

Consultation on the proposal to close the Resource Provision Base for Pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties at Westfield Primary School.

Wednesday, 29th June 2016

Parents/Carers and Public Consultation

In attendance:

Ann McIntyre	Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision
Anita Parkinson	Divisional Manager – Inclusion
Julie Metcalfe	Lead Teacher for Hearing Impairment
Claire Dawes	Headteacher Westfield Primary School
Mr L Le-Surf	Chair of Governors
Ian McIntyre	Associate Governor
Ingrid Butterworth	Unison
Jane Bethell	
Lee Robinson	
Kerry Shore	
Kathleen Bradshaw	
Nicola Magdy	
Andrea Williams	

An attendance list was circulated for all those present to sign.

Ann McIntyre welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Purpose of the Meeting

It was explained that the purpose of the meeting was to commence the stage 1 consultation process on the Local Authority proposal to close the Resource Provision Base for pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties at Westfield Primary School. The rationale behind the proposal would be explained and there would be the opportunity for questions.

Ann advised that Resource Base had the capacity for six pupils with hearing impairment and specific learning difficulties. Demand had decreased so that from September 2016 there would be only 3 pupils accessing provision. Many parents with children with a hearing impairment are now choosing a mainstream school with a package of support. Removing the Resource Base will allow this funding to be invested into increasing the level of peripatetic specialist teaching and non-teaching in Halton so that the needs of those children educated in a mainstream setting that require additional support can best be met.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation the proposal was to close the provision from 31st December 2016.

The meeting were advised that the Resource Base received £10,000 for each of its 6 places, a total of £60,000. In addition, £20,623 is provided towards the costs of a Signer and for each pupil in the base the school receives top up funding of £5,081.73.

Questions

What support would be available for the pupils currently in the Resource Base?

It was explained that there would be no change to the support provided to the three pupils in the Resource Base from September 2016. The Local Authority would continue to fund the costs of the Teaching Assistant and the Signer and would provide teaching support from the Local Authority Peripatetic Hearing Impaired Specialist Teachers until all three pupils had completed their education at Westfield Primary School.

The acoustics in the base at Westfield are specially designed to support children with a hearing impairment not having access to these facilities will impact on children with a hearing impairment. Will children not lose out on their education?

The meeting were advised that most hearing impaired children now use the FM* system. For those children educated in mainstream schools they are often taken to a quiet room in the school, when appropriate, to access specialist support. Children in mainstream settings will be provided with support from the Local Authority peripatetic team.

When will the Resource Base be closed, how many children are affected and what will be the impact on the current pupils?

It is proposed that the Resource Base will close at 31st December 2016.

The Headteacher advised that there would be no change from the support pupils currently receive. The children will still continue to be able to access the base. There will be three pupils at the Resource Base in September two will be Year 5 and one Year 6.

Pupils in the base currently need additional support just learning to talk. Trying to get the right kind of support is emotionally draining and feels like mental torture. It took until one of the children was 7 to be able to get a cochlear implant and a mainstream primary school could not meet her needs. Why is the Local Authority not advertising the Resource Base to increase numbers?

The Local Authority is the Admission Authority for the Resource Base. In order to meet the admissions criteria for the base children must be severely or profoundly deaf. The views of many of the parents with children with a hearing impairment, is that they would prefer their child to be educated in a local mainstream school with support. For children with more complex needs appropriate specialist provision will be identified which can meet all their needs.

Parents are proud of the school, support the work of the Headteacher and the staff at the school and are proud that the school is very inclusive and that many children and staff are able to sign so that children in the Resource Base can mix with children in the mainstream.

What are the numbers of children with a hearing impairment and how will they be supported if the base closes?

There are currently around 144 children and young people in Halton from babies through to post-16 with a hearing impairment requiring support.

Newborn screening allows the earlier identification of hearing loss. Many of the babies currently have mild to moderate hearing loss. There was no support available in early years previously this is now available with children seen on either a weekly or monthly basis. As a result there is less developmental delay for children starting school.

The cohort and needs of hearing impaired children has changed over the years, many children have cochlear implants earlier, the majority use FM systems other changes in IT and technology enable more children to be educated in a mainstream school. In addition, support can be provided by the Local Authority team.

The same level of support will continue to be provided for the three children who will still be in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base from September 2016. Children will continue to receive support from a specialist teacher for the deaf in line with the NATSIP[^] guidelines.

Are children in the base all the time?

No. The amount of time a child is in the base depends on their individual needs. The intention is to increase children's access to the mainstream school with support.

How often is the equipment checked for the children in the base?

The equipment and systems are checked each day

There is a real benefit for all the pupils having a Hearing Impaired Resource Base at the School would support it continuing.

Consultation with parents of younger children with a hearing impairment indicates that they would prefer their child to be educated in a mainstream setting with support so that they can go to the same schools as their brothers and sisters within their local community.

There needs to be better promotion of the base at Westfield. There also needs to be opportunities for parents to meet together where they have a shared interest.

It is planned to start to run events for parents of children with a hearing impairment.

**FM – an FM system is a wireless system designed to help those who use them better identify and understand speech in noisy situations and over certain distances.*

[^] NATSIP is the National Sensory Impairment Partnership