

REPORT TO: Schools Forum

DATE: 26 February 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision

SUBJECT: High Needs – Pupil Referral Unit

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To set out the changes proposed changes to the operating model of the Pupil Referral Unit and seeks School Forum support for the revised funding arrangements.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 Support the proposed changes to the operating model of the PRU and the funding of two inclusion places per school per annum; and

2.2 Support the contribution from High Needs budget of £100k for the provision of a PRU Outreach Service.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In recent years the high levels of secondary exclusions has been restricting the ability of the PRU to provide preventative placements and use their expertise to provide outreach support to schools. The PRU has also seen an increasing number of pupils requiring assessment for an EHCP and very few students on engagement placements successfully returning to their mainstream school. This was acknowledge in the High Needs Review and one of the key recommendations was to change the operating model of the PRU and its relationships to schools so that it can maximise the integration of pupils back into mainstream schools.

3.2 A Task and Finish Group, facilitated by Peopletoo, with stakeholder representatives has now developed a plan which will allow the PRU to work differently with schools. This new approach should allow better more consistent planning and support for schools with students with additional needs and remove duplication or gaps in provision. It is also aimed at reducing challenging behaviour and exclusions. Finally it encourages schools to utilise the good quality vocational offer provided by the PRU.

3.3 To improve the governance arrangements at the PRU it is proposed that the instrument of governance is revised. A revised instrument has been developed and includes the following:

- An independent Chair and Vice Chair;
 - Representation from all secondary schools;
 - Revised code of conduct with provision to address conflicts of interest; and
 - A key priority is to reintegrate pupils back to mainstream.
- 3.4 Under the new arrangements termly meetings will take place with each secondary school. These meetings will include the appropriate school representative/s and a member of the Educational Psychology Service, Behaviour Support Service, Specialist Teaching Service, School Assessment Co-ordinator and proposed new PRU Outreach Team.
- 3.5 The school will set out the key challenges faced in effectively supporting students with special educational needs and/or challenging behaviour. The LA team would provide advice, support, challenge and guidance a co-ordinated plan would be developed per school per term.
- 3.6 To promote greater inclusion and reintegration and try and reduce the risk of permanent exclusion, it is proposed that using the funding allocated from the High Needs budget for PRU each school be allocated two inclusion places. Each secondary school will be allocated two inclusion places per term for up to 12 weeks. For each placement the school will need to sign a Service Level Agreement with the PRU. These places are contingent on the school commitment to reintegrate each inclusion student.
- 3.7 Places will be funded at the full top up rate through the High Needs budget. A school will lose a place if they permanently exclude a student, however, following the successful reintegration of a student a school can then use the free place for another student.
- 3.8 Additional places can still be purchased from the PRU if available.
- 3.9 Under the current arrangements few pupils return to their mainstream school after an engagement placement. To address this issue it is proposed that an Outreach Service led by the PRU is developed. This service would focus on reintegrating pupils back to school and provide support. It is proposed that the High Needs budget contribute £100k to the development of this new service. Halton Association of Secondary Schools have met and support this development. They will meet again to consider whether from their own resources they wish to further enhance the level of Outreach support that can provided through the PRU.
- 3.10 The sustainability of the vocational provision provided by the PRU at Astmoor, @37 was discussed at Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers. It was explained that the provision was under used with some schools choosing to place their students elsewhere. Schools were reminded that @37 was run by the PRU and located in a separate specially adapted business unit at Astmoor and provided good quality assured vocational provision. Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers

committed to support @37 and utilise the provision when seeking a vocational placement for a student.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The revised model aims at identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or challenging behaviour earlier and determining the most appropriate support. Through this approach it is hoped that the PRU can provide more preventative support, the level of exclusions will reduce and there will be less need for expensive packages of support for pupils and a reduction in out of borough placements.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 The PRU is currently operating over capacity and is limited in the support it can provide to schools to prevent exclusion. Lack of reintegration restricts the places available for preventative work with students. The collaborative changes proposed in the new operating model, along with the investment in a more preventative approach to supporting pupils is aimed at addressing these issues and ensuring students needs can be more appropriately met locally earlier.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 These changes are aimed at improving the outcome of secondary students with special educational needs and/ or challenging behaviour.