

# **Appendix A**

## **Sycamore Green**

### **All objection letters and itemised points of objection**

## Objection Letters

Letter No.	Objection codes	Status	Signatures	Summary
151	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	MP	1	<p>I understand that you are to review the decisions made by the LEA to reorganise Primary Education in Dudley.</p> <p>I did contribute to the initial 'consultation' in reply to the Dudley Borough Primary School Consultation Document. However, to date, I have received no adequate response to my questions and points, nor indeed have any of my constituents. The Education Department was totally overwhelmed by the response of local parents and residents and was not able to conduct anything like a consultation. Indeed if one reviews the Department's own figures one can see that almost three quarters of respondents rejected the Authority's plans. I do hope that you will be able to investigate the points in my contribution and hold the LEA to account for what I consider to be an ill conceived and badly managed situation.</p> <p>My concerns fall into eight main areas:</p> <p>1. I hope that you will investigate and censure the Director of Education and the Portfolio holder for failing to inform all four Borough MPs of their plans until after informing the local media. This I believe shows total disdain for the office of Member of Parliament and for the constituents we represent. Upon challenge on this point Mr Weston, Assistant Director admitted they had 'forgotten' to consult us as part of the initial group of consultees. (Contrary to Ministry Guidelines.)</p> <p>2. I am thankful that support is planned for different individuals and groups that may be affected by the changes to the primary schools in Dudley. However, change creates a delicate time in the lives of many people and it will be very difficult for students and their families, as well as the community as a whole, to adjust. Should these plans be accepted, students will be required to learn while adjusting to new environments and will face anxiety about change; the anxiety will create difficult amounts of stress that will affect learning.</p> <p>Moreover, many other people will be affected by the changes than just the primary school students and their families. Teachers, administrators, and support staff will all be affected with potential losses of careers or job relocation. Similarly, Dudley citizens will be affected by the change in traffic flow and business owners will be affected by the reduction in customers.</p> <p>I am curious to know if there is a guarantee that students will be able to attend the closest schools</p>

				<p>to those that are being closed. It is very hard for students to transfer into different schools, and it will presumably be difficult for the students from the closing schools to transfer in. Having a guarantee will provide a smooth transition and the least drastic amounts of change and will cause the least disruption in the communities.</p> <p>On the same point, the authority does not address the changes to the students with special needs who attend the affected schools. Beauty Bank has a large percentage of students with special needs and they will especially feel the impact of all of the changes.</p> <p>3. While small schools are expensive to maintain, they provide alternatives to the large schools which the Borough seems intent to keep and expand. Keeping the small schools provides a choice, which provides the best option for all students.</p> <p>While I agree that critical factors in school performance are the quality of leadership, management, teaching, facilities, and sufficient budget, the Borough needs to realise that all of these factors are not independent. Teaching methods, and therefore the quality of teaching, can be very different when a teacher teaches a large class versus a small class.</p> <p>I am curious to know how each of these schools was chosen. Although I have read the relevant documents it is hard to understand the rationale of choice as not all of the schools are losing pupils at a fast rate in fact one can point to other schools in the Borough whose rolls are falling faster.</p> <p>It has been pointed out by my constituents at numerous meetings and is interesting to note also, that in each case of the five schools earmarked for closure, their political representation at council level is with an opposition party or in an area of high deprivation, minority ethnic concentration or on land which would release a high resale value. This is an unusual statistical anomaly which merits further investigation.</p> <p>4. It was very apparent from all of the parents and members of the community who desperately tried to save Beauty Bank Primary School that the school is an extremely loved and important part of the community. In addition, the school is more than just a primary school as it provides extended services for the family and the wider community and serves many adults, including adults who send their children to other primary schools.</p> <p>While Beauty Bank Primary School is an integral part of the Beauty Bank community, its role will be</p>
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				<p>inherently different if the building is no longer a school. Any converted buildings have different community roles. The needs of the community must be taken into account if the building is converted. However, I agree that if Beauty Bank Primary School must be converted that it remains as a community centre and is not used for any other purpose or bulldozed in order to have the land sold. I would also like to reiterate and receive assurance that all monies saved through combining the schools should be reinvested into education and should not be used in other pursuits.</p> <p>5. Ideally Beauty Bank Primary School should remain as a primary school in order to have it remain in its same and present community role. Has the Borough explored the option to use the available space in the schools for alternative purposes? If available space is used in more creative ways, education money can be saved and the changes in the community will be the least drastic. Many other authorities have faced falling rolls and employed creative ways of using premises such as children's centres, Sure Starts and so on. I would like the Authority to confirm and show evidence that they have investigated this and other options such as federation as suggested by local parents. I believe demonstration of such studies is a requirement of the Ministry's guidelines also.</p> <p>6. Furthermore, the Authority has not specified exactly where additional funding will come from in order to 'merge' and build new schools. Nor does the Authority specify land available for new schools and in the particular case of Maidensbridge does not even specify a school with which to merge! Therefore, I ask the SOC to investigate where the funding will come from in order to merge and build the schools as well as to assist in the transition and identify land and timescales for the new schools.</p> <p>The Borough's track record is less than sparkling when considering that its plans to merge two Church of England schools in Halesowen, St John the Baptist and Hasbury have been rejected by the Education Minister twice already. Can the Authority guarantee this will not happen to their plans this time around?</p> <p>On the subject of merging or annexing schools. I have recently received many complaints from parents from Greenfield Primary School. These parents were only informed of the plans for their school on 16th December and given until 2nd January 06 to comment. This 'consultation' period has taken in the Christmas break and there has not been adequate time for parents to meet nor to consult with staff and Education Officers. Many of them have questions on class sizes and space for</p>
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				<p>pupils that will now go unanswered. Once again I believe the Department has treated my constituents with complete disdain and failed in their duty with respect to the staff, pupils and parents of this school.</p> <p>I am appalled that the Authority has also seen fit to cut the admission numbers for Mount Pleasant School. This will mean that the school will receive less money and eventually may have to lose staff. This effectively means death by a thousand cuts for this wonderful little school. The school has been praised by OFSTED for its methods and standards and is world renowned for its methods of team teaching and ethos. Cutting admissions for this school effectively shuts it down year by year. Once again sacrificing standards for the balance sheet.</p> <p>8. While the annual birth rate in, Dudley has gradually fallen from a peak of 4,116 in 1990, this falls in line with the cyclical nature of birth rates. The Authority did not specifically answer my point about the different generations and the cyclical increases and decreases in population that corresponds with the different generations.</p> <p>ONS projected population numbers for Dudley between the present and 2028 suggest that the population decline reaches a low point and then rebounds afterwards; supporting that the rise and decline of birth rates are cyclical. Similarly, the numbers provided do not take into account a change in population based on people staying in Dudley longer and an increase in immigration which will add to the population should the objectives of the Black Country Study be achieved.</p> <p>I feel that it is very unfortunate that the Authority has taken the option of closing schools and not really addressed any of the concerns or suggestions posed by my constituents. I believe that the schools are closing without just cause and that they are an irreplaceable treasure to the entire community. I do not believe that the Authority has actually taken on board their responsibilities to the community and that the consultation was merely a paper exercise.</p> <p>I am asking the SOC to reject these plans and hope that you will see them for what they are, an ill conceived plan simply to close schools without looking seriously at alternatives that could benefit pupils, staff and community alike. An attempt simply to cut costs demonstrating that the planners understand the costs but not the value of the service that these schools provide. If you reject these plans they will have to be investigated by an independent adjudicator. I am sure that at this point these plans and this so called 'consultation' will not stand up to scrutiny.</p>
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194	1, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	MP	1	<p>I am writing to set out my objection to the statutory notice issued by the local authority proposing the closures of two schools in my constituency, Highfields and Sycamore Green.</p> <p>I wrote to the Council in October objecting to the proposed closures of these two schools and enclosed letters and petitions sent to me by parents and children which demonstrated the strength of feeling against them. I would like to ask that those letters and petitions are considered by the School Organisation Committee.</p> <p>I have not received any response to those letters or the proposals and suggestions they made, nor have I received any answers to the questions I raised. More importantly, parents tell me they have received no response to their letters, questions and petitions either. The local authority has also failed to ensure people have been properly notified of the statutory notices and told how they can respond.</p> <p>The number of letters and petitions these proposals generated shows how deeply parents care about these issues and the council's failure to show that it has considered the points they have raised has undermined the trust people have in the process.</p> <p>Surely parents should have been written to and told how they could respond to the notices. At the very least the council should have written to all of those who wrote to the initial consultation period, setting out the details of the statutory notices and inviting them to respond.</p> <p>I am sorry to say that I and many parents believe the consultation process has been unsatisfactory, and it is because I believe that the other proposals that have been suggested by the schools, governors and parents should have been properly considered, that I am calling on the council to halt this process, think again, look carefully at the alternative suggestions, respond to them properly and produce alternatives that do not involve the closure of either school.</p> <p>Driving forward with the original plans to close these two schools without having responded properly to the case put forward by parents, governors and the public will increase resentment at these decisions.</p> <p>Surely if the council believes it has arrived at the right decisions, it can answer in detail the questions raised and suggestions made and explain why its proposals would better serve the education of local children than the alternatives put forward.</p> <p><b>1. Birth-rates</b></p>
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				<p>My objections are based on the fact that I do not agree with the premise the council has put forward for changing the current pattern of primary schools.</p> <p>The council has failed to answer the entirely legitimate criticism and questioning of the projections it has put forward for birth rates. I have examined the ONS figures on birth rates and I believe ONS data actually suggests birth rates could be increasing, not falling.</p> <p>For example, the total fertility rate in the UK was 1.77 children per woman in 2004, 1.71 in 2003 and has increased from 1.63 in 2001.</p> <p>Second, I commissioned independent expert research from the House of Commons Library which shows that the underlying assumptions do not take into account the fact birth rate trends might rise in the future. They do not consider the impact that policies such as the child tax credit, increased support for childcare, better maternity and paternity pay and leave and the Child Trust Fund.</p> <p>Third, the proposals also do not take into account other issues that could result in increased population in Dudley. For example, the council is supporting the Black Country Study. One of its objectives is increasing the area's population by 100,000. Has the impact that this and other external factors such as immigration could have on school numbers been taken into account?</p> <p>Fourth, can the council show it has taken into account the impact-increased housing development in Dudley North will have on pupil numbers? For example, outline planning permission is being sought to develop 250 homes on land next to Highfields and there are plans to develop 700 homes in an urban village nearby. Both of these developments would clearly increase the need for school places. There is also a proposal to develop some 200 homes at the old Shaw's Factory site near Sycamore Green.</p> <p>If birth rates are increasing, and these other factors result in a population increase, closing schools could well result in too few places to meet future needs.</p> <p><b>2. Pupil numbers</b></p> <p>I do not accept that rolls are falling so dramatically at these two schools that closure is the only option.</p> <p>As I understand it the council's policy is to have no school with more than 15% surplus places. The number of pupils at Highfields is not very far below this figure at the moment and meeting this requirement could easily be done by some of the</p>
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				<p>measures set out later.</p> <p>Under the Council's proposals, it is not at all clear where the 7.5% extra capacity the council wishes to provide would be in Coseley. The extra spaces proposed in the area would be needed for the children from Highfields. The council proposes to make available spare capacity at Hurst Hill, but that involves crossing the busiest road in the borough which is counter to both the council's and what I understand are the government's guidelines.</p> <p>Similarly, reducing admissions at Sycamore Green to one class entry would reduce capacity to 210 which again could easily be achieved by developing a nursery or by some of the other proposals set out later.</p> <p><b>3. Alternatives</b></p> <p>Even if the council's case that surplus places have arisen and birth rates are falling is correct, I do not accept that closing schools is the only way of addressing them.</p> <p>I do not necessarily accept the council's assertion that smaller schools with fewer pupils would find it difficult to sustain high quality education and staff structures can be altered to reflect pupil numbers.</p> <p>Better still, schools can look to provide extra facilities. For example, both Highfields and Sycamore Green would be ideally suited to the development of Sure Start Children's Centres, for example. Both schools are in deprived areas that could qualify for such provision, both have the space needed and such provision would generate increased revenue to help meet the cost of running the buildings.</p> <p>Governors at both schools have also drawn up proposals for extended schools provision which will increase both numbers of children and the use of the buildings.</p> <p>Both schools have plans to provide new nurseries which would increase the numbers of children going into the schools and address the decline in numbers at both schools.</p> <p>Highfields, for example, has already applied to Ofsted to register for pre-school provision. Their target date is this January. Governors at Sycamore Green are in discussion with the local authority about early years provision as well.</p> <p>What thought has been given to using part of the buildings to expand other community provision? Both schools are used by various community groups and have plans to expand such provision. Such facilities could be provided at both schools without requiring new buildings.</p>
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				<p>There are many other ways in which local authorities have reduced surplus places that have not involved the closure of schools by, for example, combining the school with other community facilities, providing "wrap-around" childcare or moving in educational support facilities, libraries, extended schools and so on.</p> <p>Can I reiterate my request that these proposals and others I know have been made I by parents, teachers and governors at the schools be considered properly before any final decisions are taken?</p> <p><b>4. Conclusion</b> Both schools and Sycamore Green in particular, serve areas of high deprivation where children need more support and stability, not less.</p> <p>Results at both schools are going up. Sycamore Green is achieving 82% in literacy, 63% in maths and 82% in science.</p> <p>Standards are increasing rapidly at Highfields as well, which has just achieved record SATS results. 54 of Highfields' children have special needs and the school has been complimented by the local authority on the provision it makes for them.</p> <p>Facilities at both schools are of a high quality and have been improved with extra investment recently. These facilities, combined with the ethos at the schools and the support they receive from parents and the wider community are serving the children well and I am very worried that their education will be destabilised by these changes.</p> <p>The council should answer properly the questions, criticisms and questions put forward. It should think again and bring forward proposals that prevent the closure of these two schools.</p> <p>I ask that the School Organisation Committee take these points and the other objections into account, ask the council to produce alternatives that do not involve the closure of these schools and refer the proposals to the Independent schools adjudicator.</p>
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## Itemised Points of Objection.

Obj Code	Objection point
1	Adequate responses to questions, suggestions and concerns have not been provided by DMBC.
2	Almost three quarters of respondents to consultation rejected the Authority's plans.
3	The Authority failed to inform Borough MPs of their plans until after informing the local media.
4	Students, families and communities as a whole will find it very difficult to adjust to any changes.
5	Students will need to adjust to new environments and will face anxiety and stress which will affect learning.
6	Teachers, administrators and support staff will all be affected with potential losses of careers or job relocation.
7	Dudley citizens will be affected by traffic flow and business owners will be affected by reduction in customers.
8	Closure of small schools removes parental choice.
9	Teaching methods and quality of teaching are affected when teaching larger classes.
10	The Authority has not specified exactly where funding will come from to 'merge' and build new schools, nor land available for new schools.
11	Any rise and decline in birth rates are of a cyclical nature and will increase again.
12	This is merely a paper exercise to cut costs and has not taken into account the value of service provided by the school.
13	The impact of policies such as child tax credit, increased support for childcare, better maternity and paternity pay and leave and the Child Trust fund on birth rates has not been taken into account.
14	The impact of increased housing development in the area has not been taken into account.
15	Reducing admissions at Sycamore Green to one class entry would reduce capacity to 210, which could easily be achieved by other methods.
16	Proposals for extended schools provision, nurseries and other facilities have been drawn up for the school to help with falling admission numbers, but this fact has been ignored by the local authority.
17	Sycamore Green serves areas of high deprivation where children need more support and stability, not less.
18	School academic results are increasing.
19	Facilities are of a high quality and have recently been improved with extra investment.
20	The local authority has failed to ensure people have been properly notified of the statutory notices and told how they can respond.

194

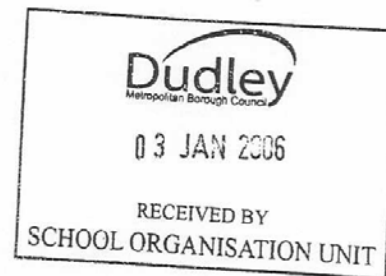


**Ian Austin MP** HOUSE OF COMMONS  
**on your side** LONDON SW1A 0AA



Carol Williams  
Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY1 1JQ

29<sup>th</sup> December 2005.



Dear Ms Williams

Please find enclosed a letter to the School Organisation Committee setting out my objection to the statutory notice issued by the local authority proposing the closures of two schools in my constituency, Highfields and Sycamore Green.

I wrote to the Council in October objecting to the proposed closures of these two schools and enclosed letters and petitions sent to me by parents and children. Can I ask that those letters and petitions are put before the School Organisation Committee as well?

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need further details.

Yours sincerely,

**IAN AUSTIN**  
Labour MP for Dudley North

**Working hard for you in Dudley North - all year round**

Constituency Office - Tel. 01384 233100 Fax. 01384 233099  
London Office - 0207 219 4811 Fax 0207 219 4486  
Email: [austini@parliament.uk](mailto:austini@parliament.uk)



**Ian Austin MP** HOUSE OF COMMONS  
***on your side*** LONDON SW1A 0AA



Schools Organisation Committee  
C/o Carol Williams  
Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY1 1JQ

29<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

Dear Member

I am writing to set out my objection to the statutory notice issued by the local authority proposing the closures of two schools in my constituency, Highfields and Sycamore Green.

I wrote to the Council in October objecting to the proposed closures of these two schools and enclosed letters and petitions sent to me by parents and children which demonstrated the strength of feeling against them. I would like to ask that those letters and petitions are considered by the School Organisation Committee.

I have not received any response to those letters or the proposals and suggestions they made, nor have I received any answers to the questions I raised. More importantly, parents tell me they have received no response to their letters, questions and petitions either. The local authority has also failed to ensure people have been properly notified of the statutory notices and told how they can respond.

The number of letters and petitions these proposals generated shows how deeply parents care about these issues and the council's failure to show that it has considered the points they have raised has undermined the trust people have in the process.

Surely parents should have been written to and told how they could respond to the notices. At the very least the council should have written to all of those who wrote to the initial consultation period, setting out the details of the statutory notices and inviting them to respond.

**Working hard for you in Dudley North - all year round**

Constituency Office - Tel 01384 233100 Fax, 01384 233099  
London Office - 0207 219 4811 Fax 0207 219 4488  
Email: [austini@parliament.uk](mailto:austini@parliament.uk)



I am sorry to say that I and many parents believe the consultation process has been unsatisfactory, and it is because I believe that the other proposals that have been suggested by the schools, governors and parents should have been properly considered, that I am calling on the council to halt this process, think again, look carefully at the alternative suggestions, respond to them properly and produce alternatives that do not involve the closure of either school.

Driving forward with the original plans to close these two schools without having responded properly to the case put forward by parents, governors and the public will increase resentment at these decisions.

Surely if the council believes it has arrived at the right decisions, it can answer in detail the questions raised and suggestions made and explain why its proposals would better serve the education of local children than the alternatives put forward.

#### **1. Birth-rates**

My objections are based on the fact that I do not agree with the premise the council has put forward for changing the current pattern of primary schools.

The council has failed to answer the entirely legitimate criticism and questioning of the projections it has put forward for birth-rates. I have examined the ONS figures on birth-rates and I believe ONS data actually suggests birth-rates could be increasing, not falling.

For example, the total fertility rate in the UK was 1.77 children per woman in 2004, 1.71 in 2003 and has increased from 1.63 in 2001.

Second, I commissioned independent expert research from the House of Commons Library which shows that the underlying assumptions do not take into account the fact birth rate trends might rise in the future. They do not consider the impact that policies such as the child tax credit, increased support for childcare, better maternity and paternity pay and leave and the Child Trust Fund.

Third, the proposals also do not take into account other issues that could result in increased population in Dudley. For example, the council is supporting the Black Country Study. One of its objectives is increasing the area's population by 100,000. Has the impact that this and other external factors such as immigration could have on school numbers been taken into account?

Fourth, can the council show it has taken into account the impact increased housing development in Dudley North will have on pupil numbers? For example, outline planning permission is being sought to develop 250 homes on land next to Highfields and there are plans to develop 700 homes in an urban village nearby. Both of these developments would clearly increase the need for school places. There is also a proposal to develop some 200 homes at the old Shaws Factory site near Sycamore Green.

If birth-rates are increasing, and these other factors result in a population increase, closing schools could well result in too few places to meet future needs.

## **2. Pupil numbers**

I do not accept that rolls are falling so dramatically at these two schools that closure is the only option.

As I understand it the council's policy is to have no school with more than 15% surplus places. The number of pupils at Highfields is not very far below this figure at the moment and meeting this requirement could easily be done by some of the measures set out later.

Under the Council's proposals, it is not at all clear where the 7.5% extra capacity the council wishes to provide would be in Coseley. The extra spaces proposed in the area would be needed for the children from Highfields. The council proposes to make available spare capacity at Hurst Hill, but that involves crossing the busiest road in the borough which is counter to both the council's and what I understand are the government's guidelines.

Similarly, reducing admissions at Sycamore Green to one class entry, would reduce capacity to 210 which again could easily be achieved by developing a nursery or by some of the other proposals set out later.

## **3. Alternatives**

Even if the council's case that surplus places have arisen and birth-rates are falling is correct, I do not accept that closing schools is the only way of addressing them.

I do not necessarily accept the council's assertion that smaller schools with fewer pupils would find it difficult to sustain high quality education and staff structures can be altered to reflect pupil numbers.

Better still, schools can look to provide extra facilities. For example, both Highfields and Sycamore Green would be ideally suited to the development of SureStart Children's Centres, for example. Both schools are in deprived areas that could qualify for such provision, both have the space needed and such provision would generate increased revenue to help meet the cost of running the buildings.

Governors at both schools have also drawn up proposals for extended schools provision which will increase both numbers of children and the use of the buildings.

Both schools have plans to provide new nurseries which would increase the numbers of children going into the schools and address the decline in numbers at both schools.

Highfields, for example, has already applied to Ofsted to register for pre-school provision. Their target date is this January. Governors at Sycamore Green are in discussion with the local authority about early years provision as well.

What thought has been given to using part of the buildings to expand other community provision? Both schools are used by various community groups and have

plans to expand such provision. Such facilities could be provided at both schools without requiring new buildings.

There are many other ways in which local authorities have reduced surplus places that have not involved the closure of schools by, for example, combining the school with other community facilities, providing "wrap-around" childcare or moving in educational support facilities, libraries, extended schools and so on.

Can I reiterate my request that these proposals and others I know have been made by parents, teachers and governors at the schools be considered properly before any final decisions are taken?

#### **4. Conclusion**

Both schools and Sycamore Green in particular, serve areas of high deprivation where children need more support and stability, not less.

Results at both schools are going up. Sycamore Green is achieving 82% in literacy, 63% in maths and 82% in science.

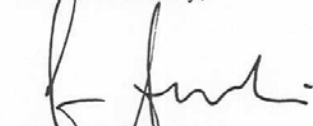
Standards are increasing rapidly at Highfields as well, which has just achieved record SATS results. 54 of Highfields' children have special needs and the school has been complimented by the local authority on the provision it makes for them.

Facilities at both schools are of a high quality and have been improved with extra investment recently. These facilities, combined with the ethos at the schools and the support they receive from parents and the wider community are serving the children well and I am very worried that their education will be destabilised by these changes.

The council should answer properly the questions, criticisms and questions put forward. It should think again and bring forward proposals that prevent the closure of these two schools.

I ask that the School Organisation Committee take these points and the other objections into account, ask the council to produce alternatives that do not involve the closure of these schools and refer the proposals to the Independent schools adjudicator.

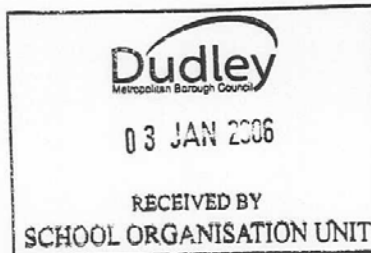
Yours sincerely,



**IAN AUSTIN**  
Labour MP for Dudley North

198

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ



19<sup>th</sup> December 2005

**For the attention of the School Organisation Committee**

I write to register a formal objection to the statutory notice of closure that has been published in respect of Highfields Primary School, Bell Street, Coseley. My reasons for this objection are as follows.

Firstly, I feel that the responses to the initial consultation put forward by LEA officers were heavily paraphrased and as a result did not accurately reflect what had been said. Governors had put forward an alternative proposal which I again set out below.

The proposed closure of Highfields only removes 70 surplus places from the system. When the LEA is trying to cater for a 5000 surplus this seems to be a drop in the ocean. This figure of 70 is arrived at because Highfields has an admission number of 210. However in order to accommodate Highfields children the admission number at Christchurch is being increased by 105 and at Wallbrook by 35, giving an increase in of 140 places in neighbouring schools. The difference between 210 and 140 is 70.

In their response to the proposals governors at Highfields argued that the reduction of 70 places could have been achieved another way. Christchurch's admission number could have been left unchanged at 45. Instead of Wallbrook admission number being increased from 40 to 45, it could have been reduced to 30. The difference between 40 and 30 is 10. Multiply this by the 7 year groups in a primary school and you have 70! This achieves exactly the same reduction in numbers but all three schools remain open. This suggestion was paraphrased in the responses as follows:-

*"Keep Highfields open. Reduce admissions numbers in other local schools and direct children to Highfields."*

*It is within the Council's power to change the planned admission numbers for schools. Parents have a right to express a preference for places in schools and have a statutory right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with the place offered. It is not in the council's power to direct parents to send their children to Highfields."*

Governors were not suggesting that parents were directed to Highfields. The point was that with a reduced admission number at Wallbrook, coupled with a fair application of the appeals procedures if necessary, there would have been a natural re-distribution of pupils around the Coseley area over a period of 2, 3, 4

years as that new number worked through the system. Numbers would stabilise at all three schools.

My second point is that Highfields numbers have also suffered due to the lack of nursery facilities. Christchurch has the local nursery which is used by parents of Highfields school. A very successful Parent and Toddler group has operated at Highfields over recent years. Many parents have informed us that they wish to bring their children to Highfields but have been reluctant to do so once they have entered the nursery. The main reason for this is that parents feel, quite rightly, that their children have made friends in the nursery and they wish those friendships to continue into school. So if their friends are feeding into Christchurch then reluctantly some Highfields parents place their children at Christchurch for this reason. This is a situation that has lead to Christchurch being 20 children over its admission limit on PLASC 2005

Over the past 18 months Highfields has carried out surveys which have shown that if Highfields offered provision for three and four year olds, parents would choose to use it and would then feed their children into Highfields. Governors have planned for this. Registration has been sort with OFSTED and Surestart funding has been secured. This provision was due to be launched in January 2006. Due to present circumstances it has now been put on hold.

The above proposals would, I feel, have left 3 viable schools in the local area without the additional expense of building 4 new classrooms at Christchurch and three new classrooms at Wallbrook. Why build 7 classrooms when there is a school already in existence in excellent repair already offering 7 classrooms? This would also leave room for expansion in the future should demand rise due to building in the local area or rises in the birth rate.

Thirdly, in various meetings it has been suggested that Highfields would become so small that it would become educationally and financially unviable. This stems from Dudley LEA's views that no school should be smaller than 210 places. This is their view. It should be pointed out that LEA's up and down the length and breadth of the British Isles support successful schools much smaller than Highfields would ever become. The governors of Highfields had planned to manage the falling roll situation. This did involve slimming down the staff and if necessary introducing mixed age classes (something, incidentally, that will have to take place at Wallbrook, given their proposed admission number of 45).

The other facet to the plan included using spare space for alternative uses and the proposed pre - school for 3 and 4 year olds was part of this. Some staff would have been transferred off the staff of Highfields School and onto the staff of the pre - school, thus cutting the schools costs. Contributions towards heating, lighting etc. would have also been sort from the pre - school again to offset running costs. Similar arrangements would have been put in place with the proposed After School club that would have offered parents childcare both before and after school. We have already invited our local Priority Neighbourhood Manager to work from our premises. This is something that has worked successfully since October 2005.

Governors had also recently bid to develop a children's centre on site. Whilst this bid was unsuccessful because there was a more experienced provider in the area, the offer had been made for us to work in partnership and offer satellite services from the main children's centre. This is something that would have benefited our local community tremendously.

I do not know of any evidence to prove that small schools are educationally less successful than larger schools. The truth of the matter is that Dudley LEA has chosen not to support small schools in the proposals they have put forward.

Fourthly, little consideration has been given to the effects, both emotional and educational, that the proposals would have on our children. Parents and children are concerned about the integration process of bringing two schools together. They know that the schools will work to smooth this process but feel that it is inevitable that the children and parents will feel like outsiders.

There are particular concerns regarding Year 5 children who will become Year 6 in September 2005. This is probably their most important year in primary education. In the Highfields case they will find themselves housed on the Highfields site (which would then be an annexe of Christchurch). We are told that this could be for a period of a few weeks whilst building work is completed at Christchurch. They would then move to the Christchurch site around October time. They may also have different teachers and senior leaders around school. All of this would be extremely unsettling for them particularly with the pressure of Key Stage 2 SATs on them as well. After getting through that hurdle they would then be faced with moving school yet again in the summer when they transfer to secondary school. In effect they would be moving school twice in the space of 9 months. Indeed, the stress levels in all of our children have already been raised significantly by these proposals despite our best attempts to shield them from the effects.

There are also concerns around the continuity of provision and maintenance of progress levels. We will work closely with Christchurch and pass on records etc. However, inevitably many of our children would be in a new environment with new professionals and those new professionals would take some time to get to know their individual needs. Even with the best transfer arrangements in place there will inevitably be a hiatus in their progress.

There also concerns that the proposals decrease the number of places at community schools and increase the number of places available at church schools in the area, a swing of approximately 36% in the Coseley East area. This point was made in the original consultation period but was not really picked up in the consultation responses. It was suggested in some of the meetings that the criterion referring to maintaining the balance between church places and community places meant that church places would be maintained and that the criterion was not referring to ratios. We feel that the criterion did not say this. It



implied that a balance between church places and community places would be maintained. In Coseley East this has not happened!

My next point is that parents of Highfields children feel that they would be forced to move their children to schools that do not offer the same range of facilities as they are used to at Highfields. In particular they are acutely aware that Christchurch does not have a sports field. They are aware of the arrangements to use Coseley Cricket Club and are also aware that Christchurch may be developing an all weather sports area. However they do feel that both of these arrangements are not as good as what they have now and therefore the educational opportunities on offer to their children are being compromised by the proposals.

Parents are also concerned about the safety of their children whilst walking to their new school. In particular they are concerned about the already difficult parking around Christchurch that causes major safety issues for parents collecting and delivering their children whether that be by car or on foot. The feeling amongst parents is that this will only get worse if Christchurch expands. They feel that the safety of their children is being compromised by the proposals because these issues do not arise at Highfields due to Darkhouse Baptist Church allowing parents to use their car park.

My final point is that the closure of Highfields would seriously affect the social cohesion of an already deprived area. The school is a focal point for the community and is often the first point of contact for all sorts of agencies for many parents. By forcing parents to take their children to various other schools it can only contribute to a decline in feelings of social identity and belonging in the local community, a community that already feels it is ignored and neglected by its local council. In an area where many youths already feel alienated this can only lead to further social problems in the future due to feelings of disenfranchisement. The falling roll situation could have been seen as an opportunity to really boost a socially deprived area. The current proposals miss that opportunity and indeed will contribute to the steady decline of the Highfields area.

To summarise, I am objecting to the closure of Highfields on the grounds that:-

1. The responses to the initial consultation were heavily paraphrased and did not accurately reflect the opinions of the people who sent them in. This meant that the Council's cabinet had not been accurately informed of the outcomes of the consultation when they debated it and came to their decision.
2. Alternative proposals that achieve the same reduction in numbers but keeps all 3 schools in the Coseley area open have been submitted but have not been given due consideration.

3. We do not accept that small schools are educationally and financially unviable and that the LEA is inaccurate in making such suggestions to councillors.
4. Little consideration has been given to emotional and educational effects these proposals would have on the children of Highfields
5. The proposals do not maintain the balance between church places and community places.
6. The proposals would force Highfields parents to send their children to an alternative school that in their opinion does not offer the same levels of provision as they a currently used to.
7. The proposals diminish the quality of the local area and will not contribute to social cohesion, indeed they will make it worse for the children of the area and their families.

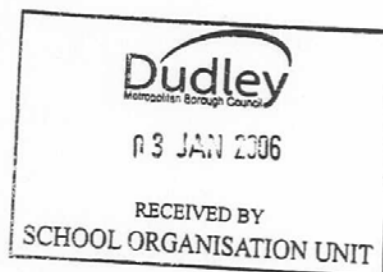
For these reasons we ask you to look again at the proposed closure for Highfields Primary and reconsider the decision.

Yours sincerely,



199

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ



**For the attention of the School Organisation Committee**

I write to register a formal objection to the statutory notice of closure that has been published in respect of Highfields Primary School, Bell Street, Coseley. My reasons for this objection are as follows.

Firstly, I feel that the responses to the initial consultation put forward by LEA officers were heavily paraphrased and as a result did not accurately reflect what had been said. Governors had put forward an alternative proposal which I again set out below.

The proposed closure of Highfields only removes 70 surplus places from the system. When the LEA is trying to cater for a 5000 surplus this seems to be a drop in the ocean. This figure of 70 is arrived at because Highfields has an admission number of 210. However in order to accommodate Highfields children the admission number at Christchurch is being increased by 105 and at Wallbrook by 35, giving an increase in of 140 places in neighbouring schools. The difference between 210 and 140 is 70.

In their response to the proposals governors at Highfields argued that the reduction of 70 places could have been achieved another way. Christchurch's admission number could have been left unchanged at 45. Instead of Wallbrook admission number being increased from 40 to 45, it could have been reduced to 30. The difference between 40 and 30 is 10. Multiply this by the 7 year groups in a primary school and you have 70! This achieves exactly the same reduction in numbers but all three schools remain open. This suggestion was paraphrased in the responses as follows:-

*"Keep Highfields open. Reduce admissions numbers in other local schools and direct children to Highfields."*

*"It is within the Council's power to change the planned admission numbers for schools. Parents have a right to express a preference for places in schools and have a statutory right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with the place offered. It is not in the council's power to direct parents to send their children to Highfields."*

Governors were not suggesting that parents were directed to Highfields. The point was that with a reduced admission number at Wallbrook, coupled with a fair application of the appeals procedures if necessary, there would have been a natural re-distribution of pupils around the Coseley area over a period of 2, 3, 4 years as that new number worked through the system. Numbers would stabilise at all three schools.

My second point is that Highfields numbers have also suffered due to the lack of nursery facilities. Christchurch has the local nursery which is used by parents of Highfields school. A very successful Parent and Toddler group has operated at Highfields over recent years. Many parents have informed us that they wish to bring their children to Highfields but have been reluctant to do so once they have entered the nursery. The main reason for this is that parents feel, quite rightly, that their children have made friends in the nursery and they wish those friendships to continue into school. So if their friends are feeding into Christchurch then reluctantly some Highfields parents place their children at Christchurch for this reason. This is a situation that has lead to Christchurch being 20 children over its admission limit on PLASC 2005

Over the past 18 months Highfields has carried out surveys which have shown that if Highfields offered provision for three and four year olds, parents would choose to use it and would then feed their children into Highfields. Governors have planned for this. Registration has been sort with OFSTED and Surestart funding has been secured. This provision was due to be launched in January 2006. Due to present circumstances it has now been put on hold.

The above proposals would, I feel, have left 3 viable schools in the local area without the additional expense of building 4 new classrooms at Christchurch and three new classrooms at Wallbrook. Why build 7 classrooms when there is a school already in existence in excellent repair already offering 7 classrooms? This would also leave room for expansion in the future should demand rise due to building in the local area or rises in the birth rate.

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I do not know of any evidence to prove that small schools are educationally less successful than larger schools. Indeed, whilst studying for my NPQH qualification I visited a small school in an LEA close to our own that had achieved Beacon school status. The truth of the matter is that Dudley LEA has chosen not to support small schools in the proposals they have put forward.

Fourthly, little consideration has been given to the effects, both emotional and educational, that the proposals would have on our children. Parents and children are concerned about the integration process of bringing two schools together. They know that the schools will work to smooth this process but feel that it is inevitable that the children and parents will feel like outsiders.

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There are also concerns around the continuity of provision and maintenance of progress levels. We will work closely with Christchurch and pass on records etc. However, inevitably many of our children would be in a new

environment with new professionals and those new professionals would take some time to get to know their individual needs. Even with the best transfer arrangements in place there will inevitably be a hiatus in their progress.

My fifth point is that parents of Highfields children feel that they would be forced to move their children to schools that do not offer the same range of facilities as they are used to at Highfields. In particular they are acutely aware that Christchurch does not have a sports field. They are aware of the arrangements to use Coseley Cricket Club and are also aware that Christchurch may be developing an all weather sports area. However they do feel that both of these arrangements are not as good as what they have now and therefore the educational opportunities on offer to their children are being compromised by the proposals.

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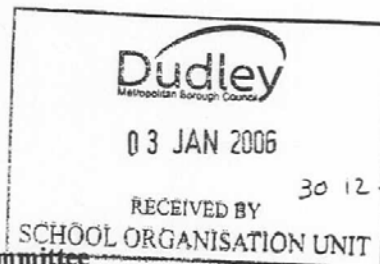
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For these reasons we ask you to look again at the proposed closure for Highfields Primary and reconsider the decision.

Yours sincerely,

200

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ



**For the attention of the School Organisation Committee**

We write to register a formal objection to the statutory notice of closure that has been published in respect of Highfields Primary School, Bell Street Coseley. Our reasons for this objection are as follows.

As the parents of children who currently attend the above school we firmly believe that you are making a grave mistake by considering this closure.

We believe the children's education is going to suffer considerably due to the emotional upheaval this will cause.

**Highfields Primary School has so much potential for example:**

- Secure, safe and friendly environment
- Enclosed sports field
- Highly qualified staff throughout the school
- Future pre-school facilities
- Wheel-chair access throughout the school
- Well organised toddler group
- A devoted home school association
- Extremely happy children
- New computer suite
- Interactive smart boards in every class

How can it be financially and environmentally viable to close a perfectly good school with all these facilities to extend and build on neighbouring schools to make them bigger in order to take our children?

By moving the children to a replacement school contradicts the Governments promise of smaller class sizes, as there will obviously be an increase of children attending the proposed schools.

We cannot see how this proposal will benefit the children of Highfields or any of the proposed replacement schools.

Yours sincerely

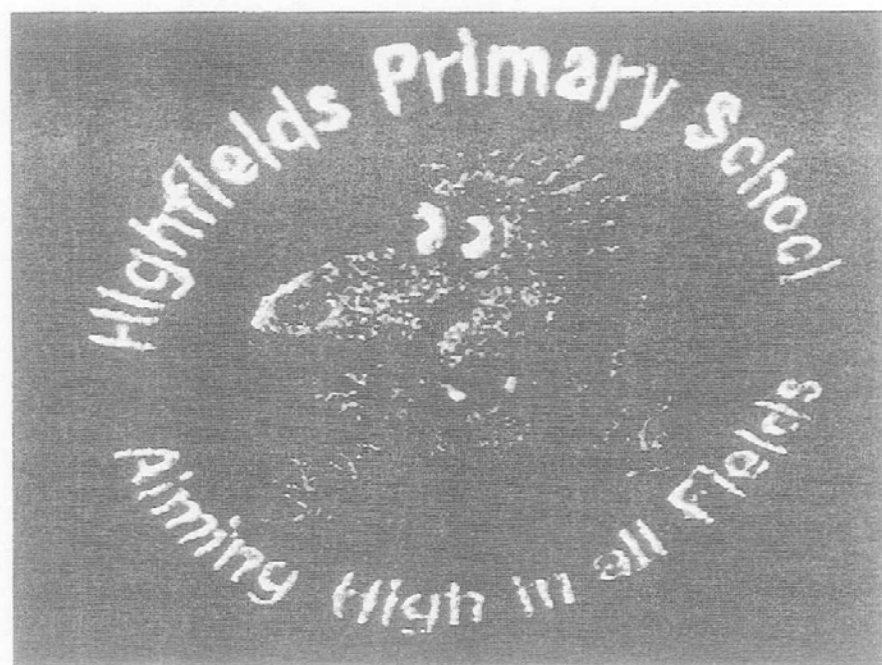
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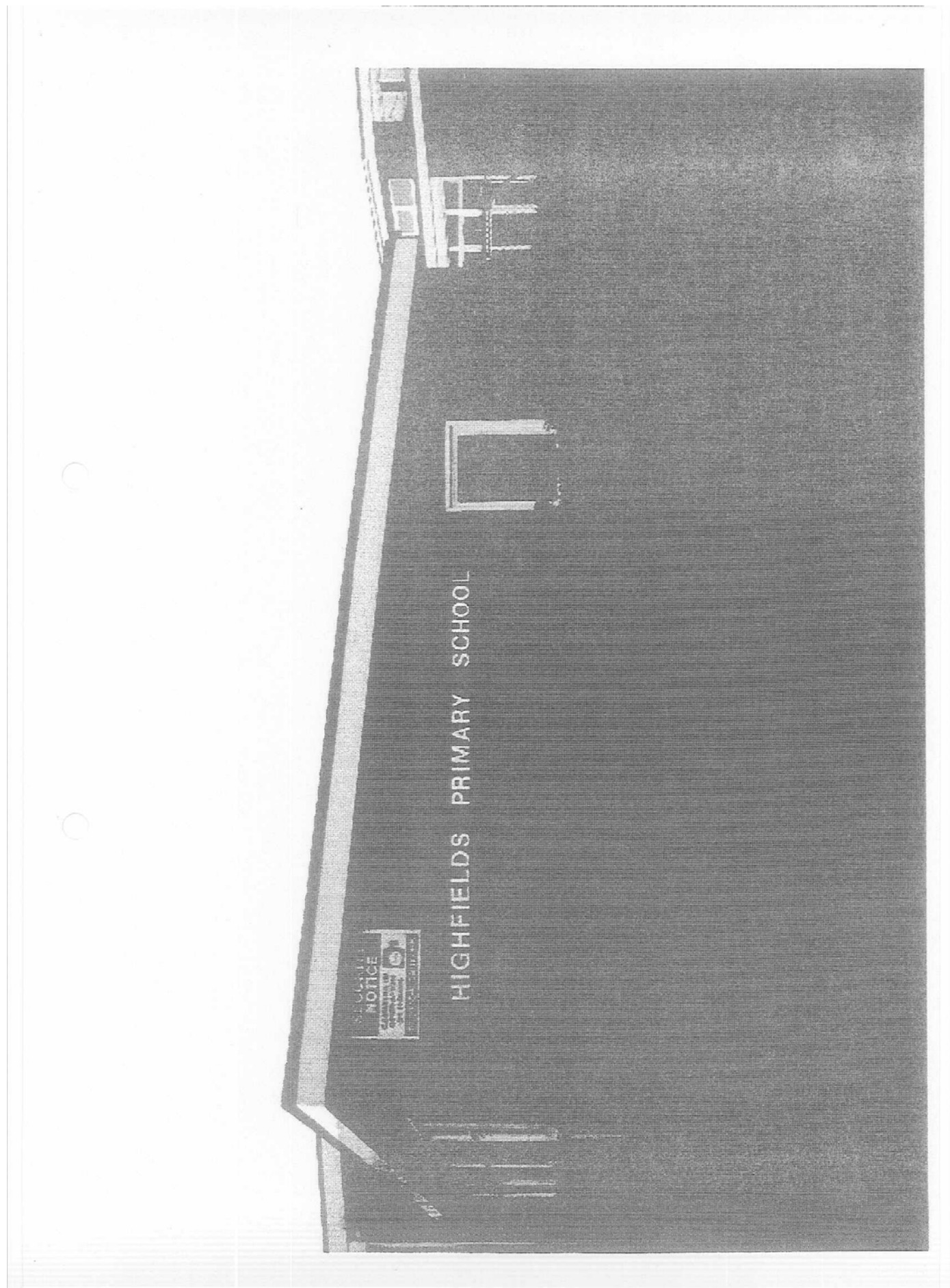
# SAVE OUR SCHOOL



# DON'T LET IT CLOSE







252

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ

Dudley  
Metropolitan Borough Council

03 JAN 2006

RECEIVED BY  
SCHOOL ORGANISATION UNIT

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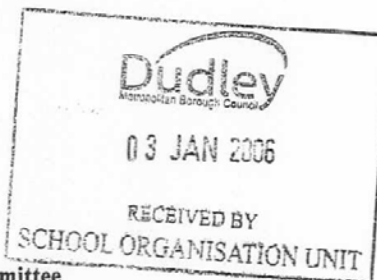
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For these reasons we ask you to look again at the proposed closure for Highfields Primary and reconsider the decision.

Yours sincerely,

253

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ



**For the attention of the School Organisation Committee**

I write to register a formal objection to the statutory notice of closure that has been published in respect of Highfields Primary School, Bell Street Coseley. My reasons for this objection are as follows.

I feel I must explain to you the fantastic facilities Highfields Primary School has to offer to convince you not to close our school.

Highfields was built in the mid seventies and is in an excellent state of repair.  
The school has recently had a new extension built for our Pre-school children to attend.  
The school is on substantial land and has the scope to extend further.  
The playground is on one level for the children to run around and enjoy the safe environment that they are in.  
We have a fairly large playing field where the children enjoy many outdoor activities e.g. sports day, football, nature lessons and outdoor karate shows, these are only a few of the things we have done on our playing field.  
Beyond that you can see trees and fields and hear the birds in the trees, the children are so lucky to have this facility.  
The school has recently erected six foot high fencing around the perimeter to add more security for our children.

Imagine you are them in a safe, secure environment to be told that you may have to go to a neighbouring school where these facilities are not as good as, and in some cases not even offered, how would you feel?

Safe	All of the neighbouring schools have parking issues Not all of our neighbouring schools have playing fields
Social and Emotional	The disruption to their education. The feeling of being alone in a strange environment Stressful transition period

**Please ask yourself**

**Is it worth closing Highfields School when we have all the facilities our children will ever need?**

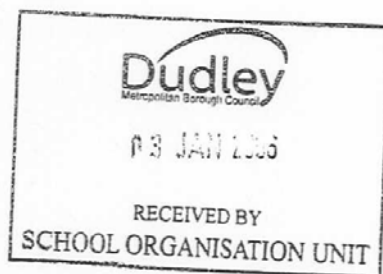
**How can it be financially or environmentally viable to close a perfectly good school with all these facilities to extend and build on neighbouring schools to make them bigger in order to take our children?**

**Make our children happy - Please keep Highfields Primary school open.**

Enc

265

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY1 1JQ



Dear Ms Carol Williams

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE**

I write to register a formal objection to the statutory notice of closure that has been published in respect of Highfields Primary School, Bell Street Coseley. My reasons for this objection are as follows.

Although we are a small school we have the grounds to expand and with the building being less than thirty five years old it is very well maintained.

The biggest problem we have is that as our school is set back from the road not everyone knows we are down Bell Street. This could be addressed with better signage at the top of Bell Street and Dudley LEA promoting us more as alternative schools to parents in the area.

The over subscription of neighbouring schools is also a problem to us and because if pre-school children go to a nursery at one of our neighbouring schools, the parents or carers automatically think that they have a link between that nursery and the primary school. This in turn leads the parents or carers to think that they have to put that primary school as their first choice.

We currently have in place a pre-school facility with funding available for three years. The area needs more pre-school facilities as there are only a few in the local area.

If we could have the opportunity to educate these parents and carers that other options are available for their children's education then I believe that, as Highfields is such a safe and secure environment with an excellent teaching staff, run by a very efficient Headmaster and also has its own playing field and parents car park, more children would attend Highfields School and we would not be in this position of possible closure.

What concerns me as a parent is that no consideration to the needs and the welfare of the children who currently attend Highfields are being taken into account, neither as any thought been given to the effect it will have on the local community in Coseley. Coseley needs all of its Primary Schools as it gives parents the choice of different educational needs for the different ways that children learn.

Yours sincerely

(270)

Carol Williams  
Westox House  
1 Trinity Road  
Dudley  
DY11JQ

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Firstly, I feel that the responses to the initial consultation put forward by LEA officers were heavily paraphrased and as a result did not accurately reflect what had been said. Governors had put forward an alternative proposal which I again set out below.

The proposed closure of Highfields only removes 70 surplus places from the system. When the LEA is trying to cater for a 5000 surplus this seems to be a drop in the ocean. This figure of 70 is arrived at because Highfields has an admission number of 210. However in order to accommodate Highfields children the admission number at Christchurch is being increased by 105 and at Wallbrook by 35, giving an increase in of 140 places in neighbouring schools. The difference between 210 and 140 is 70.

In their response to the proposals governors at Highfields argued that the reduction of 70 places could have been achieved another way. Christchurch's admission number could have been left unchanged at 45. Instead of Wallbrook admission number being increased from 40 to 45, it could have been reduced to 30. The difference between 40 and 30 is 10. Multiply this by the 7 year groups in a primary school and you have 70! This achieves exactly the same reduction in numbers but all three schools remain open. This suggestion was paraphrased in the responses as follows:-

*"Keep Highfields open. Reduce admissions numbers in other local schools and direct children to Highfields.*

*"As within the Council's power to change the planned admission numbers for schools. Parents have a right to express a preference for places in schools and have a statutory right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with the place offered. It is not in the council's power to direct parents to send their children to Highfields."*

Governors were not suggesting that parents were directed to Highfields. The point was that with a reduced admission number at Wallbrook, coupled with a fair application of the appeals procedures if necessary, there would have been a natural re-distribution of pupils around the Coseley area over a period of 2, 3, 4 years as that new number worked through the system. Numbers would stabilise at all three schools.

My second point is that Highfields numbers have also suffered due to the lack of nursery facilities. Christchurch has the local nursery which is used by parents of Highfields school. A very successful Parent and Toddler group has operated at Highfields over recent years. Many parents have informed us that they wish to bring their children to Highfields but have been reluctant to do so once they have entered the nursery. The main reason for this is that parents feel, quite rightly, that their children have made friends in the nursery and they wish those friendships to continue into school. So if their friends are feeding into Christchurch then reluctantly some Highfields parents place their children at Christchurch for this reason. This is a situation that has lead to Christchurch being 20 children over its admission limit on PLASC 2005



Over the past 18 months Highfields has carried out surveys which have shown that if Highfields offered provision for three and four year olds, parents would choose to use it and would then feed their children into Highfields. Governors have planned for this. Registration has been sort with OFSTED and Surestart funding has been secured. This provision was due to be launched in January 2006. Due to present circumstances it has now been put on hold.

The above proposals would, I feel, have left 3 viable schools in the local area without the additional expense of building 4 new classrooms at Christchurch and three new classrooms at Wallbrook. Why build 7 classrooms when there is a school already in existence in excellent repair already offering 7 classrooms? This would also leave room for expansion in the future should demand rise due to building in the local area or rises in the birth rate.

Thirdly, in various meetings it has been suggested that Highfields would become so small that it would become educationally and financially unviable. This stems from Dudley LEA's views that no school should be smaller than 210 places. This is their view. It should be pointed out that LEA's up and down the length and breadth of the British Isles support successful schools much smaller than Highfields would ever become. The governors of Highfields had planned to manage the falling roll situation. This did involve slimming down the staff and if necessary introducing mixed age classes (something, incidentally, that will have to take place at Wallbrook, given their proposed admission number of 45).

Another facet to the plan included using spare space for alternative uses and the proposed pre - school for 3 and 4 year olds was part of this. Some staff would have been transferred off the staff of Highfields School and onto the staff of the pre - school, thus cutting the schools costs. Contributions towards heating, lighting etc. would have also been sort from the pre - school again to offset running costs. Similar arrangements would have been put in place with the proposed After School club that would have offered parents childcare both before and after school. We have already invited our local Priority Neighbourhood Manager to work from our premises. This is something that has worked successfully since October 2005.

Governors had also recently bid to develop a children's centre on site. Whilst this bid was unsuccessful because there was a more experienced provider in the area, the offer had been made for us to work in partnership and offer satellite services from the main children's centre. This is something that would have benefited our local community tremendously.

I do not know of any evidence to prove that small schools are educationally less successful than larger schools. Indeed, whilst studying for my NPQH qualification I visited a small school in an LEA close to our own that had achieved Beacon school status. The truth of the matter is that Dudley LEA has chosen not to support small schools in the proposals they have put forward.

Fourthly, little consideration has been given to the effects, both emotional and educational, that the proposals would have on our children. Parents and children are concerned about the integration process of bringing two schools together. They know that the schools will work to smooth this process but feel that it is inevitable that the children and parents will feel like outsiders.

There are particular concerns regarding Year 5 children who will become Year 6 in September 2005. This is probably their most important year in primary education. In the Highfields case they will find themselves housed on the Highfields site (which would then be an annexe of Christchurch). We are told that this could be for a period of a few weeks whilst building work is completed at Christchurch. They would then move to the Christchurch site around October time. They may also have different teachers and senior leaders around school. All of this would be extremely unsettling for them particularly with the pressure of Key Stage 2 SATs on them as well. After getting through that hurdle they would then be faced with moving school yet again in the summer when they transfer to secondary school. In effect they would be moving school twice in the space of 9 months. Indeed the stress levels in all of our children have already been raised significantly by these proposals despite our best attempts to shield them from the effects.

There are also concerns around the continuity of provision and maintenance of progress levels. We will work closely with Christchurch and pass on records etc. However, inevitably many of our children would be in a new

environment with new professionals and those new professionals would take some time to get to know their individual needs. Even with the best transfer arrangements in place there will inevitably be a hiatus in their progress.

My fifth point is that parents of Highfields children feel that they would be forced to move their children to schools that do not offer the same range of facilities as they are used to at Highfields. In particular they are acutely aware that Christchurch does not have a sports field. They are aware of the arrangements to use Coseley Cricket Club and are also aware that Christchurch may be developing an all weather sports area. However they do feel that both of these arrangements are not as good as what they have now and therefore the educational opportunities on offer to their children are being compromised by the proposals.

My final point is that the closure of Highfields would seriously affect the social cohesion of an already deprived area. The school is a focal point for the community and is often the first point of contact for all sorts of agencies for many parents. By forcing parents to take their children to various other schools it can only contribute to a decline in feelings of social identity and belonging in the local community, a community that already feels it is ignored and neglected by its local council. In an area where many youths already feel alienated this can only lead to further social problems in the future due to feelings of disenfranchisement. The falling roll situation could have been seen as an opportunity to really boost a socially deprived area. The current proposals miss that opportunity and indeed will contribute to the steady decline of the Highfields area.

To summarise, I am objecting to the closure of Highfields on the grounds that:-

1. The responses to the initial consultation were heavily paraphrased and did not accurately reflect the opinions of the people who sent them in. This meant that the Council's cabinet had not been accurately informed of the outcomes of the consultation when they debated it and came to their decision.
2. Alternative proposals that achieve the same reduction in numbers but keeps all 3 schools in the Coseley area open have been submitted but have not been given have been given due consideration.
3. We do not accept that small schools are educationally and financially unviable and that LEA is inaccurate in making such suggestions to councillors.
4. Little consideration has been given to emotional and educational effects these proposals would have on the children of Highfields
5. The proposals would force Highfields parents to send their children to an alternative school that in their opinion does not offer the same levels of provision as they a currently used to.
6. The proposals diminish the quality of the local area and will not contribute to social cohesion, indeed they will make it worse for the children of the area and their families.

For these reasons we ask you to look again at the proposed closure for Highfields Primary and reconsider the decision.

Yours sincerely,