



ea

Education
Authority

Area Plan for Primary Education

**Special Unit Provision at Fort Hill Integrated
College**

Consultation Response

Closing Date: 24 February 2017

Introduction

The Education Authority wishes to extend and enhance specialist provision attached to mainstream schools to ensure equity of access across Northern Ireland and appropriate special educational need (SEN) pathways within schools and cross phase; this would include seeking Department of Education approval through the development proposal process to establish additional learning support, speech and language and autism specific provision attached to mainstream primary and post-primary schools across all local council areas.

During the assessment of current provision attached to mainstream schools it became apparent that a number of units in the South Eastern area, which have been operational for a number of years, did not follow the development proposal approval process.

It is the intent of the Authority to remedy this administrative error by bringing forward development proposals to formally recognise the units at the following schools.

Vision

Special units attached to mainstream schools gives added support to those pupils who cannot cope full time within a mainstream class – the units provide a way to slowly immerse SEN pupils, in a controlled manner, into an environment which will aid in the development of their social communication and educational skills.

There is a need to formally recognise those units that are currently operational but have not followed the development proposal process. They are a central part of meeting the needs of pupils who require support in mainstream schools and form part of the overall area planning solution for special education provision.

Education Authority Position

At the EA Education Committee meeting on 15 December 2016 it was agreed to initiate consultation with the Board of Governors, staff and parents of those schools where units are in operation but need to be formally recognised by way of a development proposal, this consultation will include those schools in the area that may be impacted by these proposals. The proposal for Fort Hill Integrated College is as follows:

School	Draft Proposal
Fort Hill Integrated College	The Education Authority proposes to establish 2 Autism Spectrum Disorder Centres at Key Stage 3 and 1 General Learning Support Centre at Key Stage 4 at Fort Hill Integrated College with effect from 1st September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Nature of the Education Authority's Recommendation

1. Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 describes the process regarding the establishment of a special unit at a school. This process requires the publication of a development proposal.

Therefore, as part of the pre-publication consultation on this development proposal, the EA is seeking any objections and/or other comments on the establishment of the special unit from the Board of Governors, teaching staff and parents of children attending the directly affected school, as well as from other schools that may be affected by the proposals. (Objections may also be made to DE during the two-month statutory objection period immediately following the development proposal's publication.)

2. The special unit is part of the Authority's overall special education provision in the area and need to formally recognized. They are a central part of meeting the needs of pupils who require support in mainstream schools and form part of the overall area planning solution for special education provision.

Publication of a Development Proposal

The EA is required to publish a Development Proposal outlining the proposed changes to the school. The views expressed in this consultation will be forwarded to EA Education Committee members prior to the Education Committee meeting, for their consideration.

Development Proposal Timetable

Stage 1

Pre-Publication Consultation with parents, staff and Governors of directly affected school will be from Monday 23 January 2017 to Friday 24 February 2017.

Pre-Publication Consultation with parents, staff and Governors of other affected schools will be from Friday 3 February 2017 to Friday 3 March 2017.

EA compiles Case for Change document: including comments received from consultation, and EA response to consultation issues.

Approval to publish the Development Proposal sought from EA Education Committee meeting on 9 March 2017.

Publication of the Development Proposal in the local press one week after approval given, on 16 March 2017.

EA submits completed Case for Change document to DE Area Planning Policy Team.

EA writes to affected schools detailing likely impact of the approved proposal.

This concludes the EA Consultation Process.

Stage 2

Once the Development Proposal is published the DE two month Statutory Period for Objections begins: **16 March 2017 to 16 May 2017**.

DE Area Planning Policy Team (APPT) compiles its business case, including consideration of objections received: APPT submit its business case to the Minister with a recommendation to approve or reject. (This is a 4-6 week period.)

The Minister considers the proposal on the basis of the business case forwarded by APPT and announces his decision – approximately, **June 2017**.

Implications

If approved, implementation of this Development Proposal to establish 2 Autism Spectrum Disorder Centres and 1 General Learning Support Centre at Fort Hill Integrated College will take effect from 1st September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter.

[It should be noted that this process cannot be used to consider specific issues as they currently relate to any individual pupil or adult associated with the school. If for example as a parent you have concerns relating to your child's present education you are advised to contact the Principal. Every effort will be made to address your concerns.]

Equality Consideration

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 all public bodies are obliged to consider the implications of any decisions on nine different groupings before decisions are implemented. The two duties within this Equality legislation include promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between all communities. The equality of opportunity duty requires that the EA shall, in carrying out all their functions, powers and duties, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- 1 Between persons of different religious belief.
- 2 Between persons of different political opinion.
- 3 Between persons of different racial groups.
- 4 Between persons of different age.
- 5 Between persons of different marital status.
- 6 Between persons of different sexual orientation.
- 7 Between men and women generally.
- 8 Between persons with a disability and persons without.
- 9 Between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Good Relations Duty requires that the EA shall, without prejudice to their equality obligations, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations:

- 1 Between persons of different religious belief.
- 2 Between persons of different political opinions.
- 3 Between persons of different racial groups.

In light of these obligations do you consider that the proposal to establish Special Units at Fort Hill Integrated College will impact positively or negatively on either Equality of Opportunity or the Promotion of Good Relations in any way?

Section 75 Category	Positive	Negative	Don't Know
Religious Belief			
Political Opinion			
Racial Group			
Age			
Marital Status			
Sexual Orientation			
Gender			
Disability			
Dependants			

If you ticked any of the above boxes please clarify your reason:

Arrangements for returning your completed questionnaire

Please return the completed questionnaire **no later than 24 February 2017** by post to

Stephen Martin
Development Officer
Education Authority
Grahamsbridge road
Dundonald
BT16 2HS

Or email your comments to Stephen.Martin2@eani.org.uk

Source of Response (Please specify):

Governor _____

Parent _____

Teacher _____

Non-Teaching Staff _____

Teacher Union _____

Other (Please specify) _____