

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**Subject:** Addition of a SEN Support Centre to Goosewell Primary School  
**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 17 January 2012  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Samantha Leaves  
**CMT Member:** Director of People  
**Author:** Jayne Gorton (School Organisation, Access and Services to Schools Manager)  
**Contact:** Tel: 01752 307472, Email: jayne.gorton@plymouth.gov.uk

**Ref:** CM(CAB) (99) (16/11/11)  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** One

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### **Executive Summary:**

Following Cabinet decisions in August 2009 and December 2010 to implement proposals relating to Downham Special School, the school will relocate to purpose built facilities on the Tor Bridge site in Estover in September 2012. As part of this move the Downham satellite classes, currently located at Goosewell Primary School will also relocate to the new site, leaving the purpose built facilities vacant.

This report seeks:

1. authorisation to undertake formal consultations with all interested parties on proposals to add a SEN support centre for children with communication and interaction needs, specifically autistic spectrum disorder to Goosewell Primary School with effect from September 2012, using the facilities vacated by Downham Special School.
2. authorisation for the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in light of the outcomes of and responses to the formal consultations, to determine whether to publish formal proposals (Public Notice) to undertake the above change affecting Goosewell Primary School; and to determine whether to implement the proposal outlined in any such Public Notice.

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### **Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014:**

This proposal aligns with and supports the following Corporate Priorities:

**Raise aspirations** – In order to ensure that children with ASD achieve better qualifications and find high quality jobs it is essential to provide sufficient specialist support places that inspire children to attend and enjoy school.

**Reduce inequalities** – Providing specialist provision for primary age children with ASD within a mainstream school would provide them with inclusive educational opportunities and narrow the gap in equality of access to support.

**Provide value for communities** – Making use of the surplus facilities at Goosewell Primary School once the Downham satellite classes are relocated will help to address the growing need for specialist support for primary age children with ASD.

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## **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land**

- Provision has been made within the 2011/12 Services for Children and Young People revenue budget to meet the minimal costs of the consultation.
- There could be an increase in the number of teaching and other staff – Funding would be based on the number of agreed places allocated through the formula funding for Support Centres charged to the direct schools element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It would be for the school to decide how to allocate the funding but the local authority would expect this to include the appointment of a teacher in charge.
- The facilities are purpose built and will not need refurbishment; however the proposal includes the provision of a sensory room.
- Additional equipment would need to be purchased for the proposed sensory room, together with some workstations. This would be paid for through the Children's Integrated Disability Service equipment budget.
- Six children currently at the school would transfer to the support centre and additional transport costs could be incurred for the additional four children depending on where they live.

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## **Other Implications: e.g. Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:**

Schools are a key facility within their local communities and support wider cohesion in the area. An equality impact assessment has not been completed as the facilities that will house the Support Centre have been constructed within the last two years and were designed to current building regulations which are fully DDA compliant. In addition these are community facilities which are open to all; therefore issues surrounding discrimination on the basis of age, faith, gender, race or sexual orientation are not applicable.

The Council's Strategy for Change 2008 states that "The Council expects all schools in Plymouth to be inclusive. All pupils with Special Education Needs will, if appropriate, have the opportunity to begin early years and primary education as part of, or co-located with a mainstream school." This proposal supports that aspiration.

There are no health and safety issues as the facilities have been purpose built and an alternative entrance and drop off point is already in existence for minibuses transporting those children who currently attend the Downham satellite class. There are no community safety issues related to this proposal. The risk management for this facility is incorporated within the school's own risk management procedures.

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## **Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:**

- a) The proposed change would make effective use of the vacated facilities at the school and provide additional specialist provision for the growing number of children with autistic spectrum disorder within a mainstream environment.
- b) The proposed change is considered to be in the best interests of children, families and staff.
- c) The Council is required to carry out a period of formal consultation and consider all the outcomes of and responses to that consultation before deciding whether to publish a formal notice of the proposed change. Therefore it is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, be authorised to determine whether to publish formal proposals to undertake the above change affecting Goosewell Primary School in light of the outcomes of and responses to the formal consultation.

- d) If a formal proposal is published, the third stage of the statutory procedures requires the Council to consider all the outcomes of and responses to the public notice and make a final determination whether or not to proceed with the proposal. Therefore, it is recommended that if a public notice is published, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People be authorised to make a final determination about this proposal.

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**Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:**

Doing nothing was considered and rejected on the basis that the facilities at Goosewell Primary School were purpose built, there is a need for additional facilities for the growing number of children with ASD, the school does not need the additional space for mainstream education and not to make use of the facilities would be a financial burden on the school and a waste of specialist provision.

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**Background papers:**

[Plymouth City Council Children's Services Strategy for Change Investment for Children](#)

[Cabinet Paper August 2009](#)

[Cabinet Paper December 2010](#)

[Inclusion Strategy 2005-2008](#)

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**Sign off:**

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| Fin   | ChS0361<br>AMartin | Leg | 13282/LT | HR | MG<br>1111/001 | Corp<br>Prop | N/A | IT | N/A | Strat<br>Proc | N/A |
| Originating SMT Member: Colin Moore, Assistant Director for Lifelong Learning |                    |     |          |    |                |              |     |    |     |               |     |

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Since developing the Inclusion Strategy in 2004, we have worked to the principle that all pupils with Special Educational Needs should have the opportunity to begin early years and primary education as part of, or co-located with a mainstream primary school.
- 1.2 Within Plymouth it is recognised that over the past 10 years, knowledge and understanding of the needs of children and young people with autism and earlier identification of children with ASD/complex communication needs have led to a dramatic increase in the need for provision in mainstream schools.
- 1.3 In 2010 two key reviews were completed within Plymouth's Children and Young People's Plan. In July 2010 a review of provision for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders resulted in recommendations for the improvement of provision and to meet identified gaps. In December 2010 a multi-agency Task and Finish Group review of support available to children and young people with ASD and their families resulted in an improvement plan to develop a more coherent, multi-agency response to need. Both reports highlighted the importance of recognising how early support, provision of information and co-ordination of services would improve outcomes for children, young people and their families both in relation to education and learning and out of school. It was subsequently agreed that the recommendations of both reviews should be drawn together into a single improvement plan for support and provision to children and young people with ASD and their families and this plan is currently being finalised.
- 1.4 In August 2009 and December 2010 Cabinet agreed to implement proposals to relocate Downham Special School to purpose built facilities on the Tor Bridge site in Estover in September 2012. As part of this move the Downham satellite classes, currently located at Goosewell Primary School will also relocate to the new site, leaving the purpose built facilities vacant.
- 1.5 When the plans for the building project at Goosewell Primary School were first discussed it was proposed that when the Downham satellite classes relocated the facilities would be occupied by pupils from Longcause Special School. However for some years the school has provided separate facilities for a group of children with ASD and developed significant expertise in this area and, as part of an ongoing review of special education provision within the city, it would be more appropriate to incorporate the facilities into the school rather than providing satellite facilities for a special school.
- 1.6 The number of children in the city being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder is rising and the facilities being vacated at Goosewell Primary School would be ideally suited to providing a Support Centre for these children.

## **2.0 Goosewell Primary School**

- 2.1 Goosewell has a planned admission number in reception of 90 and a forecast number on roll in 2012 of 591. It is an above average-sized primary school serving the local area, with some pupils coming from outside the immediate catchment area. The school's latest Ofsted report in June 2011 grades the school as 'good' with good capacity for sustained improvement.
- 2.2 34% of pupils come from services families and the proportion of pupils joining, leaving and sometimes rejoining the school other than at the usual times of admission or transfer is much higher than found in most other schools nationally.
- 2.3 Although the overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average it is increasing, with a high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. In some year groups the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

- 2.4 The school includes an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) base, which currently caters for six pupils with communication and interaction needs who come from the wider area of Plymouth.
- 2.5 The school has a welcoming, strongly inclusive family atmosphere. Pupils enjoy their time at the school and their attendance is above average. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well and attain broadly average levels.
- 2.6 The school does a good job of ensuring that the significant number of pupils who join the school during the year, such as those from service families posted to the area, settle in quickly and progress well.
- 2.7 Staff have very good relationships with all pupils and use these well to encourage all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to become confident and enthusiastic learners. The school have placed staff on the new ASD accredited programme (PgCert) with the University of Plymouth, reflecting their commitment to successfully meeting pupils' needs.

### **3.0 Specialist facilities at Goosewell Primary School**

- 3.1 Downham Special School's satellite classrooms currently provide pupils with a combination of specialist teaching and resources and opportunities to be included with their peers in some mainstream classes at Goosewell Primary School.
- 3.2 The facilities comprise two self contained classrooms on the lower ground and ground floors, each accommodating eight children, with cloakroom/lobby, office, storerooms, withdrawal room, disabled toilets and shower, kitchen areas, wet room/play area and group rooms.
- 3.3 In order for the children to integrate with their own age groups the KSI satellite base is placed on the lower ground floor with the main school's years 1 and 2 (KS1). The KS2 satellite base is on the ground floor close to the existing years 3 and 4 (KS2).
- 3.4 Both bases are located on the main spinal corridors in the school to ensure that they are well connected to central resources and halls for dining and drama and not isolated.
- 3.5 The group rooms are located next to the classrooms allowing for noisy and quiet activities to be separated and small groups to withdraw for individual sessions.
- 3.6 The classrooms are large enough to achieve the general recommendations for a wide range of curriculum activities. They are below the size recommended for complex ASD needs but the children currently using the satellite classes do not fall within this category and therefore do not require spaces for such a wide range of supportive equipment.
- 3.7 Staff kitchen areas are provided in each base for preparation of snacks, and for the preparation and washing of art and pupil cookery utensils.
- 3.8 The KSI group room has been fitted with a trough for wet play and opens directly onto the outdoor play space allowing wet play activities to be undertaken both outdoors and indoors.
- 3.9 The group rooms have been designed and equipped to reflect pupils' ages, and both bases contain disabled/accessible toilets, with the KSI toilet also operating as a walk-in wet room shower.
- 3.10 Each day a mixture of packed and cooked meals are provided for in the school hall and children in the satellite classes are on the early lunch sitting to allow them to enjoy a longer mealtime. It is a good social event and the age groups mix.

#### **4.0 Proposed Support Centre**

- 4.1 The proposed Support Centre would be a local authority provision commissioned to Goosewell and managed by the school on the local authority's behalf. The arrangement would initially accommodate 10 children, six of whom already attend the school. An evaluation of the service will be undertaken after three years to determine how it is meeting the identified need. The evaluation will inform the specification for the service level agreement for the following three years.
- 4.2 Children would be allocated to the Support Centre by the SEN Panel and would be registered as pupils of Goosewell Primary School.
- 4.3 The school has the right ethos and a record of making provision for ASD children under their existing cluster arrangements and this proposal would be an extension of that expertise.
- 4.4 Goosewell is well located to meet the needs of pupils in the East of the city. Current primary specialist ASD provision is in the West of the city at Mayflower Primary School.
- 4.5 Plymstock School, which has enhanced provision for secondary aged pupils with ASD is located close by and this would provide improved transition for pupils requiring continued specialist provision in Key Stage 3.

#### **5.0 Benefits and disadvantages**

- 5.1 Benefits of adding a Support Centre to Goosewell Primary School include:
  - Makes use of the purpose built facilities when the Downham satellite classes relocate to Tor Bridge.
  - Not to make use of the facilities would be a financial burden on the school and a waste of specialist provision.
  - Provides additional facilities for the increasing number of primary age children with ASD.
  - Provides primary age children with ASD with inclusive educational opportunities within a mainstream school.
  - Narrows the gap in equality of access to support, increasing capacity in the east of the City and providing choice for parents.
  - Builds on the school's successful track record of dealing with children with ASD and makes effective use of the expertise and specialist knowledge already developed in the school.
  - Provides specialist support places to children with ASD that will inspire them to attend and enjoy school, and ensure that they achieve better qualifications and find high quality jobs.
  - Located close to Plymstock School which has enhanced provision for secondary aged pupils with ASD providing improved transition for pupils requiring continued specialist provision in Key Stage 3.
- 5.2 Disadvantages of adding a support centre to Goosewell Primary School include:
  - The facilities could be used to expand the school, we have a policy of not expanding primary schools beyond three forms of entry and Goosewell is already this size.
  - Children with ASD are spread throughout the city and additional costs could be incurred in transporting them to a Support Centre in Plymstock.
  - Additional set up costs could be incurred in equipping and staffing the Support Centre, but these would be covered by the Support Centre formula funding and Children's Integrated Disability Service equipment budget.

- The classrooms are below the size recommended for complex ASD needs which could restrict the children that can be accommodated. However the proposal is to provide flexible arrangements suited to the individual needs of the children. This would include being educated within a mainstream class in the school for part of the school day and mean that only a proportion of the children would be located in the Support Centre at any one time.
- The school experiences turbulence in its population partly due to the high number of service families, which could adversely affect children with autism. However the school successfully manages this issue with the current autistic pupils and would use its expertise in this area to ensure that pupils were not adversely affected.

## **6.0 Statutory procedures**

- 6.1 The first stage of statutory procedures – normally 6 weeks - is to hold detailed and formal consultations with all interested parties, including pupils, parents, staff and governors, as well as all other schools in the city and other public agencies. There are detailed provisions in DfE guidance as to the prescribed information that must be made available to all consultees, which includes the details of the proposal, and the impact of the proposal on students, staff, governors and the local community.
- 6.2 Following completion of stage 1, the second stage prescribes that the local authority must give careful consideration to all the outcomes of and responses to the consultation and then decide in the light of those outcomes and responses whether to publish formal proposals, in the form of a public notice, to add a Support Centre to Goosewell Primary School.
- 6.3 Following completion of stage 2, the third stage prescribes that the local authority must give careful consideration to all the outcomes of and responses to the public notice and then decide in the light of those outcomes and responses whether to implement the proposal to add a Support Centre to Goosewell Primary School.
- 6.4 The fourth and final stage is to implement the proposals.