

Education Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

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CABINET WRITTEN STATEMENT

TITLE: Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools – Pilot Projects

DATE: May 2006

BY: Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

The Welsh Assembly Government has agreed to make £5.1million available to 22 LEAs in Wales to establish Special School Pilot Projects " Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools " over 3 years, from September 2006.

As part of the Assembly's wider strategy to RAISE standards for disadvantaged groups, this complementary pilot aims to promote further inclusion and develop the role of special schools by identifying and disseminating good practice by special schools in developing practical links with mainstream schools and promoting special schools contribution to an increasingly inclusive education system.

Following discussions with the WLGA and ADEW, we will seek bids from LEAs in collaboration with special schools on proposals relating to a range of outreach practices including:

- Support for individuals in mainstream settings – advice and guidance for mainstream schools
- Delivering training – formal and informal to a range of settings and services
- Modelling and coaching – mainstream and specialist staff working together to enhance their skills and knowledge
- Sharing specialist resources – such as specialist equipment and communication aids to enable pupils to access the curriculum
- Working with parents and Carers – providing support, advice and guidance
- Multi-agency support and provision – working with the statutory and voluntary agencies to increase capacity and meet the holistic needs of their pupils

- Improved transition arrangements post 16 – working with FE institutions and developing work based learning opportunities in collaboration with local businesses.

Local authorities will also be asked to consider developing services of this nature on a regional basis, thereby increasing their capacity and specialisms in different areas of SEN. For example one school may specialise in Autistic Spectrum Disorders whilst another may have expertise in the area of Emotional Behavioural Difficulties.

The development of the pilot projects aim to support an inclusive education system in Wales thereby ensuring wherever possible and appropriate pupils needs are met within their local mainstream school but where access to specialist provision is required it is of the highest standard and works in partnership with other providers.

In acknowledging that not all LEAs have special school provision and some that do cater specifically for one type of need, it is proposed that this grant could be used to develop their SEN provision across specialist resource bases attached to mainstream schools. However, priority should be given to developing the role of the special school within the context outlined above but this should be considered as part of all SEN provision available within the authority and where appropriate on a regional basis.