

## **THE PROPOSAL**

It is proposed to increase the pupil admission numbers for Hillcrest School and Community College from 1 September 2006, from 152 to 180.

This increase of 28 places is a result of increased parental pressure for local children to gain a place at their local school. It is acknowledged that there is a falling roll scenario in the Borough of Dudley, however, this is not the case for Netherton. For the last 4 years, Hillcrest School has been significantly oversubscribed. In September 2002, the school admitted 15 more pupils above 152. In 2003, the Local Education Authority asked the school to take an extra 30 pupils to accommodate the increased number of children within our immediate area.

In March 2004, Governors were asked to accept a further 60 extra places but were unable to accommodate the Local Education Authority's request due to shortage of rooms. These children were accommodated in another Dudley school with the provision of mobiles. The pressure felt by the Governing Body from the local community was significant. 152 pupils gained places based on Dudley Admissions Policy, however, the furthest distance from school was 0.7 of a mile. The remaining 30 children were admitted taking the distance from the school to 0.8 of a mile.

In 2005 further pressure was placed on the Governors to increase the number in Year 7 from 152 to 180. An application was made to the Department for Education and Skills in May 2005 for funding of £400,000 from the Expansion of Successful and Popular Schools funding stream. Negotiations with the Department for Education and Skills resulted in an offer of £400,000 being made to the school to support a new build for the increased roll. This was dependant upon making a submission to the Schools Organisation Committee for the increase of pupil admission number from 152 to 180.

The year on year increase for places at Hillcrest School and Community College has placed a strain on the community with friction being caused between roads from which pupils are admitted to Hillcrest School and those roads whose residents are not able to gain a place at the school for their children.

It should be noted that at no time has Hillcrest School ever been top of the performance tables in terms of academic achievements, although results have gone up year on year from September 2000. We welcome all pupils irrespective of ability, home language and ethnicity. There are 28 home languages spoken at Hillcrest School. 30% of the school population are on free school meals, 25% of our children are ethnic minority, predominantly Pakistani muslims.

It appears that the improvements within Hillcrest School and Community College have attracted the support of the community of Netherton. A significant number of residents wish their children to go to their local school.

The majority of children who are unable to access a place at Hillcrest School have transferred to Heathfield School which is out of the Borough of Dudley and is a Sandwell school.

The school has the support of the Local Authority for this application to the Schools Organisation Committee. During the period of statutory notice in January 2006 not a single objection was received.