

## **Marland Residential School: Change of Boarding Provision**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.***

**Recommendation: that approval is given to implement the proposal to convert from Termly (7 Day/Night boarding) to Weekly (5 Day/4 Night boarding) residential provision at Marland School with effect from September 2017.**

### **1. Summary**

The Governing Body of Marland School, Peters Marland, Torrington, (Foundation Special School) propose changing boarding provision in order to target resources to continue to raise educational standards and align with changes in parental/carer demand for weekly placements. The Governing Body has consulted on the change in the residential school from termly to weekly boarding for pupils with Social, Emotional and/or Mental Health issues with effect from September 2017 and seek approval to implement this change.

### **2. Background/Introduction**

Marland School was inspected in November 2016 and is a Good School. With strong leadership and governance teaching is effective and lesson plans capture the interest of pupils leading to a good level of engagement and learning. The School provides 40 residential places for boys aged 11-16. The main focus of the School is to provide high quality teaching and learning on an academic, vocational and life skills basis and continue to raise educational standards with the residential aspect of the school enhancing stability and continuity for the working school week (Monday to Friday).

There has been a significant change in recent years from both new admission students and parents/carers in demand for weekly places. This is supported in the Ofsted Report of November 2016 where students expressed the preference to go home more often. Nationally there is a shift away from the more historic termly residential provision model with more emphasis being placed on the importance of a balance between a weekly residential model and access to family and local community at weekends.

The change in provision is in line with Devon's Local Offer and the Education Infrastructure Plan to ensure value for money, the most effective use of resources and future pattern of service delivery.

### **3. Proposal**

The proposal is to make the change in boarding provision from termly to weekly and to implement with effect from September 2017.

There has been an increase in demand for Special Education provision in recent years with children's needs becoming more complex and a requirement to offer more flexible provision which meets local needs. This is due to demographic change, high inward migration and significant house building. The Governing Body has considered the future of Marland School in relation to this, the change in demand for termly residential places, the challenges

of future funding and the need to provide high quality teaching, learning and pathways to further education and employment. Currently most of the residential students spend alternate weekends at home during term time. Boarding on alternate weekends provides a 'value added' element to the service provided by the School but is not an essential aspect of the overall educational provision. The implications of the proposal on individual families has been assessed and considered by the Governing Body. In addition it has been confirmed that the proposed changes are unlikely to have any significant impact on Children's Social Care services.

Escalating costs in the region of £230k+ per year against a reduction in funding income together with the change in the requirements for new admissions has necessitated the Governing Body to carefully consider the future of the School. As a result of the change in boarding provision there will necessarily be a need for a reduction in staffing.

#### **4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data**

The Governing Body consulted on the proposal from 18 April to 16 May 2017. There were 17 responses to the consultation: 13 in support, 2 had mixed views with concerns and 2 objected to the proposal.

The mixed views related to behaviour management during out of class activities in the evenings and weekends which benefitted the pupils but it is considered that this is embedded throughout the 24 hour curriculum and is not dependent on 7 day residential but a mix of the whole time at Marland and will continue with the 5 day/4 night provision.

Staff are obviously anxious but are fully understanding and supportive of the current financial position that the School find themselves in due to national policies.

The 2 objections relate to maintaining the provision for younger pupils and concerns related to transport. The School has confirmed that it will continue to meet the pupil's needs on the new shorter week basis and that transport will be provided as part of the ongoing placement package and that it is not the responsibility of parents to provide this.

Following consultation, in accordance with statutory requirements, a Brief Notice and Full Proposal were published on 24 May 2017 with a formal four week representation period. No responses were received.

#### **5. Financial Considerations**

As part of the Medium Term Capital Programme, which was agreed by the Full County Council on 18 February 2017, £4.5m has been agreed for a new 28 place residential block and refurbishment of existing accommodation on the first floor of the main school building. This will ensure that the refurbished weekly boarding provision meets the requirements of the pupils and addresses accommodation concerns raised by Ofsted and Health and Safety.

The changes in boarding provision will be absorbed within the current school budget reserves and no further capital will be required.

With regard to transport, based on current students the additional school transport cost is expected to be in the region of £55k per annum. The Transport Coordination Service will be tendering new routes once the change has been confirmed and will also be working with the schools looking at other options in how the transport will be provided.

#### **6. Environmental Impact Considerations**

The Parish Council responded to the consultation and is supportive but is concerned that the proposal would result in an increase in traffic volume. It is likely that there will be an

increase in traffic movement but it will be limited to a 2 hour window on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. The Parish Council have asked that consideration to be given to a passing place between Broomhill Farm and Beacon Hill. This would be classed as a local scheme request and regrettably at the present time there is no funding available to undertake this work.

## **7. Equality Considerations**

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/ new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment/Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

An impact assessment has been prepared, a copy of which has been circulated to Cabinet Members and is available at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/impact/published/>

## **8. Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations.

## **9. Risk Management Considerations**

This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken/included to safeguard the Council's position.

A whole system approach in assessing the proposal including the impact on Social Care has been undertaken. No further risks have been identified.

## **10. Public Health Impact**

The proposals will take into account the requirements and health and wellbeing of its local community.

## **11. Discussion**

Marland School is highly unusual in that it is a LA Maintained termly residential special school for students with Social, Emotional and or Mental Health (SEMH) issues. There are very few similar maintained termly residential SEMH schools nationally. The vast majority of LAs only provide maintained Day provision with a small number offering weekly residential. The Governors of Marland School consider that the priority must be maintained on provision of high quality teaching, learning and pathways to further education and employment. The residential aspect is provided to enhance stability and continuity for the working week and this will continue by providing Monday to Thursday night Ofsted accredited high quality

residential provision. The increasing national pressure on funding means that resources need to continue to be targeted at the educational outcomes of the students alongside the wider enrichment programmes of the school but this needs to be on a realistically sustainable basis. Escalating costs against a reduction in funding income has required the Governing Body to carefully consider the future of the School. The changes proposed will allow the school to continue to sustain and further improve the quality across both the teaching and pastoral residential side without one negatively impacting on the other as well as the benefits of regular weekly access to family and community at weekends.

## 12. Options/Alternatives

Marland School has experienced a significant change in recent years from both new admission students and parent/carers who express preference for a weekly placement rather than the current termly default offer. The primary aim for all student referrals is educational. Children's needs are becoming more complex and as development continues throughout Devon the pressure for these places will increase and the change in provision will ensure that demand is met within this School.

## 13. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The Governing Body consider that these changes will provide future sustainability, meet demand for this specialist provision and meet their's and the LA's statutory duties to provide places and for pupils to be able to attend their local school.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

## Electoral Divisions: Torrington Rural

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools, Councillor James McInnes

*Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity, Dr Virginia Pearson*

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. Marland Residential School: Proposal to Change Boarding Provision Impact Assessment	30 June 2017	<a href="https://new.devon.gov.uk/impact/published/">https://new.devon.gov.uk/impact/published/</a>
2. The Education Infrastructure Plan 2016-2033 (revised) including strategic place planning and school organisation	October 2016	<a href="https://new.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/pupil-place-planning">https://new.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/pupil-place-planning</a>