

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 17 January 2019

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - People

**SUBJECT:** Application for the development of a Special Free School for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Education and Social Care

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide an update on the opportunity to develop a Special Free School for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs in Halton.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: To note the decision of the Chief Executive, acting under delegated powers, to develop a free school provision on the Naylor Road, Widnes, site.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 On 18 October 2018, Executive Board approved an application to establish a special free school in Halton shared with St Helens Borough Council. On 16 December 2018, a statement was published by the Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, advising that all high quality bids applications for special free schools submitted in the current round would be approved. The DfE Lead Assessor has contacted the LA to request final submission of the specification as a matter of urgency. Following consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio holder for Children, Education and Social Care, the Chief Executive used delegated powers for the development of the free school provision on the Naylor Road, Widnes, site.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Department expects that any land identified by the Local Authority will be provided for free or there will be a peppercorn rent charged to the Trust that will run the free school.

4.2 The capital costs for development of the building will be met by the DfE if the application is successful.

- 4.3 Each local authority will commission places from the Free School and will pay for these places from their High Needs Funding. It is anticipated that by establishing this new provision there will be a reduction in the costs of placing pupils out of borough and a reduction in the costs of transport.
- 4.4 Should there be any additional capacity other neighbouring authorities have expressed an interest in commissioning this provision.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 If the application to develop a free schools is successful Halton and St Helen's will be required to identify a Trust sponsor through the presumption route.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Supporting pupils with SEMH in local schools is more inclusive as it allows pupils to be educated within their own community and alongside their peer group.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None identified

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The bases will provide support for pupils with social emotional and mental health difficulties.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None identified

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

## **7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is anticipated that establishing local SEMH provision will lead to a reduction in the rates of exclusions at secondary schools.

## **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 8.1 This proposal could have the effect of increasing demand for a special school place which risks long term outcomes for young people to live

an independent life. To mitigate against this, it will be expected that the free school work collaboratively with local authority commissioners and schools across the boroughs to support re-integration where this can be achieved and to be a key partner with the continuum of provision for pupils with SEMH.

8.2 Where re-integration is not appropriate, the school will work with local post 16 planning and provision teams and develop strong links with FE providers and with employers to design appropriate pathways, with links into apprenticeships and supported internships.

**9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 The aim of the proposal is to improve the local offer for key stage 3 and 4 pupils with SEMH.

**10.0 REASON FOR DECISION**

10.1 Provide a more inclusive offer for pupils with SEMH giving them the opportunity to be educated with support alongside their peers.

**11.1 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

11.1 Not submitting an application for a joint free school. However, lack of provision has an impact on the educational outcomes of pupils that need this support.

**12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

11.1 Notification as to whether the bid has been successful will be announced by the DfE in Spring 2019.

**13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
DfE – Guidance and Criteria For local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools – July 2018	DfE Website	Ann McIntyre Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk