



24<sup>th</sup> June 2020



### School Expansion

Within Northamptonshire there is a growing pressure on the need for places for students in special schools and additionally those who have significant cognition and learning needs with a co-morbidity of social, emotional and mental health needs.

Northamptonshire is facing a shortage of special school places, with all special schools at, or above, capacity. Isebrook school has reached the agreed number of students, after expanding from 156 students 3 years ago to above capacity of 200 to 206 this year. The local authority is wishing to place at least an additional 20 students at Isebrook, taking the school to a proposed 224 on roll September 2020. Therefore, increasing the student numbers and expanding into a satellite provision supports the local authority, within current admissions arrangements, in placing those students who truly require a special school provision at Isebrook.

Students with a cognition and learning need, and social emotional and mental health difficulty require a bespoke curriculum that caters for their significant learning difficulties. This often requires additional space and access to a varied and active curriculum with a sense of purpose which develops self-worth whilst also providing academic rigour. This provision is over and above that which can be offered in a 'formal' environment, especially as the individuals have either become disaffected or are at risk of exclusion.

The expansion of Isebrook, both in numbers and to a connected provision, will have a positive impact on the students through the better use of resources. The ability to offer a curriculum in a personalised and bespoke manner will ensure some of the most vulnerable at Isebrook have the opportunity to develop the skills they need, in the environment they need; smaller groups and an environment to manage sensory regulation, anxiety and social development. In addition this will provide the opportunity for staff development; to better meet the needs of this specific cohort and having a positive effect on all students at Isebrook.

Northants County Council (NCC) presently owns a building, within Kettering and close to the current Isebrook site, that is the proposed site for the connected provision. The building is already designated for educational use and so provides a range of resources for academic and vocational activities, such as a catering kitchen and café area, hall and stage, hair salon. The building also provides excellent access to the local town centre to develop specific independence skills (having excellent transport connections for travel training), whilst also being close enough to Isebrook to access shared resources, such as independent cooking suite, land studies area and sports facilities. Isebrook has worked hard to build links with the local community in Kettering, and being based in the town century enables the connected provision to make best use of these positive relationships and strengthen them further, enabling the students to build social capital, becoming better connected with their community, and so providing better opportunities for their future.

The Local Authority have identified Isebrook as being able to support this particular cohort of students (aged 11-16), as the school has a proven track record of supporting students with complex needs including mental health difficulties, through a rigorous curriculum focussing on personal development, underpinned by relationships and a strong pastoral team.



## Creating Tomorrow Multi Academy Trust

*Making the impossible possible*

The Trust also provides a strong financial model (being able to undertake the lease) and structures to support the expansion of Isebrook, to ensure that the provision is successful and sustainable. The connected provision has been fully costed, with the Local Authority committed to the funding model proposed, especially as a similar provision out of county would be extremely costly. The Local Authority are also willing to undertake any refurbishments that are required.

Staff currently employed at Isebrook will be offered the opportunity to work within the connected provision, ensuring the correct philosophy is in place from the start, and developing the continuum of provision for students and the curriculum.

As this is an expansion to the current provision there is no need to add to the governance arrangements, however within the fully costed expansion there is built in leadership time. This is within the capacity developed by recent restructuring of the trust, to oversee the running and development of the proposed provision.

If the business case is not approved there will be a number of consequences, not only on the individual students, but on the school and Local Authority. The consequences of exclusion for a student with an EHCP is significant with the vast majority becoming NEET. If Isebrook is not able to expand its provision then, as most likely, the school will likely be expected to accept the students and then resources will be stretched beyond capacity and the quality of provision affected. If the Local Authority cannot place the students within the current school provision then costly independent and out of county placements will be required.