

Background Paper 1: Link Provisions Options Appraisal

Option 1: Close both Links

Advantages and benefits of closure	Disadvantages and Risks
<p>The Council is now focused on other strategic models to address the levels of exclusion through the new Education Entitlement Team (EET) and there is an expectation that the primary and secondary models should be more closely aligned. Closure of the Links would release funding to support this work Countywide, rather than just in Nuneaton & Bedworth. The Links do not currently provide support to permanently excluded primary pupils.</p>	<p>This model may appear comparatively expensive, but this model does demonstrate positive impact on those learners who have accessed it. The majority return to their home schools without facing exclusion. Removal of this intervention may result in an increase in primary exclusions in Nuneaton & Bedworth.</p>
<p>The location of the Links means that it can only feasibly support pupils in Nuneaton & Bedworth, with no options for similar support across the East and South of the County. This is inequitable; we need a Countywide strategy.</p>	<p>The model is popular with schools who have accessed it and they have provided positive feedback about the support provided by the Link.</p>
<p>Academisation of Stockingford Primary would require the boundaries to be redrawn to allow the Link to retain its current location; the new Academy may not be amenable to providing caretaking, telephone, internet, alarm systems and school dinners from September. If the Link were to become a standalone entity there is a risk that these</p>	<p>This would require redundancy for 2 Lead Teachers and 4 Specialist Teaching Assistants, with associated processes and costs</p>

<p>arrangements may incur increased costs. Closure of the Links would overcome these risks.</p>	
<p>The Links support a maximum of 8 pupils per Link at any one time and were often not at full capacity making it relatively expensive.</p>	
<p>Arguably the Local Authority should not be directly involved in providing educational services as this is the role of schools. Keeping the Link is not in keeping with the LA's strategic focus of advisory support and capacity building, diverting resources away from this focus.</p>	
<p>Current staffing is the minimum requirement; any absence is covered by Specialist Teaching Service staff. With the reductions in STS staffing, any absences post September would have to be covered via an agency, which is expensive and may not always be available at very short notice. Teacher absences are particularly difficult to cover due to the skills and experience needed.</p>	

Option 2: Retain the Wheelwright Lane Link

Advantages and benefits of retaining one Link	Disadvantages and Risks
<p>The Link has been successful with pupils who have attended and is well thought of by schools who have worked with it</p>	<p>Although the model is popular with schools in the area, the location of the Link at the boundary of Warwickshire and Coventry means that a relatively small number of learners and schools benefit from as it is difficult for some pupils to be able to access the support due to the distance they would be required to travel</p>
<p>Academisation of Stockingford Primary would require the boundaries to be redrawn to allow the Link to retain its current location; the new Academy may not be amenable to providing caretaking, telephone, internet, alarm systems and school dinners from September. If the Link were to become a standalone entity there is a risk that these arrangements may incur increased costs. Closure of the Stockingford Link would overcome these risks.</p>	<p>Retaining the Wheelwright Lane Link would mean that funding would not be freed up for the Primary Exclusion Strategy. In the SEND & Inclusion Savings plan, it was identified that there was enough funding for 1 Link and that primary schools would be asked to fund the other Link.</p> <p>If Wheelwright Lane were to be retained it would use this funding.</p> <p>Currently primary schools have not made a final decision to fund the Link facilities</p>
	<p>This would require redundancy for 1 Lead Teachers and 2 Specialist Teaching Assistants, with associated processes and costs</p>

Option 3: Do nothing and retain both Links

Advantages and benefits of retaining both Links	Disadvantages and Risks
<p>This model may appear comparatively expensive, but this model does demonstrate positive impact on those learners who have accessed it. The majority return to their home schools without facing exclusion.</p>	<p>A disproportionate amount of resource - £241,000 – is tied up in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area, whereas this could be better utilised to support the overall strategy of earlier intervention and supporting learners who have been permanently excluded Countywide.</p>
<p>With 2 Links there is scope to ensure that the cohort of pupils in each Link is best suited to ensure success for the pupils.</p>	<p>Although the model is popular with schools in the area, a relatively small number of learners and schools benefit from it.</p> <p>The location of the Links means that it is difficult for some pupils to be able to access the support due to the distance they would be required to travel.</p>
	<p>In the SEND & Inclusion Savings plan, it was identified that there was enough funding for 1 Link and that primary schools would be asked to fund the other Link.</p> <p>Although primary headteachers in Nuneaton and Bedworth were consulted, as yet there has been no decision by the primary schools over whether to fund the Link facilities.</p>
	<p>Retaining both Links would bring potential additional costs when</p>

staff absence occurs in order to retain minimum staffing levels. Current staffing is the minimum requirement; any absence is covered by Specialist Teaching Service staff. With the reductions in STS staffing, any absences post September would have to be covered via an agency, which is expensive and may not always be available at very short notice. This is particularly true if there is a teacher absence as any replacement would need to be skilled in supporting children with SEMH.

Retaining both Links would not sit well with the LA's strategic focus of advisory support and capacity building, diverting resources away from this focus and would leave an inequality of support available across the county.

Background Paper 2: Business Case for new model for preventing primary exclusions

(Separate pdf)