

**SEN Review Consultation Meeting – 6 October 2008
at Thomas Wolsey School**

Present: Ian Brown, Head of Infrastructure
Jane Calver, Advisory Headteacher for Learning Support
Jane Crapnell (Clerk)
Nancy McArdle, Headteacher Thomas Wolsey School
Adrian Orr, Senior Advisor for Social Inclusion
Cheryl Sharland, Head of Integrated Services
Kate Thomas, Programme Manager for the SEN Review

Attending: Mrs Turner – representing a SEN Governor from Castle Hill Infants School
Ms K Mann, Cloncurry Cottage, 182 Grange Road, Felixstowe, IP11 2QG

The purpose of the meeting was to present stage 2 of the Consultation of the SEN Review to parents in the Southern Area of the County. A presentation was given including:

- Why the local authority was reorganising schools
- The local context/background
- The proposal/options for the school and the area.
- How parents can have a say during the consultation period

The consultation process started on the 22 September and finishes on 15 December 2008.

Why Now?

- The next phase of Building Schools for the Future Programme would enable us to improve facilities at Special Schools.
- We would be able to build on the successful models we have in place.
- Learning is at the core of integrated services.

There are three options for the Southern Area plus options for county wide resources for pupils with severe dyslexia, high level autism and significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A question was asked regarding what would happen to the Hearing Impaired Unit currently in place at Rushmere Hall Primary School?

The response given was that currently we have provision in place that is not necessarily meeting local need. You may need to have a peripatetic team travel to where children are based rather than having the children travel to a school away from their local area and peers.

A point was raised regarding secondary provision for hearing impaired students.

At present the children have to transfer to Westbourne Sports College which again is out of the catchment of the children they will have grown up with at primary school. They will have to start again to make new friendships which can often be difficult for this particular group of children.

Thomas Wolsey School

Thomas Wolsey School is being rebuilt as a brand new school on the Thurleston High School site. This will open in January 2009 and will be the county's first co-located hub site. It will provide integrated services for children and young people with physical difficulties and provide county-wide outreach support. Older pupils from Thomas Wolsey will be able to transfer to the new SWISS centre when it opens in 2010.

It is hoped that Thomas Wolsey by being based at THurleston will become more a part of the community and hopefully become a 52 week a year facility in the future.

Beacon Hill School

Beacon Hill School currently shares a site with Chantry High School and it is proposed that this school will continue as a school for children and young people age 5-16 with complex moderate learning difficulties and a countywide resource for autistic spectrum disorders and supporting the three outreach centres at Sudbury, Honington and Halesworth.

Heathside and Belstead School

Heathside and Belstead Schools cater for children with complex severe learning difficulties. This is unusual as in many parts of the country these resources are often on one site.

There are issues with regard to the viability of Belstead School when SWISS opens. There are real concerns with regard to the Belstead School site. A lot of children who attend have mobility difficulties and the site is not appropriate.

A question was raised regarding whether the County Council would be physically closing the schools.

The reply was given that the preferred option is for Belstead and Heathside school to merge onto a mainstream school site in Ipswich to create a complex needs hub special school. A possible site has been identified at Westbourne Sports College.

A question was asked whether the two options are the same

The meeting was informed that there are difficulties in amalgamating the two schools. The Local Authority has to physically close one school and extend the age range of the other. Legally you cannot close both schools and open a new one. If you are opening a new school it has to go out to competition. The LA do not want to lose the expertise within the schools but prefer to build on the inclusive practice that exists in Suffolk. The LA believes that shutting both schools and going out to competition raises all sorts of issues.

Of course people will be attached to the Belstead and Heathside building which is why the LA is seeking the views of as many stakeholders as possible.

It was explained at the meeting that the Building Schools for the Future programme only applies to secondary schools. If the LA were to apply for BSF funding for Heathside and Belstead Schools, Heathside would not receive any. Funds could be accessed if the schools are brought together, but only if there is a school set up before any type of building works takes place on the new site. The amalgamation process must be completed before BSF funding is applied for.

The statutory process could be accomplished in one of three ways:

1. To close Belstead and extend the age range of Heathside.
2. To close Heathside and extend the age range of Belstead.
3. To close both schools and open a new school.

Option 3 is the most difficult. The Local Authority preferred options are 1 or 2. There would be a period when both school buildings would be open but they would be one registered school.

Satellite Provision

It has been identified that outside of Ipswich the greatest concentration of specialist need is in the Felixstowe area. There are currently two Specialist Support Centres (SCC's) at Maidstone Infant and Causton Junior Schools. The County Council believes there is an opportunity to look at some specialist provision that would be supported by one of the high schools. The LA's view that although there would be some children who had previously travelled to a special school whose needs could be met in supported provision, there may also be some children whose needs are so complex that travelling to a special school is justified.

A question was asked whether there is a cluster bus for this kind of provision?

Nobody was aware of the cluster bus but stated that if a child required provision at a special school or specialist support centre, transport would be provided for them.

We are proposing to develop a 10 place satellite on a high school site in Felixstowe that could cater for children and young people with complex needs.

A question – How would SSC's in Felixstowe fit into the new provision?

Response given that this would depend upon the needs of people. We are keen to encourage links between SSC's and satellite provision. There wouldn't probably be any children or young people with complete severe learning difficulties in this setting. There are a lot of demands in SSC's, County Council resources provide support. Beacon Hill would be the specialist hub.

Question – It is difficult to see how Specialist Support Centres fit into the proposals? Also there are concerns regarding the admission of some pupils at the SSC, and whether they are always appropriate, a specific school's issues was referred to.

Discussion took place regarding how children are placed at SSC's and what the requirements are. The County Council also reassured the person that they were

aware of the difficulty being experienced at a particular school and it was being investigated.

A comment was made regarding early years provision and the fact that it needs improving. People believe that once a child has been identified with special educational needs, it is taking far too long to put provision in place.

Discussion ensued regarding some options looked at for early years provision.