

Planning strategically resourced provision for Cumwhinton School

A consultation document



April 2007

Introduction

As you may know, the County Council and its key partners are in the process of carrying out a comprehensive review of all schools throughout Cumbria. As part of this review, the County Council is seeking to establish strategically resourced provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a social and communication difficulty, within Cumbria's mainstream schools.

A strategically resourced school is a mainstream school where pupils with specific types of special educational needs are taught alongside their peers with additional specialist facilities and staffing. This provides individual pupils the fullest opportunity to make progress in their learning and participate in their school and community.

Cumwhinton Primary School indicated some time ago that it would like to host a strategically resourced provision. This consultation document is about the possibility of establishing such a resource at the school.

If you would like further information you can find out more by:

- visiting our website: www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/childrensservices/school-organisation
- telephoning the School Organisation Project Team: **01228 606013**

This document marks the start of a genuine and open consultation process. We would like as many people as possible with an involvement or interest in the school, or in primary education in the area more generally, to contribute their thoughts on what should happen. There is a questionnaire at the end of this document which we would like you to fill in and send back to us.



Philip Chappelhow

County Councillor Philip Chappelhow,
Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
Cumbria County Council



Moira Swann

Moira Swann,
Corporate Director, Children's Services,
Cumbria County Council

Index



- The purpose and nature of the consultation document 3
- A countywide approach to changing the school network 4
- Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) provision in Cumbria 5
- Considering the possibility of establishing strategically resourced provision 7
- Achieving strategically resourced provision 8
- Drawing conclusions 9
- Next steps - the consultation and decision making process 9
- Appendix A - Accommodation plan: Cumwhinton School 11
- Questionnaire 12
- Translation services 14

The purpose and nature of the consultation document



The purpose of this document is to provide information and an opportunity to comment on the possibility of the establishment of a strategically resourced provision for pupils with ASD at Cumwhinton School near Carlisle.

Its aim is to focus on whether a strategically resourced provision would be likely to:

- create the most effective provision for the future for children with ASD;
- enhance the educational opportunities for all the pupils in the school.

The consultation document has tried to achieve the right balance between covering the most important issues and meeting the requirements of the 'Special Educational Needs Improvement Test'. This test has recently been formulated by the DfES and is likely to become a statutory requirement later this year. The test requires authorities to show how the proposed arrangement will lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with special needs.

The document has been written for a wide audience including parents, school staff, governors, young people and other members of the community who will have different starting points in terms of knowledge and understanding. The consultation document takes this into account and has attempted to make the document as easy as possible to read and understand.

Your views are important to us and will be a great help in reaching a decision. We realise that you may want more information to help you form your opinions. Details of how you can access additional information or talk over any issues of concern with us are given on page 10.

The consideration of the establishment of Cumwhinton as a strategically resourced school sits within a countywide context and approach. We feel that we should say a little about this, before focusing on the possibilities involving Cumwhinton School.

A countywide approach to changing the school network

In Autumn 2005, Cumbria County Council launched a strategic review of schools to be carried out by the end of 2007. The review covers all nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in the county. Other services for children are also part of the review.

The aim is to bring about higher achievement and better educational standards. The County Council sees this as a great opportunity to improve young people's education and their life chances and choices.

One of the reasons that the countywide review is taking place is to address some key educational issues including the establishment of strategically resourced provision in mainstream schools.

The review process is a new and ambitious approach. It involves all partners with an interest in education and other services for young people, and several groups are involved:

- **Local Partnership Groups (LPGs)** who:
 - look at their areas of the county and identify options for the future
- **School Organisation Forum** which:
 - oversees the whole review process
 - considers options from Local Partnership Groups and makes recommendations to the County Council
- **Cumbria County Council** which:
 - decides which options should go to public consultation and considers the results of the consultation
 - makes statutory proposals to achieve school organisation change
 - decides whether or not to approve statutory proposals, after considering any formal objections to them
- **School Organisation Project Team** which:
 - supports the entire review process

Any changes to the provision affecting special education such as the proposals in this document needs to rest within the overall review referred to above.



Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) provision in Cumbria



Overview

As indicated in Inclusive Cumbria*, the County Council has made a long and successful commitment to inclusive and high quality education for pupils with significant special educational needs. Cumbria County Council continues to make available the highest levels of inclusive mainstream provision to pupils of all ages.

In an effort to make available an appropriate range of inclusive learning opportunities to pupils, the Council has developed a network of strategic facilities, now called strategically resourced provision, in a number of its mainstream schools at the following locations:

- All Saints Primary, Cockermouth
- Vickerstown Primary, Barrow-in-Furness
- Cockermouth School
- Settlebeck High, Sedbergh

The County Council believes that the developments at these already successful schools have, through the inclusion of ASD pupils, enhanced the learning opportunities of all pupils by:

- enrichment of the curriculum through social awareness and community responsibility;
- developing the quality and skills of the staff;
- improving the building and offering better facilities.

Unfortunately, because we have not developed a full range of strategically resourced schools in every part of the county, similar options are not currently available to pupils and their families from the city of Carlisle and its surrounding area.

Strategically resourced provision in Carlisle

The aim of the County Council is to extend the range of provision available to primary age pupils with ASD. It is important to note that, in developing strategically resourced schools, this provision will only be made available to the neediest ASD pupils where their needs cannot be met adequately in their local mainstream school with specialist support. In line with its overall inclusive strategy, the Council will continue to expect most pupils with diagnosed ASD to continue to have their needs met in their neighbourhood mainstream school.

Taking account of legislative requirements, the County Council is responsible for securing appropriate educational provision for all pupils, whether or not they have special educational needs. The County Council, through this consultation process, is seeking to address a current gap in mainstream provision, that of mainstream specialist ASD provision in the Carlisle area for primary age pupils.

Inclusive learning expectations

The County Council recognises that its policy of establishing a network of strategically resourced schools is, by its very nature, less inclusive than provision being made in each and every local mainstream school.

By developing strategically resourced provision within selected schools in the county, the Council believes that it is making available a local option that is preferable to alternative residential provision outside Cumbria. Furthermore, the Council considers that this strategic response:

- meets the needs of pupils with complex ASD in the county;
- fulfils its responsibilities to parents and families to provide local services;
- enriches opportunities for all pupils;
- complies with the legislative targets imposed by government.

What is most important for pupils is that they are educated in a supportive educational environment which offers the opportunity for inclusive learning. This should take place in a school that is willing to adapt to the needs of the individual, rather than expecting the individual to cope with what is provided for others.

The County Council has developed its own Inclusion Chartermark which is a means of assessing the inclusivity of all schools and is a standard which it expects strategically resourced schools to meet. A copy of the Inclusion Chartermark can be accessed on the school organisation web site, details of which are given in the introduction.

Contractual arrangements

All existing strategically resourced schools are expected to have an agreed contract with the County Council. This contract has a 3-year life span, renewable annually under a roll-on arrangement. Thus, if either the County Council or the school no longer consider the strategic arrangement to be viable, then a 3-year notice period is required.

The purpose of the contract is to give detailed information on areas of responsibility between the County Council and the strategically resourced school. The contract covers the following key areas:

- Curriculum
- Staffing arrangements
- Funding of the provision
- Pupils (including designated number)
- Placement arrangements
- Transport arrangements
- Admissions / Exit criteria

A copy of the draft contract can be accessed on the school organisation web site, details of which are given in the introduction.

Considering the possibility of establishing strategically resourced provision



Background to the Cumwhinton review

Taking up the strategic direction outlined in Inclusive Cumbria (2003), an inclusion audit was carried out in the Carlisle area in November 2003. This identified a need for the development of the mainstream school-based strategic provision for pupils with ASD as high priority.

In November 2004, the County Council wrote to all Carlisle area schools, inviting them to bid to become strategically resourced schools for primary pupils with significant and complex ASD problems. Six primary schools expressed an interest in developing ASD provision.

Using criteria that considered the key features and qualities of the ideal host, the County Council selected Cumwhinton School. Following further meetings with the former headteacher, and subsequently staff and governors of the school, relevant questions were answered satisfactorily thus allowing further development of the project.

Unfortunately, the development programme for Cumwhinton School has been delayed due to the wider review of schools organisation in the Carlisle area.

Education in Cumwhinton Primary School

Cumwhinton is a popular and successful 4-11 primary school, which caters for over 140 pupils. The school has a long and successful tradition of meeting the special educational needs of children within its own community and a wider area, which is why it is an ideal base for inclusive learning. On a small scale, it has already developed particular skills in working with pupils who have ASD.

It is important that the school is enhanced by the establishment of strategically resourced provision, and that the basic character is not changed by distorting the overall balance of the pupil profile. Consequently, the numbers of pupils with ASD will be restricted to a maximum of 8. A copy of the draft contract, which gives details of pupil numbers, can be accessed on the school organisation web site, details of which are given in the introduction.

At its last Ofsted inspection in September 2005, Cumwhinton was described as a school that '...gives its pupils a good education. The pupils are happy and confident at school and parents are very satisfied with the education and care provided. The good curriculum is taught well. The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well. As a result of these strengths, pupils throughout the school make good progress in their schoolwork and their personal development'.

The report commented that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities progress well in response to the good support they receive. The addition to the existing support of the proposed new facilities will allow the opportunity for pupils to receive specialist support as appropriate and the school to continue to enhance the good work in this area.

Achieving strategically resourced provision

General

In order to bring about school organisation change, it is necessary to publish what are known as statutory proposals.

A formal proposal to bring about a 'prescribed alteration' would be needed in relation to establishing strategic provision at Cumwhinton School. As the school has community status, the proposals would be published by the County Council. They would, however, need to be preceded by a clear written statement of support from the Governing Body of the school.

If it is decided to pursue the establishment of strategically resourced provision at the school, appropriate statutory proposals to bring that about would need to be published. It is anticipated that this would happen in June 2007, following which a final decision would be taken by the Council's Cabinet in September 2007.

The school's buildings

It is some time since Cumwhinton School was identified as a possible host school for an ASD facility. In order to assess the possibilities of how this could be provided at the school, provisional building plans were drawn. Once it was decided to consult on the possibility of establishing a facility at Cumwhinton School, the plans were advanced and planning permission has been sought to extend the existing school premises. This would enable the provision to be built in time for the suggested date of September 2008.

The building work would provide additional specialist facilities comprising of a dedicated classroom, a multi-use space and other non-teaching units. A copy of the proposed floor plan for the school is included in Appendix A. Funding to achieve such changes is likely to come from capital resources specifically earmarked for improving access to schools.

There are plans in hand to increase the play area available to all pupils, which will include a creative play area amongst the trees. This will more than compensate for the space taken up by the new buildings.

Drawing conclusions



As we have explained, by developing strategically resourced provision within the county, the Council will be making a local option available that is preferable to alternative and residential provision outside Cumbria. The Council feels that the case for establishing strategically resourced provision at Cumwhinton School is very strong and that it is the appropriate way forward because it will meet the needs of primary age pupils with complex ASD in the Carlisle area. The staff and governing body at Cumwhinton School have indicated that they feel the same way.

We would like to have your views on the possibility of establishing strategically resourced provision for pupils with ASD at Cumwhinton School, and there is a questionnaire at the back of this document to help. This consultation document and additional supporting information outlined in the next section will help you to form your opinions on the subject.

We look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire or on-line response as your views are important and will influence the decision which is eventually taken.

Next steps - the consultation and decision making process

The consultation period

The consultation is based on this document. The consultation period starts on Wednesday 18 April 2007. The final date for letting us have your thoughts and comments is **Wednesday 16 May 2007**.

How to express your views

This consultation document has been very widely distributed. It has gone to Cumwhinton School's parents, staff and governors, all of the County Council's key partners in the provision of education, neighbouring schools, the District Council, voluntary organisations, staff associations, unions, and many others. It is important that we know what you think about the establishment of strategically resourced provision at Cumwhinton School. We look forward to hearing from you.

Questionnaire

There is a questionnaire at the back of this document. We would like you to complete it and return it to us. Alternatively, you can complete the questionnaire on-line during the consultation period by following the consultation finder links on the County Council website: www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/consultation.

What happens after the consultation process?

Once the responses to the consultation process have been analysed, a report will be prepared for the County Council's Cabinet. The report will include a summary of comments received from individuals and photocopies of the responses from recognised organisations. The report will be a public document, so will be available to the media and on the County Council website.

The Cabinet will consider the response to the consultation and form a view about what it believes to be the appropriate provision for the future. This is likely to occur shortly after the consultation closes.

If it is decided to seek to establish strategically resourced provision at Cumwhinton School, the legal processes referred to in the section on 'Achieving strategically resourced provision' on page 8 will need to be followed. As stated earlier, it is likely any new provision would be available in September 2008.

How can I find out more?

Members of the School Organisation Project Team will be more than happy to discuss with you any of the issues covered in this document or anything else related to Cumwhinton School. You might find this helpful before completing the questionnaire.

The number to ring is 01228 606013.

As we said earlier, we wanted to keep this document as short as possible. There is extra information available if you want to read the detailed background documents that we used when we wrote this paper. These include building plans, draft contracts and the most recent Ofsted inspection report.

All of these documents are available to view or download on our website:

www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/childrensservices/school-organisation

If you do not have access to the internet, we can provide you with a printed copy of any sections of the additional information. All you need to do is to call the School Organisation Project Team on 01228 606013. Alternatively, requests can be made by fax to 01228 606016, or by post to the following address:

Freepost RRBS – RLBG – GZGL
CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL
School Organisation
18 Portland Square
CARLISLE
CA1 1PE

Appendix A - Accommodation plan: Cumwhinton School



Key to Areas

- Staff
- Teaching
- Storage/other
- Toilets
- Circulation

Questionnaire

Planning strategically resourced provision for Cumwhinton School

This questionnaire is to help you put your views, comments and suggestions in writing. All views will be made available to those taking decisions. Please continue on a separate sheet if required. Alternatively, complete your questionnaire online at www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/consultation.

Please complete, tear out and return to the address overleaf. The last date for responses to be received is **Wednesday 16 May 2007**.

Q1 Given the current situation, and the information contained in this document, do you think it appropriate for a strategically resourced facility to be developed at Cumwhinton School?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 3

Please add any comments that you have about the question above in this box:

Q2 Do you think that these proposals will enable Cumbria County Council to meet its target of enhancing the availability of local provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Don't know 3

Please add any comments that you have about the question above in this box:

Q3 Do you have any further comments or suggestions you wish to make on the content of this consultation document, or more generally?

Q4 Do you have any other suggestions that you wish to make?

Q5 Please tell us the nature of your interest in the process, and which schools you are connected to.
Please tick all that apply.

Interest	✓	At which school(s)?	
		Cumwhinton (✓)	Other (please state)
Student	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Parent/Carer of current school pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Member of support staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Member of teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pre-school parent	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Local resident	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q6 Name

Address

.....

..... Postcode

Q7 How old are you?

Under 20 1 20-39 2 40-59 3 60+ 4

Signature

Thank you for completing this consultation questionnaire.

Please now return it to the FREEPOST address below:

Freepost RRBS - RLBG - GZGL
 CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL
 School Organisation
 18 Portland Square
 CARLISLE
 CA1 1PE

Translation services

English

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, braille, audio, or in a different language by calling 01229 894401.

Bengali

আপনি 01229 894401 -এই নম্বর ফোন করে, বিভিন্ন ফরম্যাট যেমন বড় প্রিন্ট, ব্রেইল, অডিও বা একটি ভিন্ন ভাষাতে এই নথিটির একটি কপি পেতে পারেন।

Portuguese

Pode obter uma cópia deste documento em vários formatos, como por exemplo em Braille, áudio, ou numa outra língua. Para tal ligue para o 01229 894401.

Cantonese

如果您想获取该文件的不同版本，如：大字体印刷、盲文、音频或不同语言版本，请致电：01229 894401。

Lithuanian

Paskambinę telefonu 01229 894401, galite užsisakyti šio dokumento kopiją įvairiais formatais, pavyzdžiui, atspausdintą dideliu šriftu, Brailio raštu, užsisakyti garso įrašą arba gauti dokumentą, išverstą į norimą kalbą.

Polish

Aby otrzymać kopię tego dokumentu w innych formatach, takich jak duży druk, druk Braille'm, audio, lub w innym języku proszę dzwonić pod numer 01229 894401.

Turkish

01229 894401'u arayarak, bu dokümanın bir kopyasını büyük puntolu, körler için kabartmalı, ses dosyası gibi değişik formatlarda veya farklı bir dilde edinebilirsiniz.



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