

REPORT TO: Education Committee - 18 April 2005
Personnel Committee - 18 April 2005

REPORT ON: Provision for Children and Young Persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

REPORT BY: Director of Education and Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

REPORT NO: 194-2005

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report highlights the increase in the number of young children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and the steps taken by the Education Department to continue to make appropriate provision for these children.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to:

- i. note the contents of this report;
- ii. note in particular the decisions taken to extend the capacity of Clepington and Hillside Primary School Resourced Locations, and to establish a generic Resourced Location in Eastern Primary School;
- iii. instruct the Director of Education to continue to monitor the level of provision for children and young people with ASD.

2.2 The Personnel Committee is recommended to establish:

- i. 3 posts of Classroom Assistant (SEN), grade GS2/3, SCP10-15, £13,554- £15,063 pro rata.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of implementing these proposals, requiring in total 2 teachers and 3 Classroom Assistants (SEN), will be £78,604 in session 2005-06, rising to £125,700 in a full financial year. This will be met from monies provided by the Scottish Executive to implement the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Implementation of this report will maximise access for children and young people to the skills and knowledge needed to play a full part in society. Recognising their needs will ensure a better quality of life for them.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report continues the process of improving equality of access to educational opportunities for all children.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Since 1996 the Education Department has taken a series of steps to improve the level of provision for children and young persons of all ages with ASD and other social and communication difficulties, taking account of the severity of their disorder and their consequent support needs.
- 6.2 A significant number of the children with ASD will have related social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), obsessive compulsive disorders, anxieties and phobias, depression, and speech and language problems. The Education Department is keen to manage the majority of children, with support, in mainstream schools but there will always be children whose needs are so pressing that they require a placement in dedicated specialist centres.
- 6.3 An Enhanced Support Area was established, and has been expanded, at Kingspark School to cater for those children with the greatest problems, whose disorder is sometimes accompanied by other learning difficulties.
- 6.4 Frances Wright Pre-School Centre has been at the forefront of developments in this field in the pre-school sector, and has most successfully integrated autistic children with mainstream children in the nursery class. Frances Wright has also worked intensely and effectively with Dundee Educational Psychology Service and the Pre-School Home Visiting Service to identify these children at an early age and assess their needs, and also to engage parents/carers in discussions designed to ease the transition into the pre-school sector, and from there into primary school. One notable benefit of such an approach has been the growing numbers of young children with ASD who begin their education in specialist provision but move into mainstream school at a relatively young age.
- 6.5 The specialist Resourced Location for children with language and social disorders was opened at Fintry Primary School in the 1980s, and was followed by further specialist centres at Hillside Primary and Harris Academy in 1990 and 1999 respectively. Along with Frances Wright, they are calm, methodical bases where children receive autistic specific tuition while following most of the mainstream curriculum. As they continue to make progress in the safety and security of the base, working with known and trusted teaching and support staff, so they are encouraged and assisted to venture out into mainstream classes.
- 6.6 These five specialist centres (Kingspark, Frances Wright, Fintry, Hillside and Harris) have been recognised as centres of excellence in the field of ASD by the National Autistic Society, and Dundee was one of the first UK authorities to be accredited for meeting rigorous standards in learning and teaching, the use of accommodation and resources, and the quality of relationships between staff and pupils.
- 6.7 Approval for further expansion was given by the Education Committee in April 2002 (Report No. 278-2002), and two further centres were opened at Clepington Primary and Morgan Academy.
- 6.8 There are a significant number of children and young people who have been diagnosed with ASD but whose symptoms are less severe, such that they can, with support, access mainstream schools and the mainstream curriculum. In recent years our specialist teaching staff have been working hard to train and develop staff in mainstream schools to support autistic youngsters.

7.0 ISSUES

- 7.1 The numbers of children diagnosed with this disorder are currently high and growing, and Dundee is simply following the national trend in this regard. The greatest cause for concern in Dundee at this time are the pre-school years and the early years of primary school, always a challenging time of transition in the lives of vulnerable children.
- 7.2 There are currently 29 pupils diagnosed with ASD who will enter primary school in August 2005. This represents almost 30% of the young children who will start primary school with significant additional support needs.
- 7.3 In 2002 when the most recent report on this subject was presented to Committee, there were 41 children diagnosed with ASD in the primary sector. The numbers of those identified as requiring specialist provision in Fintry (capacity 16) and Hillside (capacity 12) were 16 and 11 respectively, a total of 27.
- 7.4 Now in 2005 the equivalent numbers are 83 in the whole of the primary sector. The three specialist centres at Fintry, Hillside and Clepington (capacity 12) have 15, 14 and 12 respectively, giving a combined roll of 41.
- 7.5 Assessment of pre-school children from Dundee Educational Psychology Service (and taking account of children moving from primary to secondary school) initially told us that there would be a shortfall of 7 specialist ASD places for incoming Primary 1 children in August 2005. Having given careful consideration to the needs of these children there was no doubt that it would have been unfair on them and schools to expect them to be able to sustain a place in mainstream school at the beginning of their primary career. They require the specialist provision that can only be made in a specialist centre.
- 7.6 Of the 7 pupils who require places 2 reside in the east of the city and would ordinarily be enrolling in Eastern and Barnhill. In addition there are 3 pupils whose catchment area is Eastern and 1 pupil whose catchment area is Craigiebarns already attending Clepington or Fintry Resourced Locations. Finally there are 2 pupils in Frances Wright who are local to Eastern and who will require specialist provision in August 2006. There is currently no Resourced Location provision in the east of the city, which was previously served by Grange Primary (now in Angus Council).

8.0 PROPOSALS

- 8.1 We propose to extend the capacity of Clepington and Hillside to 18 pupils, and establish a generic (non-ASD specific) Resourced Location in Eastern Primary School, both with effect from August 2005.
- 8.2 The merit of this proposal lies in the greater availability of ASD places in our established Resourced Locations, and in the provision of a facility in the east end of the city which would be able to take some children with ASD as well as others with more general support needs. This proposal will also allow us more easily to meet our obligations under the new Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 to provide local places and promote inclusion in the local community. The establishment of an additional Resourced Location would allow us to explore the possibility of reducing some of our places elsewhere in the city.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Depute Chief Executive (Finance).

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

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31st March 2005

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31st March 2005