



SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING

9th December 2021

EARLY YEARS PATHWAY: UPDATE

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update members of Schools Forum on the work to examine the Early Years Pathway and plan for best use of resources since the last report in February 2021.

2 CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 The work mandated by Schools Forum is firmly aligned to the Rutland SEND and Inclusion Strategy, and the intention to support and develop an integrated pathway that draws on all the skills and resources at the county's disposal, utilised to help all providers in the Early Years sector to meet children's needs and set children on a suitable and inclusive learning path.
- 2.2 The project also planned to explore the previously expressed causes for concern between the LA and Executive Head teacher at Oakham Church of England Primary School(OCEPS); that the funding arrangement for The Parks was based on historic arrangement and not fit for purpose, that planning for places could be improved and that delivery agreements needed to be put in place¹ so that The Parks' operating model² was clear and could be communicated. It was also important that the project addressed the need for all parties in Early Years across Rutland to grow the skills and resources to support and identify children with emerging needs and support families at the earliest stage of development. It was agreed that external facilitators would be best placed to enable the work.
- 2.3 RCC appointed SEND Consultancy as part of the SEND Recovery plan resources to support a collaborative process, bring wider perspective for Rutland and offer SEND experience from the regional perspective, to focus on the wider Early Years pathway with The Parks as a key resource for inclusionary support. The work included a need to deliver both financial security and the enabling of the all the OCEPS provisions to be well-placed for future development.
- 2.4 SEND Consultancy describe their work as being an "honest broker". They bring a high level of expertise in SEND, inclusion and also in senior leadership, governance and professional coaching support; two having been special school Head teachers, all three members having worked in school improvement for schools; and all three having worked for NASEN- the National Association for Special Educational Needs, with one

¹ revised SLA for each was required, as the categories of need do not reflect current SEND Code of Practice (2015) descriptors of need, i.e., communication and interaction (ASD and wider spectrum needs); cognition and learning (rather than the non-normative moderate learning difficulties category of need).

² The OCEPS site holds three separate special provisions within the schools: Parks under 6 special school (7.5 fte pupils on roll) and the two DSPs for Autism and for MLD- 20 places in total.

as CEO and two as education lead officers. All three have LA officer experience and two have a 'lived' experience with immediate family members with additional needs/disabilities.

3 PROJECT PHASES

- 3.1 Spring 2019 - Rutland County Council commissioned SEND Consultancy to undertake an initial review of arrangements and provisions for children experiencing SEND in Rutland within Early Years and primary aged children.
- 3.2 Reviewers spent time in Rutland in detailed review of the costs and cost pressures within the Parks specialist provision and Oakham Primary school Designated Special Provisions (DSPs), looked at aspects of Early Years practice within the county, including meeting with EY providers and child minders; meeting with the Inclusion Team for Early Years. They worked with Rutland Information, Advice and Support Services, (SENDIASS), 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, and spent time within Oakham/Parks provisions with leaders to find out what was working well, and what the next steps to innovative practice and provision for early years and primary aged children could look like in Rutland going forward.
- 3.3 This initial work helped to shape the priorities for the next phase of the project, and a working group was started at the end of 2019 which included the Chair of Governors, Parent governor, Executive Head teacher, SENCo lead, the team from SEND Consultancy and RCC Head of Early Help, SEND and Inclusion and Project Management capacity.
- 3.4 Alongside this investment of Schools Forum through the SEND Recovery plan an additional financial input of £50k (under a Memorandum of Understanding between RCC and OCEPS provided from RCC as a one-off payment to enable capacity to engage in the process, to allocate to school-based activity which supported the work of this project.

4 ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 This phase began with a day's visioning in September 2020, where OCEPS, RCC and SEND Consultancy came together virtually. The features of this vision included:
 - Knowledge rich and purposeful curriculum.
 - Continuing to build a centre for excellence in SEND across the sector.
 - Expert Outreach in the area.
 - Participation of and co-production with children and families in decision making about their support.
 - Collaboration between education, health, and social care services – services working together
 - Special educational provision is made available for those who need it
- 4.2 Further develop strategic partnership and discussion about how to bring a model to meet these aspirations led to a twice monthly Keeping in Touch (KIT) meetings to

deliver a shared action plan.

- 4.3 Phase 1 of the Action plan (to March 2021) had specific actions designed to make sure all partners were confident and ready for Phase 2 development work
- Work was initiated on developing an interim SLA for the DSP in November 2020, however following a number of iterations it was sit aside to concentrate capacity on forging the sustainable model.
 - Professional coaching for key leaders to support transitional and transformation process was provided.
 - Collaborative and reflective review of Oakham C of E Primary school and The Parks SEND offer,
 - Development plan created and actioned to prepare school for the delivery of the revised offer for SEND
- 4.4 Phase 2 was designed to provide an agreed model of future provision which is aligned with appropriate pupil support pathways of admission and exit.
- 4.5 The Local Area and Oakham C of E primary school are ready to ensure a successful transition to a refreshed and agreed model of working to support children from the earliest years.
- 4.6 Agreed and well understood local expectations of what the LA is commissioning and what the schools should provide to improve outcomes for children. In order to reduce out of County placements of pupils with SEND, adopting an invest to save approach in developing new ways of working.
- 4.7 In February 2021 Schools Forum received an update report from SEND consultancy setting out the work achieved so far and some of the risks and issues encountered.
- 4.8 A reminder too of the impact of the pandemic on capacity and ability to achieve some of the required tasks should be duly noted.
- 4.9 In March 2021 OCEPS set up a task group as a subset of the Governing body to take forward the work OCEPS wished to pursue in working up a model and business plan for a suitable option, examining other provision models, and considering financial requirements. The LA also offered support to this work.
- 4.10 SEND Consultancy meanwhile supported strategic planning work in the school and helped consider how the finances were currently configured, cross charging between the Primary school and The Parks and potential for any changes to these to potentially improve the financial position. They also proposed 5 possible tangible future models as a starting point for the group.
- 4.11 In June 2021 OCEPS provided a preferred model (Option 6) to be explored in light of the findings from research at other settings and the available finances.
- 4.12 It emerged in July 2021 that OCEPS were exploring academisation and expressed the plan to uncouple the federation between OCEPS and The Parks so that a new model of operation could be pursued.
- 4.13 In an exchange of communication between OCEPS governing body, RCC and SEND

Consultancy all reaffirmed the need to work on an integrated pathway that draws on all the skills and resources at the county's disposal, utilised to help all providers in the Early Years sector to meet children's needs and set children on a suitable and inclusive learning path.

5 NEXT STEPS AT NOVEMBER 2021

- 5.1 SEND Consultancy will assist in developing a business and operational plan based on Option 6 and a reduced meetings schedule should enable capacity for OCEPS to undertake remaining research tasks such as examining how other settings deliver a broader offer and shaping financial models to help flesh out future developments and are still pertinent to the development of a fresh offer.
- 5.2 Meetings with OCEPS and SEND Consultancy in the coming weeks will help understand the potential impact, timeline and associated dependencies brought about by the OCEPS academisation process and a focus for the short term on shaping a suitable operational model which is still the outcome sought by all partners.