

**REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE –
22 APRIL 2002**

**REPORT ON: DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH AN AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER WITHIN
DUNDEE SCHOOLS**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 278-2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the Education Department's proposals for the continuing development of provision in Dundee schools for children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- i) approve the continuing development of provision in Dundee schools for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder;
 - ii) approve the upgrading of specific accommodation in Fintry Language unit;
 - iii) approve the arrangements for the establishment of Resourced Locations at Clepington Primary School (in session 2002-03) and Morgan Academy (in session 2003-04) to support a group of primary and secondary pupils respectively with autistic spectrum disorder; and
 - iv) instruct the Director of Education to monitor carefully the level of need for specialist facilities for children and young people on the autistic spectrum.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Property expenditure of £86,000 will be required to provide additional accommodation at Fintry Language Unit (£36,000) and to enable adaptations to Clepington Primary School (£50,000). In the secondary sector there is appropriate short-term accommodation at Morgan Academy Lawton Road, and purpose-built accommodation will be provided at the new Morgan Academy building in Forfar Road.
- 3.2 The development of the facilities at Clepington and Morgan will necessitate the appointment of specialist teaching staff and classroom assistants (SEN) in each of the schools. The actual numbers required will depend on pupil uptake.
- 3.3 The cost of additional accommodation at Fintry can be met from the Scottish Executive's Excellence Fund for Schools, Inclusion Programme, 2001-02. All remaining costs will be met from the Executive's Inclusion Programme, 2002-04, final details of which remain to be confirmed by the Scottish Executive.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These developments will extend support to improve access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable pupils with special educational needs (autistic spectrum disorder) to play a full part in society.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These developments will improve the quality of access to educational opportunities for pupils with special educational needs (autistic spectrum disorder) in Dundee.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Since 1996 the Education Department has been developing its service to allow mainstream schools to support most of their own pupils with special educational needs. These needs are wide and diverse and can be met in a small group setting within a Support for Learning department staffed by personnel who can offer and facilitate a highly differentiated curriculum to pupils.

- 6.2 In 1997 the then SOEID issued the results of a research project which it had commissioned to investigate the educational opportunities for children with autistic spectrum disorders across Scotland. The report presented a number of issues which local authorities would wish to take into account when developing their services for this pupil group.

- 6.3 A central feature of the research was that children with a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder, including Asperger's Syndrome, have specific needs which require a different focus and approach from that adopted for children with other types of special educational need. In particular the learning and teaching of children with autistic spectrum disorder must take account of their triad of impairments:

- difficulties in social interaction with adults and other children and young people
- difficulties in flexible thinking and behaviour
- difficulties in all aspects of communication

- 6.4 This pupil group therefore requires specific organisation of the learning environment, and tried teaching and behavioural methods such as TEACCH (Teaching Alternative Communication to Children). Interactive approaches to building relationships and fostering communication will be deployed, as well as alternative systems of communication to spoken language.

- 6.5 Throughout the past four years the Education Department has continued to develop provision specific to the pupil group diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. Their needs are met within a variety of settings providing a continuum of provision. Children below the age of five years are currently supported in the specialist facility at the Frances Wright Pre-School Centre. School-aged pupils are supported in mainstream schools and classes where possible, or in

mainstream primary bases within Hillside Primary School and Fintry Language Unit, or in the secondary base located within Harris Academy. Kingspark School caters for youngsters at the severe end of the autistic spectrum, and has recently been extending its provision for this pupil group. Para 6.6 indicates the numbers of pupils currently enrolled in each of these facilities.

6.6

School	Sector	Capacity	Roll 2001-02
Frances Wright PSC	Nursery	12	13
Fintry Lang. Unit	Primary	16	16
Hillside Primary	Primary	12	11
Harris Academy	Secondary	10	10
Kingspark School	Special	24	20

6.7

All of the Education Department's specialist autistic units have been participating in a project entitled 'Accreditation Scotland', funded by the Scottish Executive. This commissioned work is part of the National Autistic Society's Accreditation Programme, and is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of autism specialist standards on the quality of education for children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder. The full and final Accreditation Review took place in March 2002 and the final report is awaited, but already identified Dundee strengths at this stage in the process include:

- commitment to continuous improvements
- high expectation of pupil achievement
- several provisions cited as delivering 'best practice'

7.0

PROPOSALS

7.1

The Education Department's own information (para. 7.2 below) predicts that the demand from children and young people diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder for places within mainstream bases in the near future will outstrip present supply. This trend is very much in line with national prevalence rates which show a continuing increase in the number of diagnoses of autism.

7.2

Sector	Capacity (Current)	Roll 2001- (Current)02	Roll 2002-03	Roll 2003-04
Pre-School	12	13	12	12
Primary	28	27	34	43
Secondary	10	10	10	15
Special	24	20	22	24

7.3

Furthermore while the early feedback from the National Autistic Accreditation Project suggests that generally our present accommodation in schools meets the needs of our present pupil group it predicts that a modest increase in numbers in certain locations might hinder pupil progress. In particular the National Autistic Society indicates that unless the accommodation at Fintry Language Unit were enhanced the facility would not achieve accreditation status, even although all other aspects of the work there constitute a model of good practice.

- 7.4 The Department therefore proposes the enhancement of the accommodation at Fintry Language Unit and the development of two new facilities for children and young people on the autistic spectrum, at Clepington Primary School in session 2002-03 and Morgan Academy in session 2003-04. This will ensure that provision for this pupil group is available in different parts of the city and will increase the possibility of children attending a school in or reasonably close to their local community.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Director of Personnel, the Director of Support Services, the Director of Finance and the Director of Social Work.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

Anne Wilson _____ Date _____

Director of Education