

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**SCHOOLS FORUM 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

### **REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

#### **ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVISION AT GILBROOK SPECIAL SCHOOL**

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper makes a temporary proposal for the use of the funding that the closure of Brookdale Education Inclusion Base (EIB) releases.

##### **Background**

The EIB is specialist provision for twelve pupils with statements of special educational needs. The major need of pupils attending the EIB are moderate learning difficulties (mld), that is, where pupils experience significantly greater difficulties learning at the same rate as the overwhelming majority of their peers. Currently Brookdale has four pupils and this includes three year six pupils who transfer to secondary school in September 2011. During this academic year no pupils have been admitted to Brookdale and the one remaining pupil will be transferring to an alternative placement.

The EIB has been open at Brookdale for over ten years and was previously known as a Special Needs Class. During this period the provision has been very successful in offering specialist teaching inclusion in an integrated setting where pupils have benefited from small group teaching and working alongside peers in mainstream classes. The number of primary EIBs (mld) in the Authority has reduced over recent years to five and will four on Brookdales' closure. The reduction is for number of reasons; because mainstream schools have become more inclusive, the primary population has fallen, and parents preference for mainstream education. Brookdale has worked hard to ensure that inclusive practices are at the heart of the school's ethos. Brookdale School has thoroughly investigated the feasibility of modifying their EIB to meet the needs of pupils with a social communication difficulty/autistic spectrum disorder. This has involved staff and governors visiting other schools and having discussion with authority officers. After much deliberation Brookdale decided not to become EIB provision for pupils with social communication difficulties.

During the current academic year pressure has been mounting on spaces for primary pupils with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). The Authority maintains two primary bases for pupils with a BESD and a primary special school, Gilbrook. Provision is full, and Gilbrook is oversubscribed, as it has been on occasions in the last few years.

It is therefore proposed that the in-year monies released by closing Brookdale EIB are temporarily transferred to Gilbrook for the acadmic year 2011-2012 to commission a pilot assessment class to cope with current demand and allow the Authority and school to examine future needs and plan to meet them. A report will be prepared for a future Forum about the use of these monies.

The cost of the Education Inclusion Base for the financial year 2011-12 (7/12) is £39,400 and for the financial year 2012-13 (5/12) is £28,192.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Forum is asked to:

- note Brookdale's decision to close the Education Inclusion Base;
- accept the proposal for the temporary use of the funding released by the EIB closure to pilot the use of an assessment class at Gilbrook School for the academic year 2011-2012 with a further report to a future Forum.