

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

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| Meeting: | Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee |
| Date: | 30 June 2003 |
| Subject: | Update on the implementation of the SEN strategy |
| Responsible Chief Officer: | Paul Osburn, Executive Director (People First) |
| Status: | Public |
| Ward: | All |
| Enclosures: | Appendix A: SEN strategy strategic objectives Appendix B: Special Educational Needs Development Plan 2003/04 |

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the implementation of the SEN strategy requested by the Sub-Committee in July 2002 in connection with the monitoring of the LEA inspection plan.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note and comment on the report.

3. **Relevant Previous Decisions**

- 3.1 Cabinet approved the SEN strategy at its meeting on 25 June 2002.

4. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report addresses the Council's Corporate Priority to promote Harrow as a centre of lifelong learning by offering the highest quality education services, by raising aspirations and outcomes of achievement and by providing activities for cultural, artistic and leisure pursuits which reflect the profile and the interests of all local communities.

5. **Background Information**

- 5.1 The formulation and implementation of a clear and coherent strategy for SEN, especially one that demonstrates how the inclusion of pupils will be developed, is widely recognised as a difficult and challenging area for LEAs owing to the complexity of the issues that need to be resolved.
- 5.2 Harrow's SEN strategy was agreed and approved after extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including parents. It aims to provide a coherent framework for developments and was identified as a document that the LEA should put in place when Ofsted inspected Harrow in 2001.

- 5.3 The SEN strategy is monitored and reviewed by the newly formed Inclusion Steering Group, comprising officers, headteachers and governors
- 5.4 Harrow's strategy is based on key strategic objectives (Appendix A) in which the principles of inclusion, early intervention and partnership are embedded and the importance of further developing provision for more complex needs, improving accessibility in schools and using resources efficiently are emphasised.
- 5.5 Harrow has a long tradition of achieving a high level of inclusive practice. Schools broadly agree with and support the policy of inclusion and work hard to implement a strategy for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream classes wherever possible. Officers are in the process of developing advice and policy guidance to schools to further develop and improve accessibility (Appendix B: Development Priority 4).
- 5.6 The authority has one of the lowest percentage of pupils in special schools and the lowest percentage of pupils with statements in special schools (LEA inclusion trends in England 1997-2001: Statistics on special school placements & pupils with statements in special schools, CSIE, 2002). The proportion of statemented pupils attending special schools outside the authority is reducing although there continues to be difficulty in making provision for the full range of pupils with autism.
- 5.7 The role of Harrow's special schools continues to evolve and grow and plans for the further development of Kingsley High School, in partnership with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, and Woodlands First and Middle School, are progressing.
- 5.8 Schools in Harrow provide effectively for the diversity of children's needs. At each key stage Ofsted inspection grades indicate that provision for special educational needs in schools is consistently judged to be good or satisfactory (Harrow LEA Statistical Profile, Ofsted, 2003).
- 5.9 Harrow's strategy recognises the importance of developing ways of giving greater responsibility to schools for meeting the needs of pupils with the potential for statements. The delegation of funding for most pupils with statements in mainstream schools in Harrow came into effect fully in April 2002. However a new group has been set up to develop with schools the next phase of delegating SEN resources to school level to adjust the balance between school action/plus and statements (Appendix B: Development Priority 1).
- 5.10 The need to improve the authority's capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special needs in schools, including the monitoring of schools' use of delegated expenditure, was highlighted as a weakness in the authority's Ofsted inspection. A key element of the strategy is the development with schools of systems that can be put in place for supported self-review and evaluation of work on special needs and inclusion, forming part of a wider programme of self-review and LEA monitoring.
- 5.11 A working group has been established consisting of a cross section of school representatives who have expressed an interest in further developing the LEA's shared understanding of inclusive education. The original group consisted of headteachers and LEA officers and the group is now expanded to include the special needs co-ordinators from each of the schools involved. The schools are working on two strands: (1) The development of criteria for schools to use as a self review tool for inclusion, and (2) The

development of exemplars of SEN material to offer schools guidance on the identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs. The schools involved are currently piloting criteria within their settings this term (Appendix B: Development Priority 2).

- 5.12 A revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice came into effect in January 2002 that introduced a number of key changes that have been implemented. For example, previous stages were replaced by 'School Action' and 'School Action Plus' and 'Early Years Action' and 'Early Years Action Plus' and schools were no longer required to maintain an SEN register. There was a requirement for the LEA to specify or quantify provision in Part 3 of statements though some flexibility is allowed. LEAs are expected to amend all statements by 15 February prior to a child's transfer in September of that same year and this was carried out very successfully for pupils transferring to high school this year. The requirement to provide an independent conciliation element has been established.
- 5.13 Harrow continues to take steps to improve how well it meets its statutory duties regarding the assessment and support for pupils with statements of SEN. However, continuing delays in receiving medical advice has hindered the speed with which statutory assessments are carried out and this is being discussed again with the health authority in an attempt to improve the situation. The use of an external provider for writing statements has been helpful especially at a time when there have been staffing shortages in the team that deal with statutory assessments and statements. The processing of reviews of statements has been particularly affected by staffing difficulties and has been identified as a key area for improvement. It is recognised that there remains a need to further build the capacity in the team that handles the statutory SEN assessment procedures and currently a consultant casework manager has been engaged.
- 5.14 Some types of special needs are highlighted within the strategy, particularly autism where the numbers of children with an autism disorder has risen. There has been a very positive development in early intervention for children with autism through a significant increase in the number of Portage Home Visitors and the setting up of the National Autistic Society Early Bird scheme for parents of young autistic children. It has also been possible to increase the specialist teachers for autism within the Sensory and Communication Team to provide staff in schools with improved access to advice and specific training in how to teach children with autism where it is recognised that school staff are not highly trained enough to deal with children with autism who have a very different way of learning from other children. It is anticipated that the further development of Harrow's special schools will include specific provision for autism (Appendix B: Development Priority 3).
- 5.15 The provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties was identified as having significant weaknesses in the authority's Ofsted inspection (Appendix B: Development Priority 5). Since then, learning support units have been established in 3 high schools and these have had a positive impact on reducing exclusions in those schools.
- 5.16 In September 2002 a new advisory teacher post was established at Harrow Tuition Service to support those pupils most at risk of exclusion in first and middle schools and to support pupils' re-integration through out-reach work with schools. This approach is proving successful and plans are in place to establish more suitable primary accommodation, annexed to Harrow Tuition Service, to improve provision for pupils.

Suitable accommodation has also been identified to expand secondary teaching space at Harrow Tuition Service in 2003/4 and it is intended to increase opportunities for out-reach and re-integration to further develop support for pupils and their schools.

5.17 The Access and Development team provides advice and direct support teaching in schools for pupils at School Action Plus. Following consultation with headteachers, a decision has been taken to devolve to schools the funding for direct support teaching from April 2004 with a buy-back service offering a range of provision to support pupils at School Action Plus. The core advisory function within the Access and Development Team will be retained. Three advisory teacher posts for behaviour will be aligned with the outreach developments at Harrow Tuition Service from September 2003 and one advisory teacher for SEN will carry out strategic advisory functions, including monitoring and moderation of SEN provision.

5.18 The published professional development training programme contains a wide range of SEN courses and there will also be accredited training provided for special educational needs co-ordinators through the University of London Institute of Education. Harrow continues its links with the University of Hertfordshire and further education locally in providing training for teaching assistants. The further development of the provision of advice and support from Harrow's special schools is being considered (Appendix B: Development Priority 6).

6. **Consultation**

6.1 Not applicable.

7. **Finance Observations**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report but the area has to be continually monitored and some future developments are likely to have financial implications. There is £300K of growth identified each year for this area in total within the medium term budget strategy.

8. **Legal Observations**

8.1 None

9. **Conclusion**

9.1 Progress is being made in implementing the SEN strategy, including the key development priorities. . Data on the outcomes for pupils with special educational needs will be reported as part of the service review.

10. **Background Papers**

10.1 District Audit Report on Special Educational Needs, August 1999.

10.2 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: High school place planning for pupils with statements of special educational needs, 9 December 1999.

10.3 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: District Audit Report on Special Educational Needs (SEN), 14 October 1999.

10.4 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: Feedback on high school place planning for pupils with statements of special educational needs, 15 June 2000.

10.5 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee Information Circular: Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Development Plan, 15 March 2001.

- 10.6 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: Delegation of Funding for Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs, 13 June 2001.
- 10.7 Inspection of Harrow Local Education Authority, Ofsted/Audit Commission, September 2001.
- 10.8 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee Information Circular: Developments in provision for children and pupils with special educational needs, 3 October 2001.
- 10.9 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: District Audit Special Educational Needs Follow-Up, 3 October 2001.
- 10.10 Harrow LEA Inspection Action Plan, 18 December 2001.
- 10.11 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: Developing Harrow's Special Educational Needs Strategy, 23 January 2002.
- 10.12 Education, Arts and Leisure Committee: Local Management of Schools – Changes to the Funding Formulae and Extended Delegation of Budgets, 23 January 2002.
- 10.13 Education Development Plan 2002-2007, February 2002.
- 10.14 LEA item for Governing Bodies Spring Term 2002: Developing Harrow's SEN Strategy
- 10.15 Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Review of the distribution of SEN statements in mainstream schools, 8 April 2003.

11. **Author**

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Appendix A

The strategic objectives are as follows:

- To promote inclusive education by supporting Harrow schools and preschool and childcare providers to develop and extend their ability and confidence to meet a wider range of needs;
- To identify needs and provide support as early as possible;
- To develop further provision for children and young people with complex behavioural and developmental needs;
- To improve access and raise the achievement of the diverse range of pupils with special educational needs, recognising the full range of pupils' achievements;
- To make the optimum use of all resources, ensuring that these are targeted and allocated appropriately and efficiently;
- To continue to develop and improve partnerships with children and young people, their parents, carers and other agencies.

HARROW'S SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN**MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL HARROW CHILDREN – A COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION****Key development priorities – 2003/04**

| Development | Outcomes | Timescale | Lead/Service |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1 Develop with schools the next phase of delegating SEN resources to school level to adjust the balance between school action/plus and statements. | <p>Increased flexibility and capacity for schools to meet needs and include pupils more effectively through early intervention.</p> <p>Reduced bureaucracy as a result of less dependence on statements.</p> | <p>Setting up of a working group in March/April 2003.</p> <p>Consultation in autumn 2003.</p> <p>Implementation of agreed changes in April 2004.</p> | <p>Children's Services Education Financial Services</p> <p>Officer: Roger Rickman</p> |
| 2 Develop with schools systems that can be put in place for supported self-review and evaluation of work on special needs and inclusion, forming part of a wider programme of self-review and monitoring. | <p>A common understanding and judgements by schools and the local authority with regard to SEN/AEN.</p> <p>Improved capacity of schools for self-evaluation and development to ensure inclusion for all pupils.</p> | <p>Developing approaches spring/summer 2003.</p> <p>Piloting and trialling systems in schools autumn 2003.</p> | <p>School Development Services Children's Services</p> <p>Officer: Carole Tobin</p> |
| 3 Continue to develop provision for autism in the early years sector, improve the access to specialist advice and training for staff in schools and develop provision in mainstream and special schools. | <p>Increased support for families at an early stage.</p> <p>Designated mainstream schools with a more developed level of expertise.</p> <p>Extended provision within each of the special schools.</p> <p>More pupils with autism having their needs met within the authority.</p> | <p>Fully implement the Early Bird Scheme in 2003.</p> <p>Complete the recruitment to the central team by April 2003.</p> <p>Plan and support developments in mainstream and special schools 2003/04.</p> | <p>Children's Services Early Years and Childcare Service School Development Services</p> <p>Officer: Roger Rickman</p> |

| Development | Outcomes | Timescale | Lead/Service |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|
| 4 Take steps to reduce barriers to learning by meeting the new duties for schools and the local authority to plan and implement over time strategies to improve the accessibility of schools. | Implementation of school and local authority accessibility plans and strategies, Increased accessibility in schools. | April 2003 to March 2006. | Schools Children's Services Strategy and Resources School Development Services Officers: Michael Bateman, Helen Forbes-Low, Carole Tobin |
| 5 Review and revise the provision of advice and work with schools to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure that 'at risk' and/or excluded pupils receive suitable provision. | A clear range of effective provision that helps schools to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Appropriate educational provision for excluded pupils with effective outreach and re-integration programmes for pupils seriously 'at risk' and/or excluded. | Spring 2003 to March 2004. | School Development Services Children's Services Officer: Brenda Rayson |
| 6 Increase schools' capacity to meet vulnerable children's needs through a targeted staff development programme for school managers, SENCOs, teachers and teaching assistants. | A range of expertise in all settings which has an impact on teaching and learning for those vulnerable groups of children experiencing barriers to learning. | 2003/04 annual programme. | School Development Services Children's Services Officer: Carole Tobin |