

Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning

Consultation Document

Consultation on: **Primary Education in Halesowen
Proposal for the Establishment of a New Voluntary Aided
Church of England Primary School for Halesowen.**

Summary: This consultation proposes the closure of Halesowen CE and Hasbury CE primary schools and their replacement by a new Church of England Aided Primary School serving Halesowen. The Council's preferred location for the development is the site of the current Hasbury School, although other options are set out in the paper. In addition to setting out the various options for the delivery of the project, the paper provides information about the position of staff and pupils affected by these changes, should they proceed and the likely timetable for the development of the project.

Deadline: All responses must be received by **31 January 2004**

Consultees:

- Parents and Carers of pupils attending either school
- Staff members at both schools
- The Governing Bodies of both schools
- All other interested parties
- Chairs of other Governing Bodies
- Headteachers
- Councillors
- Members of the Lifelong Learning Select Committee
- Members of Parliament
- The Black Country Learning and Skills Council
- Dudley Lifelong Learning Partnership
- Further Education Colleges
- Directorate staff
- Unions and Professional Associations
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- Dudley MBC - Corporate Board
- Primary Care Trusts
- West Midlands Police
- Worcester Diocesan Education Committee
- Roman Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission

Dudley Association of Governing Bodies
Neighbouring LEA Directors
Dudley Racial Equality Council
Community Forums
Community Learning Networks
Churches together in the Borough of Dudley
Churches together in Halesowen
Dudley Free Church Liaison Council
Dudley Parent Partnership
The Kashmiri Pakistani Professionals Forum
Dudley Community Partnership
Black Country Chamber of Commerce
Dudley Education Business Group
Community Representatives Panel
Sure Start local programmes
Children's Fund
Children and Young People's Partnership

Public Access: Public Libraries
Dudley Website www.dudley.gov.uk
InsideDudley
Westox House

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All responses may be published. **A large print version**, and versions in other languages are available on request to the above address.



John Freeman
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
November 2003



Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning

Primary Education in Halesowen

Proposal for the Establishment of a New Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School for Halesowen

Consultation Document

'Putting Learning First for Dudley'

November 2003

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Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning

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Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning Primary Education in Halesowen

Proposal for the Establishment of a New Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School for Halesowen

Introduction

1. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, in partnership with the Diocese of Worcester, has decided to carry out a public consultation on proposals for changes to primary school organisation in Halesowen. The consultation period will last until 31 January 2004 and the Council is now inviting the views of all interested parties.
2. Two schools are directly affected by the proposal. No decisions will be made until the response to this consultation has been considered by the Council in consultation with the Diocesan authority. The schools directly affected are Halesowen Church of England (CE) Voluntary Aided (VA) Primary School and Hasbury Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School.

What is the proposal?

3. The proposal is to merge Halesowen VA Primary School and Hasbury VC Primary School to create a single new Voluntary Aided primary school serving the central districts of Halesowen. The combined school would be able to admit up to 450 children, and have a 30-place nursery. Under the proposed plan a new primary school will be opened to replace both Hasbury and Halesowen Primary schools, both of which would be closed. The new school would be a Church Aided school supported by the Diocese of Worcester. This is the same form of constitution as presently operates at Halesowen CE Primary School.
4. The proposed location of the new school has not been finally decided. However, the Council's preferred location for the new school is the Hasbury site. A number of options are included in this consultation paper and the views of all interested parties are invited.

When is the proposed date for the merger?

5. The proposed date for the merger is September 2005 at the earliest. This recognises the need for time to complete the statutory processes required when schools are closed and new schools are opened, and also time for a significant building programme to be completed whichever of the options is selected. The earliest date that new buildings are likely to be available is September 2005, and completion for January or Easter 2006 might also be considered as being likely. There is no plan to amalgamate the management or operation of the two existing schools prior to the new buildings being available.

Why is there a need to reorganise primary school places in Halesowen?

6. Over the last few years, the number of children attending the two schools has gone down. The number of babies born in the Halesowen North and Halesowen South Wards fell steadily between 1990 and 2000. In 2001 the number of births registered was 588, 35.5% fewer than the peak in 1990 when 912 births were registered. This has led to the situation where the number of children expected to enter Hasbury and Halesowen Primary Schools will be much lower in future years. In particular this decline in numbers will affect Halesowen Primary School, which is already the smallest school in the Borough.
7. Our smallest schools face difficult circumstances. They may face problems with financial viability. There are presently 140 children on roll at Halesowen CE Primary School (Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census - PLASC return to Central Government - January 2003), with the intake not expected to increase over the long term, based on current trends of parental preference and live births. The level of surplus places in the school looks likely to settle at around 30%, in January 2003 the surplus capacity was 33.3%. As a consequence of the lower numbers of children, the school may well have to consider reducing the number of staff it employs over the next few years as the school budget, chiefly based on pupil numbers, continues to decline.
8. Hasbury Primary School has some surplus places, currently around 15.2% (based on the annual PLASC census 2003), and there has been a fall in the roll of the school from 308 in 1997 to 280 in 2003. The number of children admitted to Hasbury in future years is not expected to grow. As a consequence of this the school may well experience budget pressures over the next few years.

9. The Council must review schools with surplus places and annual returns showing the position across the Borough and on a school by school basis have been required by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in London for some years. Where significant surplus exists (more than 25%) there is an expectation that action will be taken to improve the situation.
10. In 2001/02 the Council undertook a major review of all of its primary schools culminating in the publication of a consultation document in October 2002. The document contained a number of proposals for change based on analysis of available data set against the review principles explained in the 2002 consultation document. Included in that initial consultation was a proposal to address surplus places in central Halesowen by means of a project involving the reorganisation of Hasbury and Halesowen primary schools into a single entity.

Why a Church Aided School?

11. Halesowen is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School and Hasbury is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School. The proposals envisage a voluntary aided school replacing the two existing schools, one of which is in the aided sector the other is voluntary controlled. Voluntary schools are schools that have been established by voluntary bodies, usually church bodies. There are two categories of voluntary schools: controlled and aided. The Local Education Authority (LEA) maintains them both.
12. The key differences between voluntary and community schools lies in their constitution, and in particular the responsibilities and powers of the governing body. The category a voluntary school falls into is determined by the way it is established, which in turn decides the distribution of powers and duties between the LEA and the governing body.
13. In a voluntary aided (VA) school the governing body is responsible for all capital work relating to existing buildings (internal and external). The governors also have to meet the capital cost of any improvement or enlargement of the buildings. The governing body is responsible for a number of issues including health and safety. These liabilities are met with the aid of a grant, at present 90% (hence the term "aided") from the Secretary of State. The Council provides the annual budget for running the school.
14. The establishing body, normally known as the Foundation, has a majority on the governing body. The LEA cannot compel a voluntary aided school to

remove particular subjects from the curriculum, thereby safeguarding the unique ethos of faith based education. Aided schools must however follow the National Curriculum. The governing body employs the staff.

15. Voluntary controlled (VC) schools result from those voluntary schools whose providers were not able to meet their share of the cost of bringing the premises up to the standard required and the cost of continuing external repair at some time in the past. This often occurred when the 1944 Education Act became law at the end of the Second World War. This Act placed new requirements on schools. The constitution of the governing body is the same as for a community school except that provision is made for the continuing representation of the voluntary body (usually the church) on the governing body. Often the voluntary body owns the school buildings, but the LEA meets the costs of maintenance or alteration, and is also responsible for the running costs. The LEA employs the staff and provides an annual budget for running the school.
16. The proposals aim to maintain the tradition of voluntary Church of England primary provision in Halesowen. There are also financial benefits in terms of increased ability to seek government funds and use of money from the sale of current school sites.

What will the new school be called?

17. At present this has not been decided. The new school's name and identity might reflect the history and associations of the two former schools and must be recognised and valued in the community it will serve. It may be that parents and pupils will have a role to play in suggesting the name when the time comes. Existing parents and pupils at both of the current schools will also be involved in consultations about the colour and type of uniform to be worn by pupils at the new school.

How will all this be paid for?

18. The cost of a new primary school of the size envisaged is likely to be in the region of £4 million - £6 million. The funding package for the construction costs will vary depending on which of the options is selected for implementation. The costs are likely to be met from three main sources – funding from the Borough Council, from the Diocese of Worcester and capital funds from the DfES. At this stage it is difficult to be precise about the levels of funding required or amounts likely to be available from each source, but it is clear that significant government financial support would be required. The

sale of either or both of the existing schools sites might feature in the funding package. The Hasbury site is owned by the Borough Council and the adjacent field by the local parish, the Halesowen site is partly owned by the Diocese of Worcester and partly by the local parish.

What are the aims of the proposal?

19. The Council recognises that school reorganisation should only be undertaken where there is very strong evidence that the educational opportunities for children are likely to be adversely affected if no action is taken, and that any reorganisation proposal will maintain and improve educational standards over the longer term. In planning and delivering a school reorganisation the Council aims to:-

- Take steps to minimise the potential disruption to the children presently attending the schools.
- Secure the long-term future of Church of England supported primary education in Halesowen schools so that future generations of school children can benefit from the high quality of education that the existing schools provide.
- Secure long-term stability for the staff, on whom ultimately, high quality education depends, as a single larger school will benefit from greater financial resources.
- Address the vulnerability of small primary schools; a single larger school will have staffing capacity to deal with managerial, curriculum and pastoral responsibilities to a high level.
- Provide the opportunity for investment in improving school buildings and infrastructure, removing surplus places, provide the opportunity to release funding to reinvest in a single site, and significantly enhance school buildings making them fit for 21st century education.
- Provide opportunities to significantly improve community facilities, based on the views of the local community, new school buildings will enable the incorporation of new community facilities.

Will all of the children that currently attend Hasbury and Halesowen Schools be offered a place at the new primary school?

20. All of the children attending Hasbury and Halesowen Schools will be guaranteed places at the new school. Any children who are entering reception or nursery will also be guaranteed places. All parents will be contacted early in the merger process with information on how the transfer of children would be managed.

What will happen to either of the existing sites if they are not needed for the new building?

21. It is likely that any site not needed for the new school will be sold. Future development would however be determined by planning and development controls and it is likely that current open or green spaces would not be developed.

How will class sizes be affected if the schools merge?

22. Class sizes could well rise at Halesowen and Hasbury over the next few years, if the number of teachers employed reduces as the result of falling rolls and overall budget reductions resulting from this. As the new school will be bigger, class sizes are likely to be bigger, although within national requirements and local good practice standards. The Council is committed to keeping class sizes as small as possible.

Who will be in charge of setting up the new school?

23. The establishment of the new school would be joint project between Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and the Diocese of Worcester. However, at an early stage the Council proposes to establish a shadow governing body to oversee the planning of the new school. The governing body's membership would include representative staff, parents, Council appointees and representatives of the Diocese. About two terms before the opening of the new school this body would gain statutory powers. At this point it would be able to make appointments to the staff of the new school. A key task would be the establishment of the new school's policies and procedures, including a staff structure and salaries policy.

What about the staff?

24. It is intended that all of the staff from both existing schools will initially be employed at the new school. This may mean that there may be a number of non-class based teachers on the staff that the Headteacher and Governors could use to help to reduce the size of teaching groups. Arrangements would be made to protect the funding for additional staffing costs for a period of years following the merger. No staff member will be made compulsorily redundant and all of the staff of both schools will have guaranteed employment for at least 3 years. The detail of these arrangements, and related matters, will need to be the subject of discussions between the Council and the relevant unions and professional associations, in consultation with the Diocese of Worcester.
25. It may be that individual staff members will seek early retirement, redeployment or voluntary severance. These requests would be responded to sympathetically, taking account of individual circumstances.
26. At present the law requires that the posts of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher must be advertised nationally.

What are the options being considered?

27. The following options are being considered - the comments of all interested parties are invited on each of these possibilities.

Option A - Closure of Halesowen CE VA Primary School and Hasbury CE VC Primary School and the opening of a new 450 place entry primary school in all new buildings on the current Hasbury site.

The Council's preferred option.

A new Voluntary Aided Primary School could replace the two existing schools and be located on the present site of Hasbury Primary School. This would create a primary school with 450 places and include a nursery offering places for 30 children.

Initial option appraisals have shown that a new school of sufficient size could be constructed on the Hasbury site. This option will impact significantly on the aims of the proposed reorganisation. All new buildings would address the buildings, and building maintenance and suitability problems currently faced by both governing bodies, and would meet the needs of teachers and learners

for years to come in purpose built modern buildings. The new buildings would maintain the nursery provision currently at Halesowen CE and the Language Unit at Hasbury. Both of these facilities would benefit from purpose designed and built accommodation for the first time. At the same time the design of the new school would allow the issues associated with the public footpath cutting the current Hasbury school in half to be addressed, together with concerns about access to the school and local traffic management problems. New buildings would allow the development of community resources, not possible at either of the existing schools. The proximity of the church would serve to express and enhance the relationship of the new school with the Church of England, its parent body. Maintaining primary school provision on this site also ensures access to a local school for a significant residential area in the south of Halesowen.

This is the preferred option of Dudley MBC. In the light of the considerable time delay involved in option C it is also the preferred choice of the Diocese of Worcester.

Option B - Closure of Halesowen CE VA Primary School and Hasbury CE VC Primary School and the opening of a new 450-place entry primary school in improved and remodeled buildings on the current Hasbury site.

In general terms this option reflects the benefits of option A above, including the improvement of facilities for nursery education and the Hasbury Language Unit. The aim would be to retain the better condition more modern buildings at Hasbury, to replace or remodel some of the existing buildings, and at the same time to address safety and security issues mentioned above. Such a scheme would in all probability have a lower cost than the complete replacement of the current buildings, but this approach would not have the long term impact that would be seen from the creation of an all new school campus offering 21st century facilities to the school and its community. This option might need to be implemented in the event that insufficient funds can be assembled for an all new building.

Option C - Closure of Halesowen CE VA Primary School and Hasbury CE VC Primary School and the opening of a new 450 place entry primary school in all-new buildings in the vicinity of the former Walton Campus of Halesowen College

A project in this form has all of the advantages associated with the creation of a new school on the Hasbury site, and benefits from a more central location.

The main issues however revolve around the fact that available Borough owned land in the area of the former college site is too small to meet the requirements of national standards for school sites and buildings. Additional land would have to be purchased or brought into educational use to enlarge the available site. At present adjacent sites are not owned by the Council or the Diocese and are in use. Other Borough owned land in the area is designated as parkland and cannot readily be used for building development of any kind. It is difficult to see how these barriers can be overcome within an acceptable timescale in order to benefit the education and life chances of children in Halesowen within the decade.

Option D - Closure of Halesowen Church of England VA Primary School

During the Council's review of surplus places, consideration was given to a number of options for both schools, including the closure of Halesowen CE VA Primary School. The Council dismissed this possibility in its internal discussions at the time of the 2001/02 Primary Review. However, it is acknowledged that neighbouring schools, including Hasbury, have sufficient capacity to accommodate the children currently on roll at Halesowen and likely future numbers from the school's traditional catchment area. This solution could be reconsidered by the Council as a means of addressing issues of both surplus capacity and the viability of the school.

Option E - No change to the current situation

It might be considered appropriate that the Council should take no action at the present time. As surplus place levels rise in Hasbury and Halesowen Schools, and at other schools in the Borough, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will require the Council to inform them of the action it intends to take to remove these surplus places. Ultimately the Council will be required to justify, not only to the DfES but also to the wider community, why resources are not being effectively deployed. Further proposals would then need to be considered. These might need to be more far reaching than those currently under consideration in order to deal effectively with increased surplus capacity.

How can I make my views known?

28. 1 - CONSULTATION MEETINGS

In order to seek your views we will be holding two public meetings at the following venues;

On 14 January at 4.00pm in Halesowen Library; and

On 14 January at 7.00pm in the Halesowen Library

The meetings are expected to last between 1 and 1 ½ hours. The dates and times of the meetings will be widely circulated and advertised in the press. A small crèche will be provided at the 4.00pm meeting to facilitate attendance by parents and carers with small children. Places for 0 to 8 year olds only are strictly limited and MUST be booked IN ADVANCE by contacting Karen Tranter on 01384 813726. Arabic translation will be available at both meetings.

29. **2 - RESPONSE FORM**

A response form to this document is available and can also be downloaded from www.dudley.gov.uk the Council's website.

Responses should be received by **31 January 2004**.

All responses will be made fully available to any person or body responsible for making or reviewing the decision on whether to proceed with the merger.

What Happens Next?

30. The following timetable is provisional at this stage. The actual dates for actions following the end of the consultation period are yet to be determined. These dates are an approximate guide only.

End January 2004 - Closing Date for consultation response

March 2004 - Council and Diocese publish response to public consultation

March 2004 - Consideration by Dudley MBC and Diocese and decision on proposal

April 2004 - Statutory Process begins with publication of statutory notice

July 2004 - Consideration of proposal by Dudley School Organisation Committee

Contact for Further Information

31. Resources and Planning Division, Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Westox House, 1 Trinity Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1JQ

Telephone: 01384 814395

Please take the time to complete the consultation response form. Individual replies will not be made to consultation responses.

32. Where specific queries are received, we will not answer you directly, but we will try to compile a detailed response to the consultation that will be widely distributed.