

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Schools Forum - 6 December 2005

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Demography, Funding and School Planning

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Report is to inform the Budget Working Group about the Borough's demography and the impact on school funding and planning.

Demography

2. The birth rate in the Borough fell from 4,116 in 1990/01 to 3,344 in 2003 – a drop of more than 18% (see Appendix 1). Office of National Statistics projections show the birth rate stabilising at around 3,300 for the next 20 years. There is no evidence that families with children are moving into the Borough in significant net numbers, or that parents in other Boroughs are sending their children to Dudley in greater numbers than hitherto.
3. A similar reduction in secondary numbers and funding will inevitably follow as the falls in the birthrate feed through from primary to secondary age.

Funding

4. The total number of pupils in Dudley primary schools will reduce by about 2,358 by 2010. At the standard unit cost for Dudley of £3,329, this will result in a loss of grant of £7.8 million at present prices. This reduction in grant will occur whatever the configuration of primary schools.
5. Dudley schools are not generously funded by the DfES when compared to schools in other Councils in the West Midlands conurbation. We cannot afford to waste any funding on maintaining un-needed surplus places. Neither can we afford to expend money in maintaining more schools than is necessary.

6. The cost per pupil in small primary schools is significantly greater than the average (see Appendix 2), and these costs can only be met from the overall Dedicated Schools Grant, that is, by reducing the budgets of larger schools, both primary and secondary.

School Planning

7. The Council has been considering the configuration of primary schools in Dudley since 1999, when KPMG produced an external consultancy report for the Education Department. The issue was picked up in the LEA Ofsted inspections of both 2000 and 2002, and featured in the Inspection Action Plans. Consultations on proposals were carried out in 2002, and some limited action taken.
8. The Primary Schools Review concluded that unless action were taken there would be 5,000 surplus places in Dudley primary schools by 2010. The proposals agreed by the Cabinet on 17 November allow a prudent margin of over 1,600 unused places should these be required.
9. The Secondary Schools Review will commence in January 2006 with the publication of a consultation on the principles.

Conclusion

10. The conclusion is stark. ***Unless action is taken urgently to address overall school over-capacity then all schools will lose much-needed funding.***

Recommendation

11. I recommend that the Budget Working Group considers this report and supports the Council in seeking to configure both primary and secondary schools to meet future needs cost-effectively.

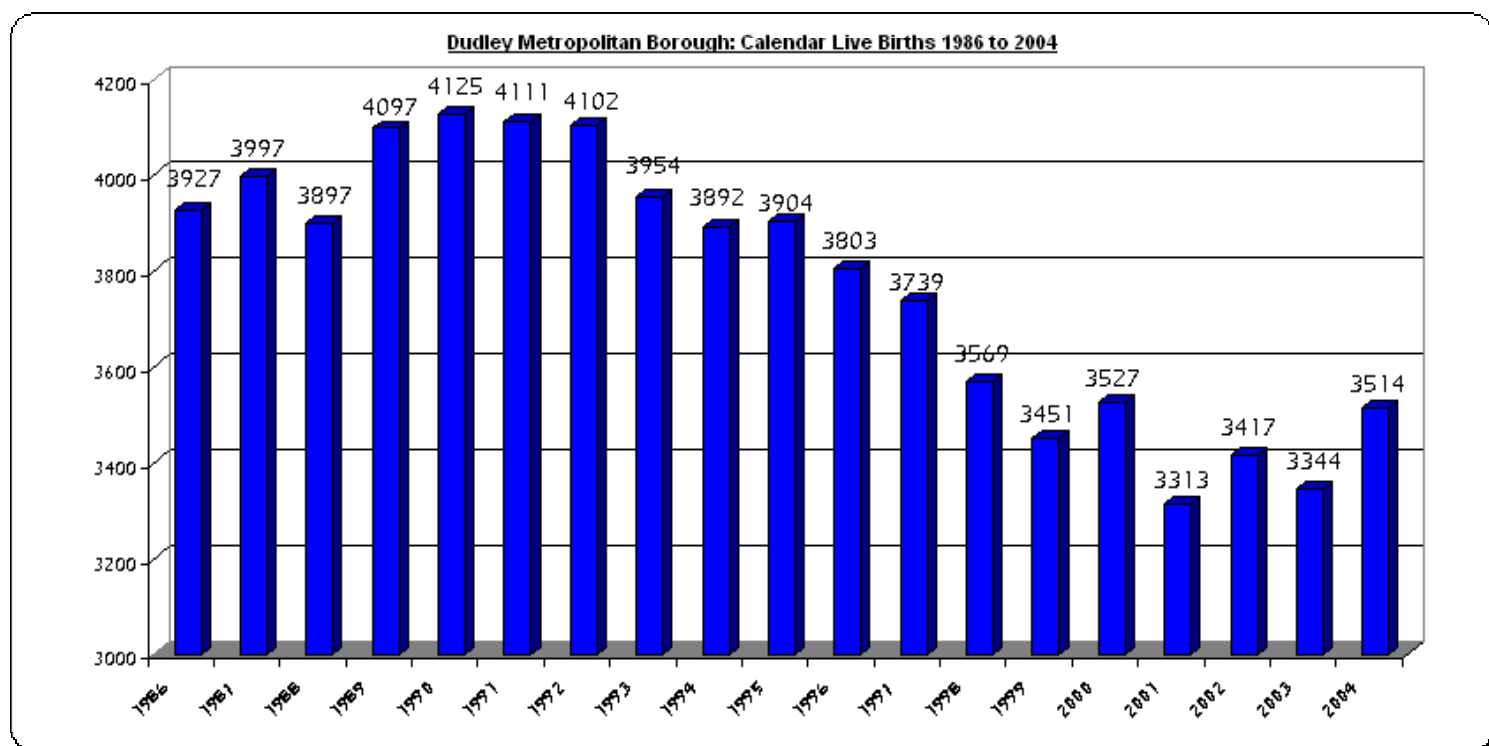


John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

6 December 2005

Demographic Factors

Live Births and Family Size



These figures are based on calendar year January - December.

| Year | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Live Births | 3927 | 3997 | 3897 | 4097 | 4125 | 4111 | 4102 | 3954 | 3892 |

| Year | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Live Births | 3904 | 3803 | 3739 | 3569 | 3451 | 3527 | 3313 | 3417 | 3344 | 3514 |

Graph showing cost per pupil based on the number of pupils at each Primary School.

