

VALUE FOR MONEY & SEND SYSTEM REVIEW



February 2021

1. Purpose

To update Schools Forum on the progress of the Value for Money and Systems review of Parks school/Oakham DSPs, a partnership of working with OCE/Parks staff and governors, LA officers and the SEND Consultancy. This has included:

Phase 1 -review of arrangements and provisions for children experiencing SEND in Rutland within Early Years and primary aged children. Reviewers have spent time in Rutland with the following:

- Undertaking a detailed review of the costs and cost pressures within the Parks specialist provision and Oakham Primary school Designated Special Provisions (DSPs);
- Reviewing aspects of Early Years practice within the county, including meeting with EY providers and child minders; meeting with the Inclusion Team for Early Years;
- Working with Rutland Information, Advice and Support Services to uncover the nature of 'pressure points' in early and primary years provision, hearing from them about the views and needs expressed by parents and carers;
- Spending time within Oakham/Parks provisions with leaders to find out what is working well, and what the next steps in innovative practice and provision for early years and primary aged children could look like in Rutland going forward.

Clarification of the current primary DSP (Designated Special Provisions) & Parks role and population for whom they cater, identifying gaps in the local area?

2. Background

SEND Consultancy commenced work with Oakham Church of England primary (OCE) and Parks schools alongside partners from the Rutland local authority at the end of autumn term 2019.



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This work has been affected by delay due to on site access during the Covid period, though school and governors have continued to meet regularly to continue the development of process. Several days of site visits have taken place spread across the calendar year 2020.

Stage 1 focused upon the financial position of the Parks provision and the inter-dependent costs which are shared by OCE. This included work with the SBM alongside the Executive HT. This was briefly reported to the Forum at the June 2020 meeting.

Parks school was inspected in January 2020 and judged to be outstanding by OfSTED. Parks enjoys a positive reputation amongst the parental community in the county. Much of the arrangements for the provision are rooted in the Parks past, where it was much larger and served the LLR (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland) community. It remains the only special school for under 6s in the country. This makes benchmarking difficult and therefore it has been necessary to benchmark it against early years provisions such as Pindar Road specialist nursery, Leicester City, and Memphis specialist nursery, Leicestershire.

Parks offers a bespoke and highly personalised approach. The education and learning team are extremely talented and have an enviable set of skills in meeting need, enabling development and supporting parents/carers. The inherited funding model and lack of underpinning commissioning agreements for both Parks and the OCE DSPs (which led to this commissioned work) are no longer fit for purpose. Parks currently operates with a staffing budget set at 121% of the budget allocated. The work of SEND consultancy has found several areas where the Parks budget as a specialist provision has been supported by the OCE budget. The current operating model is not sustainable financially and does not reflect the ambitious agenda for inclusion locally, nor compare with funding methodologies for other RCC specialist provisions, due to its historic nature.

Stage 2 has focused more on the DSPs, the community of pupils that they serve, the quality of the educational offer and a Service Level Agreement (SLA), which will provide an agreement between the school and RCC regarding the nature of provision and what is to be commissioned. The two DSPs are currently funded as MLD – a term which is not recognised within the Code of Practice for SEND (2014) and Autism, which is more widely known as Communication and Interaction needs within the Code. The provision has always been a 20 place provision, when it started it was 15 MLD and 5 ASD, then a few years ago to meet local demand it changed to 10 MLD and 10 ASD. In September at the start of this school year there were 22 children, 8 MLD and 14 ASD. The proposed changes to the SLA are in development, though broad agreement has been reached regarding updating to Cognition and Learning and Communication and Interaction needs.

The school is keen to see a rationale regarding equity of funding between primary and secondary phases of provision. The 'MLD' provision is funded at a very low rate, particularly when comparing the costs of places for children in Y6 at OCE and Y7 at the secondary DSPs- again, this is historic and requires a new agreement within the revised SLAs.

The school has always applied a flexible approach to the structure of the provision to ensure the needs of the children in it are best met. They made modifications to the teaching approaches within the DSPs this year, moving from a needs-based whole primary approach (one DSP for cognition and learning needs; one for autism/C&I) to a phase based approach with a KS1 and KS2 integrated-needs DSP. There has been a greater demand for Communication and Interaction places in the last three-four years.

The move to phase based provision has not impacted upon progress and attainment. This is a continued focus of the school-based review. Pupils continue to have more specific and personalised learning approaches both individually and in small groups.

Stage 3 is to move to conclusions and joint agreements regarding the potential for further development of the provisions, based on value for money, equity and partnership review of commissioned provision going forward.

3. Project Progress

- SLAs for the DSPs or enhanced resource provisions, are in development, with a working group developing these, with reference to the secondary DSPs for consistency. They should be complete in draft for the new financial year and potentially agreed through due process for September 2021 implementation.
- Options for the Parks, which will capitalise on the staff skills, parental confidence, but also enable wider models of support for early years pathways; also developing a model which can be consistently reviewed and updated. This agreement could be in place for September 2021 but could take longer, given the range of options presented to the school, requiring consultation.
- The project team are currently working with the school and LA to articulate some workable models of provision through an options appraisal activity where VfM indicators will feature as one element of many for the LA and the school to consider. This work has just begun and if appropriate the first opportunity the schools working party has to report to the FGB is on 4 March.
- School Improvement for SEND/Inclusion practice report with school by March 2021 (see below)

4. Next steps

School has been extremely generous in time taken to work with the SEND consultancy, including fortnightly KITs (Keeping In Touch) meetings with the LA. It is now time to add value or give some return on time committed by the school. During the February/March period, the work begun using the Whole School SEND review approach (modified for the current circumstances) will be used to corroborate the effective practice found within both Parks and the OCE DSPs, then making recommendations for further school improvement for SEND/Inclusion from the SEND Consultancy. The school should then be placed to take forward developments in summer or autumn 2021, as befits their current operating conditions.

It should be noted that all developments relating to the two provisions are supported by knowledge of the current legislative requirements, with an acknowledgement of the current SEN cross-governmental review, which

commenced in September 2019. Recent reporting from DfE included a renewed focus upon building mainstream capacity.

Kate Browning, Pat Bullen and Jane Friswell

The SEND Consultancy, 1st February 2021

