

REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: DEVELOPING INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS IN HILLINGDON TO BEST REFLECT LOCAL NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Education and Children's Services
Officer Contact	Natasha Dogra, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Developing Inclusion in Schools in Hillingdon to Best Reflect Local Needs and Aspirations Final Report

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To receive the Education and Children's Services Policy Overview Committee's report providing recommendations which seek to build upon the Borough's approach and strategy to the Inclusion of children and young people with Special Educational Needs.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	This report contributes to the Council's priorities for a flexible and contemporary Inclusion practice throughout the Borough.
Financial Cost	There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Education and Children's Services Policy Overview Committee
Ward(s) affected	All.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Note that the Committee, during its review, concluded that the service is performing well.
2. Welcome the report from the Education and Children's Services Policy Overview Committee and note the general consensus it found in favour of improving the Inclusion Practice; and
3. Endorses the recommendations of the Policy Overview Committee report and the Cabinet Member as ways to improve Inclusion practice, as set out overleaf:

Committee Recommendations:

- a) **Review the Secondary Transfer process to build confidence in parents and carers that the individual child's educational needs are catered for;**
- b) **Ensure mainstream schools are confident that they have the capacity to support children within the mainstream setting;**
- c) **Establish effective support for children, parents and carers to ensure full access to detailed information for parents, carers and schools governors;**
- d) **Encourage the development of extra curricular activities to ensure the pupil voice is heard;**
- e) **Support Extended Services demonstrating how disabled children and young people are included;**
- f) **That Officers are instructed to identify schools that may be challenged by the Inclusion agenda and report to the Cabinet Member implementation strategies that will be put into place to support these schools and the criteria used to measure their success;**
- g) **Implement a method of accountability to ensure adequate training and development is in place to ensure all staff are fully equipped with the skills required.**
- h) **That Cabinet are aware of changes which may occur at a national level that could affect the viability of the Inclusion policy in the future.**

Cabinet Member and Committee recommendation combined:

- i) **That Cabinet note the national and potential future policy context regarding inclusion from the main UK political parties attached in Annex A and endorse the Committee's recommendation to invite them to review the council's approach to inclusion, should at a later date, national policy and legislation on this matter alter direction.**

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

The recommendations are aimed at building upon Hillingdon's approach to the delivery of a comprehensive Inclusion Strategy. The development of the Inclusion practice will contribute to residents' satisfaction and the aim of catering to the needs of families of children with disabilities.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject or amend the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. The Committee chose 'Inclusion' as a review topic in 2009/10 to enable the Council to build on its successes so far.

2. The aim of this review was to look at ways to improve the service and the arrangements for implementing that strategy. The reasons behind why the Council needs to develop its Inclusion Strategy were identified, including the potential benefits and drawbacks. Opportunities to improve the service were investigated and were considered when producing the recommendations.
3. The review took place between June 2009 and November 2009.
4. The Committee's report (attached) gives full details of the review.
5. Education Officers support the Committee's recommendations and advise Cabinet that recommendations will be picked up as part of the Inclusion Strategy 2009-11, which appears elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the report should be read in conjunction with the report on the Inclusion Strategy 2009-11.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The Committee's recommendations will provide a springboard for the Council to take those steps necessary to improve services offered to families of children with disabilities.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee took evidence from residents, officers and experts as described in the attached report (see page 11).

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance is satisfied that there are no direct financial implications to the Authority, arising from the recommendations set out in this report and that any activities within this proposal will be implemented within existing financial resources.

Legal

There are no legal comments regarding this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Annex A

National Policy / Future Policy Context from the main UK political parties regarding Inclusion

HM Government

The Government is committed to the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools. In August 2009, Secretary of State, Ed Balls, announced changes in the law so schools are to be assessed on how they support Children with SEN and disabilities. Parents are to also be given the right to appeal to the local authority against their child's statement of SEN.

An inquiry was held, at the request of the Government, chaired by Mr Brian Lamb, into Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence. On 25th September 2009 Mr Lamb sent a letter to the Children's Minister recommending the strengthening of the SEN responsibilities of schools working together in Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships. These recommendations were accepted by the Minister.

In response to the Lamb Inquiry, the Children's minister has pledged to test easier ways of assessing Children with SEN. The Minister has also commissioned Toby Salt (Deputy Chief Executive of the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services) to lead an independent review into the supply of teachers trained to meet the needs of children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). He also announced that the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) would be taking forward a £550,000 project to develop special schools as leaders in teaching and learning practice for children with the most complex learning difficulties.

Source: DCSF.

The Conservative Party

Whilst not official party policy at this stage, the Conservative Party has proposed alternatives to Government Policy. The main changes are:

- 1) Statements should be replaced by Special Needs Profiles (SNP) drawn up by Profile Assessors, who would be educational psychologists, and others possibly operating in consortia. These profiles would be cumulative and subject to regular review to ensure that the continued provision is as dynamic as the child's needs. It is believed that as early intervention is important, SNP's should be created as early in a child's life as possible.
- 2) SNP's would allocate the child to one of a number of support categories (as in USA, Canada and most of Europe). It is therefore expected to be a dozen such categories, the first two or three of which would cover those pupils not currently 'statemented' but receiving special provision in mainstream schools.
- 3) Each level of support would legally attract a certain amount of funding which the pupil would then carry to a mainstream or special school. Parents would be able to negotiate with any mainstream or special school for a place, irrespective of the local authority area in which they live.
- 4) A special needs mediation scheme could be created to avoid the current adversarial context of appeals. A tribunal would be the very last resort.
- 5) Special schools could, under a rolling programme, be given 'Special Academy Status' (i.e. considerable freedom to develop as their professional requirements suggest and to expand pupil numbers).

Source: The Conservative Party Commission on Special Needs in Education- The Second Report.

The Liberal Democrat Party

The Liberal Democrats have made the following pledges in relation to Special Educational Needs policy. To:

- Separate funding from assessment and to develop a multi-agency professional assessment framework which is statutorily funded and operates independently of the commissioning process. Such an assessment will specify the services that will then be costed and provided for that individual pupil's education;
- Specify that the assessment framework be used to determine provision in as short a time as possible: working towards achieving and then reducing the present 6 month target;
- Ensure the inclusion in initial teacher training courses, other routes to ITT, and through continuous professional development of existing teachers and support staff, of comprehensive training in all types of special educational, social and health needs, difficulties and disabilities of children and young people;
- Ensure that the development of Children's Services takes into account the inclusion needs of the children and young people most in need and with the most complex difficulties and disabilities;
- Develop local alternatives to Pupil Referral Units under schools regulations to enable those children and young people with misdiagnosed and/or undiagnosed needs, difficulties and disabilities to be supported in environments free from the stigma of failure caused by permanent exclusion from schools.

Source: Liberal Democrat conference motion SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - March 2008