

**By:** Sarah Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education  
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**To:** Cabinet – 13 September 2010

**Subject:** **REVIEW OF SEN UNITS - OUTCOME OF THE EVALUATION OF THE LEAD SCHOOL PILOT**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This report sets the context for SEN Unit Review, presents the findings of the Lead School Pilot evaluation and makes recommendations and proposals for the development of a new SEN Strategy to meet the special educational needs of Kent children and young people.

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## **Introduction and Background**

1 (1) The Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 to consider referrals of children from parents/carers, schools and other agencies, for assessment of special educational needs (SEN), to undertake assessments and in appropriate cases to issue statements of SEN. The LA has a duty to ensure that the provisions identified in each statement are met and to ensure that all other duties placed upon it by the Acts and the SEN and Disability codes of practice are met.

(2) Kent provides education for its children and young people with SEN in a variety of provisions. They include:

- Maintained mainstream schools
- Maintained special schools
- Academies
- SEN Units within maintained mainstream schools
- Outreach and Inreach provision from special and mainstream schools
- Short stay schools – formerly Pupil Referral Units (PRU)
- Alternative Curriculum Provision
- Highly specialist provision for specific children - Warmstone
- 'Home' Tuition (group and individual)
- Home Education (Education Otherwise than at School)
- Independent and non-maintained sector – special and mainstream

3) In 2005, there were 971 pupils with statements attending SEN units. In 2010, this figure has decreased to 732. However, an additional 489 pupils with statements, who in 2005 would have been supported at SEN units, were supported through additional funding for very severe and complex needs (VSCN) at Kent mainstream schools. When this fact is considered, it shows the total number of pupils

with statements (who would originally have been given a place at an SEN unit) rose by over 25% from 2005 to 2010.

In 2005, there were 2,971 pupils with statements attending Kent mainstream schools (rather than SEN units). In 2010, this figure has decreased to 1,314; a 55% reduction.

Overall, when one combines the number of pupils with statements at SEN Units and Kent mainstream schools in 2005 and compares it with 2010, there has been a reduction by 1,407 (36%).

4) Delegated SEN funding to mainstream schools related to meeting the needs of pupils with Statements of SEN, including those in SEN Units and with VSCN funding, has increased marginally from £33.8m to £34.2m between 2005 and 2010.

5) The number of pupils in Kent maintained special schools has risen from 2,355 in 2005 to 2,749 in 2010 – an increase of around 17%. Delegated funding has increased by around 46% from £38.8m to £55.4m which reflects both increased numbers and the increasing complexity of needs of pupils.

(6) In summary the SEN Strategy aims to:

1. Reduce reliance on Out County placements both residential and day.
2. Reduce maintained special school residential places.
3. Reduce places and numbers of children and young people (CYP) with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) at maintained special schools.
4. Increase places and numbers of CYP with Autism (ASD) and Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) at maintained special schools.
5. Increase the role of special schools to include supporting the needs of pre-school children in the early years with SEN (including those at Early Years Action Plus and early Years Action) at mainstream schools.
6. Increase the role of special schools in supporting mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with Statements of SEN (SSEN) and those at School Action Plus and School Action..
7. Maximise delegation of funding and support to meet the needs of all children with SEN (previously Kent Audit L1 - L3, now School Action and School Action Plus and those with SSEN – previously Kent Audit L4 and above now SSEN).
8. Maximise the devolution of staff and resources to meet the needs of CYP with SEN to localities to support the inclusion/school improvement agenda.
9. Reduce travel time to and from school for CYP with SSEN and reduce transport costs.

(7) Members have made a series of policy decisions since 2004 to undertake and implement a review of SEN Units in Kent mainstream schools. Phase 1 of the Units Review began in September 2008 in the Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs) in Ashford, Shepway, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley (the pilot areas). From September 2008 to March 2009, lead schools received start-up funding of £39,235 to begin the work of developing locality provision. New formula funding arrangements agreed by the Schools Funding Forum were put in place in April 2009. Transitional funding arrangements were put in place for schools that had

existing units to support smooth transition and ensure that the needs of all children and young people with SEN continued to be met effectively.

(8) For varying and understandable reasons, all lead schools experienced different development needs and made progress in a variety of directions. Despite this, all lead schools, together with the various partner services and agencies in the localities, embraced the programme with energy and commitment and worked through issues as they arose. Every opportunity has been taken to capture the good practice that has developed, to identify the barriers that presented themselves and to seek ways forward.

## **Evaluation Findings**

2 (1) During the period from September 2008 to July 2010 information for the evaluation was collected in a number of ways:

- Questionnaires to schools, other professionals, parents and carers
- Meetings within the LCSPs with head teachers and unit staff
- Meetings with the various professionals who support schools and children
- Meetings with parents and carers
- By email from all parties through the specially designated generic email address and by letter directly to the Authority
- Self-assessment surveys completed in 2008, 2009 and 2010 by the lead schools

(2) An Executive Summary and a copy of the full Evaluation Report is attached at Appendix 1. Annex 4 of that report provides a summary of the various aspects of the lead school pilot that all parties liked and all the things that they did not like. Section 7 of the same report provides further detail on the findings with regard to the funding arrangements.

(3) While there are many aspects identified that were both positive and negative, there are some main themes that underpin the findings, leading to some significant conclusions. These are set out in Section 8 of the attached Evaluation Report. In summary, there are four clear lessons that have been learned. These are:

- The need for more clarity about the responsibilities, accountability and expectations of all mainstream schools in how they should deploy their delegated budgets to support all children and young people with special educational needs, with specific regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
- One model does not fit all need types and there needs to be a continuum of provision available for each SEN dimension need type that includes, for some need types, specialist provision within mainstream schools
- The need for clarity in respect of outreach services to schools to support those children and young people whose needs are not severe and complex enough to require placement at or intensive input from specialist provision but who, nevertheless, need access to additional specialist support beyond that which the mainstream school itself is expected to provide

- The need to improve communication and consultation arrangements for working with parents and carers

### The Way Forward

3. (1) Lead Schools in the pilot areas and all the professionals who have supported them locally have worked very hard to support all children and young people in mainstream schools with severe and complex needs and to develop effective outreach services to complement existing services. Good practice developed must not be lost and should be incorporated into future plans. It is important, therefore, that the good practice from the Pilot is taken forward, while addressing the concerns that have been raised by all parties.

(2) In order to do this it is proposed that:

- Phase 2 of the Lead School Pilot Programme does not proceed in September 2010
- Phase 1 Lead Schools will cease on 31 March 2011
- Work begins immediately on developing a new SEN Strategy to describe and develop a continuum of provision to meet the needs of all children and young people with special educational needs for each dimension of SEN, at all levels of need
- The strategy needs to consider options for funding these proposals, which will be subject to the usual schools' consultation process
- Schools, including special schools, must play a key role in the development work
- An effective communication strategy must be developed to ensure the meaningful participation of parents and carers, children and young people.

(3) A draft SEN Strategy Project Plan has been prepared, setting out the work to be undertaken together with a timetable for the work. A copy is attached at Appendix 2. A diagrammatic illustration of the continuum of provision (SEN Matrix) that is envisaged to form the basis for development is attached at Appendix 3.

### Timetable

4.

SEN Strategy Steering Group and Dimensions Sub-groups commence scoping of development work	September 2010
Present overview proposals for possible funding options to Schools Funding Forum	September 2010
Consult with schools on identified funding proposals as part of Autumn formula funding consultation process	October/November 2010

Work up provision development plans and, along with funding options, prepare proposals for consultation with all parties	November/December 2010
Take funding proposals, including transitional arrangements from April 2011, to Schools Funding Forum following consultation	December 2010
Undertake formal consultation with all interested parties	December 2010 to March 2011
Finalise plans for consideration and decision by SMT, CMT and Cabinet	July 2011
Commence implementation	September 2011

### **Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) Note the findings of the Lead School Evaluation
  - b) Agree that Phase 2 of the Lead School Programme does not proceed in September 2010
  - c) Agree the Phase 1 Pilot will cease on 31 March 2011
  - d) Agree the SEN Strategy proposals, including the development of new funding arrangements and a Communication Strategy for working with parents and carers, children and young people
  - e) Agree the timetable at 4 above

Colin Feltham  
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Background Documents - *None*