

Delegated Decision

15 April 2024

Setting the budget for: The Woodlands School incorporating Education Health Needs 2024 - 2025



Report of Jim Murray, Head of Education & Skills, Children & Young People's Services and David Watchman, Finance Manager – Children & Young People's Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To set out the methodology and proposed budget plan for The Woodlands School, including the Education Health Needs Team.

Executive summary

- 2 The Woodlands School budget which incorporates pupils from the Educational Health Care Needs Team, has been developed based upon place numbers multiplied by estimated place costs for each base provision and for those off-site placements (unregistered Alternative Provision).
- 3 Each annual budget proposal is compiled alongside the school leadership team to ensure that the full impact of the current Woodlands school capacity and the local educational climate is incorporated into draft budgetary proposals.
- 4 The budget allocation for The Woodlands in 2023/24 is £8.996 million and the Q3 forecast of outturn indicated net expenditure against this budget would be £10.067 million, an in-year overspend of £1.071 million. The impact on the High Needs Block in 2023/24 would reduce to £0.879 million after taking account of £0.192 million of reserves available to The Woodlands.

- 5 The proposed budget allocation of £11.835 million for 2024/25 is £1.768 million higher than for forecast for 2023/24, of which £1.668 million relates to increased places and £100,000 to a 1% price increase.
- 6 The implementation of the EHN policy, referral and contract process for schools from April 1st 2024 will now begin to generate income following week 6 provision. Costs relating to individual pupil needs are detailed within the EHN policy 2023 – 2024.
- 7 At this stage no additional income has been assumed in the budget allocation until it is clearer how the new policy embeds and impacts on the behaviour of schools. It is assumed that an additional income generated during the 2024/25 finance is available to offset potential pressures relating to off-site PRU placements.

Recommendation(s)

- 8 That the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services as decision maker, approves the proposed methodology and budget plan for The Woodlands School

Background

- 9 The Woodlands School serves the needs of pupils aged 5 to 16 who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- 10 The school operates across a number of sites in County Durham. Secondary age pupils attend The Elms (Ferryhill), The Maples (Ferryhill) or The Bridge (Lanchester). Primary age pupils attend The Willows (Ferryhill) or The Beeches (Ferryhill). Young people receiving EHN access onsite provision at Sacriston. Each of these bases serve all our families and therefore depending upon the age of a young person, they travel to a specific Key Stage site if and when a place is available.
- 11 Since the 2022 – 2023 academic year there have been no available onsite places in Key Stage 3 or 4. Pressure on places is significant and relentless.
- 12 Since the start of this academic year, there have been over 400 young people accessing provision through The Woodlands School.
- 13 Many of the young people have special educational needs or disabilities due to their social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- 14 The Woodlands continue to be supported by CYPS in the quality assurance aspects of Alternative Provision used by all schools. The focus of this work has been safeguarding and supporting the assurance of value for money from placements.
- 15 The EHN Team were incorporated into the Woodlands in September 2021 as numbers being supported by this team had grown significantly and there has continued to be high demand for this service after the COVID pandemic.
- 16 The cost of running The Woodlands PRU (incorporating EHN) is largely funded from the High Needs Block.

Budget

- 17 The budget allocation was £8.996 million for 2023/24 and the Q3 forecast of outturn indicated net expenditure against this budget would be £10.067 million, an in-year overspend of £1.071 million. The impact on the High Needs Block in 2023/24 would reduce to £0.879 million after taking account of £0.192 million of reserves available to the Woodlands.
- 18 The in-year net expenditure has been estimated across the different placement types as follows:

Places	Description	Per Place £	Total
80	PRU On-site	£30,750	£2,460,000
30	PRU Bridge	£16,750	£502,500
140	PRU Off-site	£33,000	£4,620,000
250			£7,582,500
140	EHN	£17,750	£2,485,000
140			£2,485,000
390			£10,067,500

- 19 The HNB forecast projections developed as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme assumed a trend of significantly increasing numbers of EHN pupils across the period to 2027/28, however this has not been the case as numbers have levelled out over that past year.
- 20 There was also an assumption in the DBV projections that PRU numbers would increase at a slower rate than has been the case in 2023/24.
- 21 The Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme is working in partnership with C.Y.P.S. to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Workstream 3: 'Improving Transition and Reintegration into Mainstream Schools' is providing strategic challenge and support to individual schools to ensure a more timely reintegration for young people with an implementation focused upon building consistency across all phases.
- 22 The Primary Inclusion Partnership programme is currently complimenting the DBV workstreams with primary panel senior leaders from within schools accessing training in coaching approaches to provide effective problem solving support to individual schools.
- 23 Using the forecast unit costs for 2023/24 as a basis, to set the budget for 2024/25 with a 1% increase in values (in line with that applied to special school funding) requires an additional £100,000.
- 24 The table below illustrates the budget requirement for a further 50 places, taking the average across the year for PRU Off-site placements to 190, and includes the 1% price increase:

Places	Description	Per Place £	Total
80	PRU On-site	£31,058	£2,484,600
30	PRU Bridge	£16,918	£507,525
190	PRU Off-site	£33,330	£6,332,700
300			£9,324,825
140	EHN	£17,928	£2,509,850
140			£2,509,850
440			£11,834,675

25 The budget allocation of £11.835 million is £1.767 million higher than for forecast cost for 2023/24, of which £1.667 million relates to increased places and £100,000 to a 1% price increase.

PRU pupil numbers

26 Currently, based upon February 2024 pupil numbers, there will be 155 pupils on site from 1 September 2024. This does not take into account those pupils who have received a PEx in March or the anticipated additional numbers of pupils arriving into Years 7 to 10 from March to July.

27 Details of pupils number on-roll at the PRU are shown in the table at Appendix 2 to the report.

28 The budget allocation provides funding for an average of 270 places (80 on-site and 190 off-site) across the financial year, however if the trend of permanent exclusions seen to date over this academic year continues into the 2024/25 academic year, this could result in the requirement for offsite placements exceeding 200 by the start of the spring term. This would put significant pressure on the budget allocation for the 2024/25 financial year and will need to be closely monitored.

Education Health Needs - Charges

29 With the EHN Team launch of their updated policy, referral process and school contract from April 2024, there are now detailed costs for those young people on a school roll who continue to access provision after week 6.

30 The provision made available by the EHN team will be determined when a referral for service is received. The provision will be based on the information provided on the medical confirmation document and/or through discussions with health practitioners.

31 The Woodlands EHN Policy document provides a detailed breakdown in costs associated with services to schools and their young people.

- 32 Initial estimates are included at Appendix 3, however this potential income is not currently included in budget setting for The Woodlands and it is anticipated that any income generated can be utilised to address the potential pressure from PRU off-site placements referenced earlier in the report.

Conclusion

- 33 It is essential that The Woodlands School is appropriately funded to support the challenging nature of its work.
- 34 The Woodlands School is being supported through Local Authority colleagues within Education to retain standards and its status as an Ofsted 'Good' school. In Local Authorities where the Pupil Referral Units have been found to be inadequate, the academy orders have left councils in a difficult position in influencing pupil place planning with a Multi Academy Trust deciding the pupil admission limit for the school.
- 35 This often results in reduced capacity to support vulnerable young people and consequently, an over reliance on high-cost alternative provision placements which place unnecessary pressures on the High Needs Block.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- The Woodlands EHN Policy 2024

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

For permanent exclusions, Local Authorities must **provide suitable full-time education** to permanently excluded pupils from the 6th day of exclusion under section 19 Education Act 1996.

Pupil referral units also (PRUs) teach children who aren't able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education. This could be because they have a short or long-term illness, have been excluded or are a new starter waiting for a mainstream school place. These budget proposals take into consideration these wider responsibilities and quality of the curriculum offered.

Finance

Funding for The Woodland is provided from Durham's High Needs Block allocation. A five-year sustainability plan for the HNB was agreed by Cabinet in April 2022 and is regularly updated.

The budget allocation for the 2024/25 financial year is proposed to be set at £11.835 million, which is £1.767 million higher than for forecast cost for 2023/24, of which £1.667 million relates to increased places and £100,000 to a 1% price increase.

Consultation and Engagement

Information on the proposals was shared virtually with members of the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board on 29/02/24.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Increased funding will help to secure appropriate provision for vulnerable children and young people with protected characteristics.

Climate Change

Increased funding may help to reduce the need for pupils to travel to access provision out of the area, reducing the contribution of CO2 emissions and climate change.

Human Rights

Increased funding will support the right for all children to receive a good education.

Crime and Disorder

Increased funding will support vulnerable children and young people with inclusion needs in achieving their best outcomes in life. Early intervention and support for vulnerable children and young people with additional needs, should have a positive impact on crime and disorder by helping to prevent offending and / or reoffending.

Staffing

The proposals will support increased staffing costs for The Woodlands and maintain the current team operating within the EHN Team. The nature of employment (casual and short-term contracts) within this team means that any significant changes to staffing structures can be managed without any real ER/VR considerations.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

From September 2022, schools which have not been deemed 'Good' according to Ofsted, in either of their last two inspections, they may be issued with an academy order. As mentioned in the report, if The Woodlands was to fall into this position, the council would still have responsibility for permanently excluded pupils but less influence on placement sufficiency. Ensuring that the school is appropriately funded and commissioned appropriately to work in line with the needs of CYPS will mitigate against this risk.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: The Woodlands Pupil numbers

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July
2020/21 KS3	44	45	46	54	57	58	57	58	58	68	70
2020/21 KS4	89	102	101	104	105	105	105	103	103	106	70
2020/21 Total	133	147	147	158	162	163	162	161	161	174	140

2021/22 KS3	38	41	42	48	53	60	64	71	77	84	80
2021/22 KS4	99	98	102	102	103	103	105	107	108	110	66
2021/22 Total	137	139	144	150	156	163	169	178	185	194	146

2022/23 KS3	49	49	59	67	69	72	86	92	95	103	92
2022/23 KS4	108	110	109	110	109	114	121	123	120	123	56
2022/23 Total	157	159	168	177	178	186	207	215	215	226	148

2023/24 KS3	76	89	94	112	124	133					
2023/24 KS4	108	120	122	124	125	125					
2023/24 Total	184	209	216	231	249	258					

Appendix 3: EHN charges

Current income	Income including AWPU, FSM and PP	Income including AWPU, FSM and PP+
Based on 60 KS4 pupils accessing The Pines provision for a 6 week placement		
£0	£68,684	£78,606
Based on 60 KS4 pupils accessing The Pines provision for 1 year		
£0	£435,000	£497,838