

Dudley School Organisation Committee – 13 July 2006

Report of the Director of Directorate of Children's Services

Update on Investing in the Future – School Reviews

KPMG reported on the issue of surplus places in Dudley Schools in 1999. The prolonged fall in annual birth rates from a peak of 4,116 in 1990 to 3,344 in 2003 has reduced the demand for primary school places by about 20%, the impact of this fall is evident in:

- loss of government grant to Dudley for provision of education (£2 million less in 2006/7 due to few pupils than 2005/6);
- less money to distribute to school budgets as cost pressures eg, staffing, supplies, services and premises continue to rise;
- difficulties for schools in maintaining drive to improve quality of provision and raise standards.

Action Taken

- Sycamore Green, Highfields and Holt Farm Primary Schools will close 31 August 2006. All pupils and staff will transfer to alternative schools from 1 September or earlier.
- Application for in year variation to reduce reception admission numbers to other priority schools was rejected by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. Dudley's projections continue to be accurate and PANs will be reduced for September 2007 admissions following consultation in Spring 2006.

In Progress

- Beauty Bank Primary School is proposed to close 31 December 2006. In June 2006 there were only 123 children attending with over 350 surplus places in the nearest primary schools. The large number of transfer requests received suggests there will be very few children attending Beauty Bank in September.

- Consultation on proposals 15 June – 7 September
- Statutory notices 14 September – 26 October
(Both refer to Beauty Bank)
- Kingswinford North/Wall Heath – There was a mixed response to the proposals to close Maidensbridge Primary School and to relocate Church of the Ascension (CE) Primary on to the Maidensbridge site. This included support for a new single school for Wall Heath on an alternative site. It was not possible to resolve the legal, financial and technical issues within the published timescale and the proposals were withdrawn. The problem of falling numbers continues to grow in the area and further proposals will be required.
- Halesowen CE/Hasbury CE Primary Schools – The proposals to close both schools and open a new 420 place VA policy school on the Hasbury site were withdrawn. New proposals to close Halesowen CE Primary with effect from 31 August 2007, to change the category of Hasbury CE from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided and to divert the public right of way were announced on 27 June. Each proposal has a separate timetable. Consultation on the closure of Halesowen CE – 4 September – 17 October 2006.
- Consultation on Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Provision will run from June to October 2006. This is intended as preparation for inclusion in the national 'Building Schools for the Future' programme.
- Proposals to close Cradley High School with effect from 31 August 2008 were announced on 20 June 2006. The process will be phased over 2 years to enable current Year 9 pupils to complete their education at Cradley High. The current Year 7, Year 8 and September intake will transfer to alternative schools by 1 September 2007. Discussions with other secondary schools are taking place to support this process. Consultation is scheduled to start on 6 July – 28 September 2006.



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John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Ray Watson
Assistant Director
Telephone: 01384 814395
Email: ray.watson@dudley.gov.uk