

Report to CABINET

High Needs Provision in Mainstream Settings

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Mohon Ali, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Officer Contact: Matthew Bulmer, Director of Education, Early Years and Skills

Report Author: Andy Collinge, Head of School Support Services

16th June 2025

Reason for Decision

This report seeks cabinet approval for 3 capital projects that will offer additional places and enhance provision for pupils with additional needs who are based in mainstream settings.

It also seeks approval for the allocation of funding from Basic Need Grant towards the schemes.

Executive Summary

This report relates to 3 projects that will enhance existing provision and provide additional provision for pupils with additional needs. These proposals are now developed sufficiently for costs and proposals to be placed before Cabinet for a final decision. These projects will create a total of 55 places in mainstream primary and secondary schools for children with additional needs.

Currently the Local Authority has around £4.7 M of Basic Need funding and £8.3 M of High Needs Capital Allocation Funding. It is proposed that where projects will generate additional places that these projects are funded from the Basic Need Grant.

Recommendations

Project One (Woodlands Primary School)

Woodlands Primary School serves the Moorside area of Oldham and is run by South Pennine Academy Trust. This project will increase access to mainstream places for 12 children who may otherwise require specialist provision. This provision will have an emphasis on children with complex communication and interaction needs. Children enrolled in this provision would have SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs) as their primary area of need. This project will lead to additional places and improved provision for children in East Oldham. Currently there is no specialist provision within this planning area which means children often are required to travel to other provision outside of their local area. The total cost of this project is estimated to be in the region of £566,584 (a total of £623,200 when including 10% contingency) following completion of a feasibility study by South Pennine Trust. It is proposed that this project is funded from the LA Basic Need Grant.

Project Two (North Chadderton Secondary School)

North Chadderton Secondary School is run by the Oak Trust. This project will enable the school to refurbish, extend and reconfigure the ARP space. This project will allow the school to increase its Alternative Curriculum offer to ensure that all students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that supports their needs in a mainstream setting. It will also allow for small group nurturing support for those for whom access to the mainstream school is challenging due to EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) behaviours which make access to any large learning environment challenging. This will allow for an additional 13 places in school for secondary age children with additional needs. Following a comprehensive feasibility study the cost of this project is estimated to be £460,911 (a total of £507,000 when including 10% for contingency). It is proposed that this project is funded from the LA Basic Need Grant.

Project Three (Werneth Primary School)

Werneth Primary School is run by the Pinnacle Trust and serves residents mainly in the Werneth area. This project will enable the school to develop a SEND Unit. The aim of this provision is to create a SEND Unit for children with autism spectrum disorder and learning delay to access specialized provision within the SEND Unit. The project will increase local availability of high needs places incrementally over a number of years, offering 24 additional places for children with additional needs. The school currently has 7 % of its cohort with an EHCP which is significantly above the national average. Following a comprehensive feasibility study the estimated cost of this project is £867,733 (a total of £954,500 when including 10% for contingency). It is proposed that this project is funded from the LA Basic Need Grant.

It is recommended that approval is given for these projects to be funded from the Basic Need Grant.

High Needs Provision in Mainstream Settings

1 Background

- 1.1 Demand for resourced based provision in maintained schools have risen substantially in recent years. The option recommended in this report provides an opportunity for the Council to provide funding to enhance SEND provision in line with its Corporate Priorities, to provide a great start and skills for life.

As all 3 projects will be overseen by academies there are no HR, Health and Safety, environment health, property, IT or community cohesion implications arising from the report.

There are no procurement implications in the request to approve the projects themselves. However, it is noted that there will likely be purchases using the funding to deliver against the projects. As such, any purchasing will be subject to procurement applying the rules of the Councils CPRs and Procurement Act 23. Upon a clear understanding of how it is intended to spend the funding, any procurement requirements over £30k (including VAT) should be discussed immediately with CPU in order to determine compliant and appropriate procurement routes and processes. This determination will be done using the Pre-Procurement Assessment Form (PPAF). As the procurements may require multiple category support, any initial requests for support will be directed to the Head of CPU.

The Council will require confirmation that academies have appropriate insurance in place before releasing funds for the works.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The LA has a statutory obligation to create suitable school places for all children, this includes those with SEN and EHCP's. It is an ambition of the LA's SEND and Inclusion Strategy to increase places in mainstream settings for children with additional needs. This enables children to have their needs met as part of an inclusive education offer leading to better outcomes for these children. It also has the additional benefit of reducing the need for costly independent provision outside the borough.

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Option 1: Approve the above capital investment for the projects listed above to deliver the ambitions of the Send and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027.

Option 2: Do not approve the projects and risk not fulfilling the above strategy

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 Option 1.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 All Primary and Secondary schools including all MATS (Multi Academy Trusts) that operate in Oldham.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of the associated works for 3 schools including a contingency of 10% is £2,084,700 and will be a charge to the educational capital programme 2025/26, which will be funded from the Basic Needs Grant). Any unspent budget will be returned to the Basic Need provision budget. All three schools are part of Academy Trusts and as such can reclaim their own VAT, therefore any repayments to the school will be paid net of VAT.

The works will be commissioned directly by the school and funding paid to the school as part of a Grant Funding Agreement.

Paula Buckley – Finance Manager

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The proposal will benefit the students at the schools and further demonstrate the ongoing commitment by the Council to the education of the children of the Borough with particular emphasis upon the most vulnerable children in the borough.

Consideration should be given around the Grant Agreement and there should be liaison with procurement and legal services to satisfy the Council that the document is appropriate, and the funding is utilised correctly.

Alex Bougatef - Interim Borough Solicitor

8 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

- 8.1 There are no negative implications for Children and Young People.

9 Key Decision

- 9.1 Yes

10 Key Decision Reference

- 11.1 EDS-03-25

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 Send and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

13 Appendices

13.1 N/A