

Walsall Council

Special Provision fund: Responses to Consultation

Introduction

- The Council will receive a government grant called the Special provision fund of £1million over a three year period.
- The grant is just under £1 million for Walsall (£957,686) over three years (£319,229 a year) for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. The first year is the new financial year starting in April.
- It is intended to develop provision for pupils with more complex SEN (i.e. children or young people with an Education Health and Care Plan or a statement) who are in mainstream or special schools. It is capital spend – the benefit lasts longer than a year.
- Local Authorities are free to spend it on other education based provision across the range of providers where this meets local needs, including nurseries, independent non maintained special schools and FE colleges Since 2014, 'SEN' is now understood in terms of educational provision in the age range 0 -25 years

Special provision is in addition to Basic Need grant. If a local authority has sufficient Basic Need, then Special Provision can be used for additional places outside statutory school age as well as improved facilities in all settings.

A five week consultation period ended on 2 March. Expressions of interest were invited. The consultation document and the DfE guidance were sent to all schools via The Link, colleges, dioceses and parents groups and were posted on the Local Offer and the School Organisation section of the Council's website. There was a report to Schools Forum in January. Meetings were held with special school heads and with parents

Responses/expressions of interest:

1. Walsall College/WACC

In 2017, a feasibility study was carried out at Walsall Adult and Community College (WACC) into the scope for expansion of up to 30 college places for young people with learning difficulties aged 16+ and 19+. The idea is to offer non-residential places that are more attractive to young people (with Education Health and Care Plans) , some of whom are going out of borough often, at a significant cost. 5 options were produced. Option 5 mainly involves making better use of the existing building occupied by WACC. The other options all involved more extensive new build on the site. WACC and Walsall College formally merge on 1 April 2018. The response from the College was:

“We have had a look into this to consider the best option from the information provided to us to date. As you know we will be taking over WACC operations from the 1 April. It is in this context that we would support your feasibility report option 5 . This option 5 as we see it requires the least building work and would address the accommodation requirements quickly.

Indicative Cost – c. £300,000.

2. Castle School

Part funding /contribution towards the cost of a sports facility for children and young people with disabilities at Castle school for schools and community use. A full feasibility study has been carried out – the total costs are in the region of £3m. Other sources of funding are being sought. A commitment from the Special Provision Fund will help to lever other funds.

Cost – c £250,000

3. St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College

Improved facilities for more complex SEN at St Francis. Currently make provision for students with physical difficulties at the school. Additional facilities requested to support their health needs on site and thus maintain and improve their mobility and independence . Currently going off site which has an impact on learning and progress .Physiotherapy provision on site through equipment and shower toilet.

Cost - c. £10,000

4. Occupational therapy in mainstream schools

The NHS Occupational Therapy service came forward with two proposals for provision of additional facilities for students with physical disabilities in two secondary schools in Walsall:

- I. Additional facilities both within the ARP (Additional Resourced Provision) and the mainstream school. : a larger therapy room; a separate storage for wheelchairs; a fully accessible therapy kitchen.

Cost –c £20,000

- II. Proposal also from OT service for creation of ARP type provision for students with physical disabilities. Already many pupils with physical needs. A ceiling track hoist is specified as the most urgent item.

Cost – c £10,000

5. Education with play facility

Face Walsall (parents of children and young people with SEND) have put forward an EOI for a play with education facility in the borough for children and young people with SEN&D. An example is 'SNAP' in Staffordshire – which is an adventure playground for children with SEN&D. There could be more provision around this type of facility – classrooms , short breaks, learning resources. An initial discussion with a third sector organisation about the potential to develop such a scheme is soon to take place.

Cost – c. £200,000

The Total cost of the outline schemes so far is: - £790,000.

That leaves just under £170, 000 available.

We are open to further expressions of interest. If none are forthcoming, the capital grant will be used to support further expansions of special schools or specialist provision that would otherwise be met from the Council's Basic Need capital allocation

Next steps

- Tell us what you think – if you have any views on the responses so far to the Expressions of Interest, please let us know
- If you have other expressions of interest, please put them forward
- In the mean time, we will work with proposers to develop the schemes that have been put forward to make sure that they are fully costed and justified in terms of a 'business case' for each
- We plan to take a report to the Council's Cabinet in June to approve the schemes that have been brought forward.
- We can expect implementation of the schemes from the autumn term (after the money is released), though it may be possible

The Special Provision Fund is an important element in the Council's capital programme. It is by and large in addition to the Basic Need allocation that is funding the expansion of special schools and specialist places for children with special needs, especially those with Education Health and Care Plans. Basic Need funds additional places for children and young people of statutory school age in all state funded schools within the borough of Walsall.

The Council's '5 year school place planning strategy sets out the demand for places in all school settings by a number of planning areas in the borough. The Plan is updated annually.

Further information

If you would like further information on the Special Provision Fund or if you have any comments on the proposals that have been brought forward, please get in touch:

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