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**York Schools Forum**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Schools Forum Task and Finish Group: Alternative Provision

**Summary**

- 1 This paper provides the members of Schools Forum with an update on the work of the Alternative Provision task and finish group and shares recommendations from the group.

**Background**

2. At the meeting of Schools Forum on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023 it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Education and Skills should convene a task and finish group to focus on a review of the current use of Alternative Provision.
3. The task and finish group has established a pattern of meetings and has representatives from the local authority SEN and inclusion services, from special schools and from mainstream primary and secondary schools and Further Education (FE)
- 4 The purpose of the task and finish group has been to review the purpose, quality and sufficiency of Alternative Provision in York and produce recommendations for Schools Forum.

This review has included:

- Examination of current provision and how it is being used and who for;
  - Consistent thresholds for the use of AP across schools
  - Identification of any sufficiency gaps;
  - What do we currently spend on AP and what outcomes are being delivered;
  - Who should fund AP? School and LA commissioned provision;
  - The Danesgate Outreach service – who for, how funded in the future;
5. The review of Alternative Provision (AP) is being done in the context of the Safety Valve delivery plan and the publication of the Department for Education's SEND and AP improvement plan which was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023. A priority in the SEND and AP improvement plan is to ensure that local area partnerships deliver a clear plan for AP which focuses on *'new approaches to the funding of alternative provision, based on the three-tier system that prioritises preventative work and reintegration of pupils back into mainstream schools. Funding changes will also need to reflect the role that local partnerships will play in organising alternative provision for an area and establish a more stable financial system for those delivering this provision.'*

6. The development of the AP Directory in York has given greater insight into the range of alternative provision available in the local area, however there has been an acknowledgement that the majority of provision in the directory is unregistered. In order to address this the local authority has introduced a programme of quality assurance visits to providers. Only providers who have engaged with quality assurance visits have been included in the directory.
7. The Danesgate Community is currently the only registered provision in the city and its Ofsted designation is a maintained pupil referral unit. Over the last 10 years the cohorts accessing the Danesgate Community have been changing, with the majority of young people now having an education, health and care plan. The age range of children being supported is also changing with a growth in primary age children needing support from Danesgate. The community has evolved over time and now has an enhance resource pathway for children with an EHCP alongside providing day six provision and provision for permanently excluded pupils.
8. Sufficiency of provision for children and young people with SEMH needs has become the main area of focus for the local SEND partnership. This has been further challenged by the impact of the Covid19 pandemic which has made the return to mainstream education difficult for some children and young people.

### **Current use and cost of Alternative Provision in York**

9. The local authority currently commissions 190 places from the Danesgate Community, a registered pupil referral unit, which is a local authority -maintained provision. The Danesgate Community provides a flexible mix of provision which includes early intervention through its outreach service, short stay PRU places through Kestrel Provision and long term provision for children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school. It has also developed specialist SEMH provision for children and young people with education, health and care plans (EHCPs). In the last 4 years the numbers of pupils with EHCPs has increased and they now take up the majority of the long term places at Danesgate. The total funding received by Danesgate for 2023-24 is £4.5 million.
10. There are several unregistered alternative provisions in the local area which are both commissioned by the local authority and directly by schools. In the case of places commissioned by the local authority these are largely used to support children and young people educated other than at school who require bespoke provision to keep them engaged them with education. Most of these young people have education, health and care plans or are known to the virtual school. They have complex needs including high levels of anxiety, trauma related barriers to learning and/or neurodiverse traits.
11. Schools are increasingly commissioning AP from the local directory to support children and young people in mainstream who have complex behaviours. Since the return to school following the Covid lockdowns there has been an increase in primary schools directly commissioning AP. This needs to be considered as part of the transition arrangements at primary/secondary phase transfer for children who have been accessing AP for one or two days a week.

## **Recommendations from the task and finish group**

12. The local area needs to develop a AP strategy– this links to Ofsted expectations and the DfE SEND and AP Implementation Plan. This should be published for the start of the school year in September 2023. The focus will be on reintegration were possible (particularly in the primary phase), improving early intervention through an SEMH outreach service, a focus on outcomes led commissioning of long- term AP places to ensure secure destinations into further education, employment and training.
13. There is currently no citywide data to map the direct commissioning of AP by schools, but it is recommended that this is considered as part of the development of the local area AP strategy. This would ensure that the costs of AP to the local education system are fully understood and would also help to inform future sufficiency planning
14. It is recommended that enhanced specialist AP linked to Applefields School is developed for a small number of high needs young people with learning difficulties so that they are able to be educated in York rather than in out of area provision. This provision will need to be supported by a multi-agency team drawn from education, health and care. It is proposed that this should be piloted from June 2023 with a small number of highly complex pupils. Criteria for access will be developed linked to the dynamic support register.
15. It is recommended that additional Key Stage 4 vocational provision is developed with York College and Askham Bryan College to support pathways to further education, training, and employment for young people with SEMH needs. To do this successfully and sustainably an annual cohort of young people needs to be identified.
16. The SEND Capital plan has set aside £1.4million to support the development of additional AP provision in the primary and secondary phase. The precise use of this funding has yet to be agreed, however, it could be used to support the development additional primary and secondary alternative provision bases. There are currently 21 Kestrel places in the primary phase, it is suggested that this is increased by 15 places to 36 places. This would support the work of the primary fair access meetings. In the secondary phase it is suggested that the local authority commission an additional 25 places with a further 25 places being directly commissioned by schools.

### **Next Steps**

17. The local area AP strategy to be written and published for September 2023. This will also clearly articulate the expectations of LA commissioned provision and that directly commissioned by schools,
18. The pilot provision for complex high needs students with learning difficulties to be developed from June 2023.
19. The cohort of Year 9 students who would benefit from additional KS4 vocational provision as part of a progression plan/mixed mainstream offer to be identified by July 2023 and to be part of KS4 provision from September 2024.

- 20. The development of additional primary alternative provision through Kestrel style bases to be fully in place from September 2024.
- 21. The development of 25 additional secondary alternative provision places directly commissioned by the local authority to be fully in place from January 2024.
- 22. The development of the SEMH outreach service to include one teacher and one teaching assistant in the primary and secondary phase to be implemented from January 2024.

**Recommendations**

- 23. The members of Schools Forum are asked to comment on and support the recommendations from the task and finish group.

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