
Meeting: Executive
Date: 31 May 2011
Subject: Discontinuation of the Dyslexia Provision at Priory Middle School
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report sets out the responses to the statutory notice to discontinue the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School from 1 September 2011.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson: Interim Assistant Director, Learning and Strategic Commissioning
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive
Key Decision: Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate): N/A

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The provision of effective and efficient local services for Special Education Needs forms a key element in the Central Bedfordshire Children's Services. It aligns with priorities and programmes on Early Intervention and on transforming learning and transforming the Council's relationship with schools.

The proposal relates to the Council's Key Priority:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

Discontinuation of the dyslexia provision will deliver a full year saving of £57,960. In 2011/2012 it will deliver a saving of £33,810. This is ring-fenced schools grant and so should the decision be made to discontinue the provision, the Schools Forum will need to make a decision as to its future use. The recommendation would be that it should be used to release Council budgets that are funding special educational needs provision that could be funded by Direct Schools Grant for which there is a budget pressure.

Legal:

Statutory notices were published for a 6 week period (28 February to 8 April) in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make a prescribed alteration to Priory Community Middle School, Dunstable from 1 September 2011. A decision has to be made by the Council within two months of the end of the consultation period.

Risk Management:

All schools have had access to professional development and training in proven models of literacy intervention.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

All staffing issues have been resolved and redundancy does not apply.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to foster good relations in respect of the following protected characteristics; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This statutory duty includes requirements to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

As part of the development of this proposal an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This has highlighted that the Council has provided accredited and non-accredited opportunities for training and guidance on proven models of literacy intervention. Schools are responsible for ensuring that their staff receive appropriate training and support to meet the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties. The Council signposts schools to appropriate resources to support them in this area.

Community Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

The development of local provision to meet local need, matched to analysis and understanding of the changing demographic, is the best way to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School be discontinued from 1 September 2011.

Reason for Recommendations: Only one response was received to the Statutory Notice. All schools are responsible for meeting the needs of pupils with Dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

Introduction

1. At the meeting on 11 January 2011, the Executive made the decision to commence statutory consultation on the discontinuation of the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School.
2. This paper outlines the responses to the publication of statutory notices in February 2011, which set out the proposal for the discontinuation of the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School to take effect from 1 September 2011.

Background and Context

2. Central Bedfordshire has 1 middle school provision for Dyslexia based at Priory Middle School. There are currently 3 pupils in the provision at Priory Middle School, two of whom leave in July 2011. The provision is funded for 7 pupils.
3. Provision is already being made across all schools. The Council has offered training to both teachers and teaching assistants in delivering proven models of literacy intervention, as well as the Diploma and Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) available through University of Northampton and delivered locally. This course has been running for over 7 years, and was subsidised by the Council but is now funded by Central Government.
4. Statutory Notices were published between 28 February and 8 April 2011 (attached as Appendix A). Details of the prescribed alteration to the school were available as part of this process (attached as Appendix B). 1 response was received from the Governing Body of Priory Middle School (attached as Appendix C).

Responses to the Statutory Notice

5. Only 1 response was received to this consultation. This came from the Governing Body of Priory Middle School who raised concerns that children would suffer as a consequence of the proposal. These concerns have been addressed in this report.

6. The legacy Council and subsequently Central Bedfordshire Council have supported the training for teachers and support staff in proven models of literacy intervention, and in accessing the accredited Diploma and Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia). Schools use the support of these and other specialist staff in identifying and supporting meeting the needs of children with these difficulties, using proven specialist interventions.
7. It is recognised that the school has benefited from the expertise provided by the specialist teacher in the provision. Similarly, other schools would say that they have benefitted from the expertise provided by staff that have accessed the training provided by the Council. The Council has continued to work in partnership with University College Northampton to deliver this course locally.
8. There is only 1 pupil previously identified as needing this provision who will be at the school from September 2011. Reassurances have been given to continue to provide support to this pupil in line with his assessed needs.
9. All schools are responsible for ensuring that they provide appropriate interventions to close the gap between pupils with literacy difficulties and Dyslexia and their peers. Schools are able to access expertise from other schools if they require it. The Council will signpost schools to this expertise where appropriate.

Conclusion

10. The recommendation to discontinue the specialist provision for Dyslexia at Priory Middle School is consistent with Council priorities. There are children with literacy difficulties in all schools, and they already receive support through their own school. The Council will continue to signpost appropriate training and support for teachers in the area of dyslexia in line with their responsibilities.

Appendices: Appendix A: Statutory Notice
Appendix B: Prescribed Alterations Document
Appendix C: Response letter