Maker may judge the proposals to be invalid and should consider whether they can make a decision on the proposals. Alternatively the Decision Maker may take into account the sufficiency and quality of the consultation as part of their overall judgement of the proposals as a whole.
16. **The effect on standards, school improvement and diversity.** The government aims to create a dynamic system shaped by parents that delivers excellence and equality, closing weak schools, encouraging new providers and popular schools to expand. Decision Makers should be satisfied that the proposals will contribute to raising local standards of provision and improved attainment and consider the impact on choice and diversity. They should pay particular attention to the effect on groups that tend to under-perform including children from certain ethnic minorities and deprived backgrounds.
17. **School characteristics.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise and whether there is supporting evidence to support the extension and take into account the existence of capacity elsewhere. The Decision Maker needs to consider the accessibility of the provision for disadvantaged groups as the provision should not unduly extend journey times or cost.
18. **Funding and land.** The Decision Maker should be satisfied that any land, premises and capital required to implement the proposals will be available.

Financial and Staff Implications

19. There are no financial costs to the closure of the Resource Base at Caldecott Primary School as no pupils have been taught within it since 2013 and there is no capital implication.
20. There are no cuts to budgets associated with this proposal.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

21. There is no impact on equality and inclusion as a result of this proposal as no children attend the Resource Base at Caldecott Primary School and there continues to be a resource base at Chinnor. As such, there is no evidence of a strong parental preference for such provision to be made in a resource base at Caldecott.

CMDCEF5

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