

Good Evening Councillors, thank you for the opportunity in allowing me to speak this evening.

I am here to discuss the potential closure of Fosse Way House, the residential provision of Fosse Way School in Westfield.

Fosse Way House is an education provision that extends the learning beyond the school day for students accessing it, this education is vital in supporting those students attending in their preparation for adulthood.

In October 2024 BATHNES LA informed the school that they would no longer be funding placements in the residential provision as they had identified that no child accessing the school required this and that the education Fosse Way House provides can be met during the school day. Whilst Fosse Way School identifies that for some students the teaching of independent living, training and employment, community inclusion and staying healthy can be met through the school day, for others this is simply not possible due to the complexities of their diagnosis and behaviour. For some, the 24-hour education that the school provides can support the development of skills and enhance education, thus reducing the cost of future placements when leaving school due to the education provided.

The Partnership Trust submitted proposals and evidence for six students in January 2025 that they felt would constitute a residential placement, further referrals for other students were put on hold due to the LA's decision. This evidence for a residential placement was gathered from parents, school staff and external services supporting the young people, for example CAMHS. Most importantly it was submitted by people who live with and support that young person every day of their life across all areas encountered at home and in school. A lot of consideration is placed on whether FWH is a suitable placement for each individual and decisions are not taken lightly when applying for funding by the team around the child.

In a recent Scrutiny Panel, we heard that a multi-disciplinary team within BANES had made the decision not to place these students in FWH, citing that the school day can provide this education. Whilst not disputing the credibility of this team, I ask if they know the child better than the team supporting on a daily basis? We are disappointed at the lack of engagement from the LA in terms of these students and are still waiting for contact to be made to parents from January 2025 despite the LA saying they had done this.

FWH is inspected by Ofsted on an annual basis and for the last three years has been graded as Outstanding, this has coincided with the raising of the bar in relation to National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools in 2022. A recent report identified the following:

- Students have life-changing experiences and are prepared for the future.
- Consistent and persistent support from staff means children return home and do tasks they have never done before, or they cope with experiences in different ways.
- Professionals identify that the residential provision helps to bridge the gap between home and school, and that for some families it is vital to provide children with the opportunity to learn skills for the future.
- Leaders are ambitious, innovative and drive research with the goal of improving the experiences of children who attend the residential provision, the school and in the wider community.

The Partnership Trust feel that a provision like Fosse Way House should be celebrated by BATHNES and that serious consideration needs to be taken to decisions made about withdrawing funding for students accessing this. Whilst the Trust are aware that it is their decision to close the provision, without funding from the LA the options to keep this running are incredibly limited. The needs of the children accessing FWH have not changed and the support they require remains the same so this change in stance from the LA is disappointing and could potentially have a detrimental effect longer term on these vulnerable students. We encourage councillors to act on this to keep a provision like this thriving in the local community.