

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Tuesday, 12th April, 2005 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Ridney (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Dunn (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Coulter, Finch, Ms Hart-Bowman, Rahman, Rogers,
Ryder and Wright; Mr Guest, Mr Hatton, Mr Nottingham, Mrs Roe and Mrs
Simms.

OFFICERS

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, The Assistant Director of
Education (School Effectiveness), The Assistant Director of Finance and
Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE - BY INVITATION

Mr Rhind-Tutt, Headteacher and Mrs Westwood, Chairman of Governors
- The Woodsetton School.

Mr Griffiths, Headteacher and Mr Marsh, Chairman of Governors -
Ellowes Hall School.

Ms Whittall, Headteacher and Mrs Glews, Chairman of Governors -
Russells Hall School.

Mrs Churchill, Headteacher and Mrs Gregory, Chairman of Governors -
Netherton CE Primary School

together with the following School Development Officers:-

Mr Powell (The Woodsetton School), Mr McGuff (Ellowes Hall School), Mr
Perrett (Russells Hall Primary School) and Ms Pearson (Netherton CE
Primary School).

77

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th and
15th March 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed,
subject to the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2005
being amended to record the strong objections of some Members
to the proposed Special Educational Needs Strategy supported at
the meeting and to the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March
2005 being amended to include a declaration of personal interest
made by Councillor Hart-Bowman in Item No 7 in view of her
governership of Russells Hall Primary School.

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Member declared a personal or prejudicial interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any item to be considered at this meeting.

79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Mrs Pearce, Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson and Reverend Morphy.

80 ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That the item at Agenda Item No. 5 (Current Position on School Governorships) be considered as the last item on the Agenda.

81 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act, in particular those paragraphs of Part I of that Schedule indicated below:-

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant Paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A</u>
School Performance	1 and 6
Progress Reports on Crestwood Park Primary School, Rufford Primary School and Old Park School	1 and 6

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted in respect of OFSTED reports received since the Committee's most recent update.

Attached as appendices to the report were the OFSTED reports in respect of the Woodsetton School, Ellowes Hall School, Russells Hall School and Netherton CE Primary School.

It was noted that the Headteacher and Chairman of Governors of each respective inspected school had been invited to attend the meeting and participate during scrutiny of the Directorate support for their school, arising from consideration of the OFSTED reports.

Prior to consideration of the individual OFSTED reports, the Headteachers and Chairmen of the respective schools were welcomed to the meeting and the relevant School Development Advisers were invited to introduce reports. The Heads and Governors were also invited to comment on the OFSTED reports pertinent to their respective schools. Following consideration of each report, the Chairman thanked those present for their attendance.

Arising from consideration given to each OFSTED report, a number of questions were asked in relation to each school, in particular, regarding:-

- (a) The Woodsetton School - The Section 10 inspection made in September 2004 had concluded in its overall evaluation that this was a very good school with some excellent features, excellently led and very well managed. The teaching at the school was described as being of very high quality; there was an excellent school ethos supported by very strong links with parents and other schools and so pupils made very good gains in all aspects of their personal development. The school was currently categorised as being in Band 1 and was described in the report as providing very good value for money.
- (b) The Ellowes Hall School - The Section 10 inspection made in November 2004 had concluded in its overall evaluation that this school provided a satisfactory standard of education, the decline seen in the last two years having been halted. The report indicated that there were clear signs of improvement under the leadership of the new Headteacher. The report indicated that the school supported satisfactory achievement of personal development and provided satisfactory value for money. Average standards were now being promoted in a majority of subjects. However, the Inspectorate considered the sixth form to be inadequate, as it did not provide a suitable curriculum for all of the students who were recruited.

In the question and answer session that followed, the Head Teacher referred to the need for improved sports facilities. Regarding the Sixth Form, the Chairman of Governors expressed the view that good support from the LEA was now forthcoming and confirmed that the LEA was working appropriately with the school regarding necessary actions. In response to the comments on sports facilities, the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning acknowledged that the school had inadequate facilities but drew attention to the constraints on funding streams available to the LEA. On the issue of science teaching, the Chairman of Governors commented that this had been improving since the cessation of supply teaching.

- (c) Russells Hall Primary School - the Section 10 inspection of this school conducted in January 2005 had concluded that Russells Hall was an effective school with a very caring ethos that valued all pupils as being equally special. Team spirit was strong and classrooms happy and purposeful places in which good teaching enabled good learning and good achievement to be provided. The curriculum was rich and exciting and the provision made for pupils' creative and personal development was a particular strength. The report paid tribute to the Head Teacher as the driving force behind the school's many successes and expressed the view that the school gave good value for money.

Reference was made in the question and answer session that followed to problems of attendance with particular regard to holidays taken by pupils in term time. This was recognised as a problem common to the majority of schools and the Head Teacher confirmed that the support provided by the LEA was satisfactory.

- (d) Netherton C E Primary School

The report conducted in January 2005 had concluded that the school provided a good standard of education. While the attainment of pupils on entry to the school was low, by the end of year 6, standards in English and mathematics were below average but the pupils made good progress and achieved well. Overall, the school gave good value for money.

In the question and answer session that followed, reference was made to the progress made by the school since coming out of special measures. The Head Teacher confirmed that the support provided by the LEA on the ongoing problem of pupil absenteeism was appropriate and satisfactory. In relation to this issue, one member commented that there was inconsistency in the OFSTED report in that it criticised the school for poor attendance at the same time as acknowledging that it was doing all it could to address the situation.

A discussion then ensued on the deployment of Education Social Workers generally. In this regard, the Assistant Director of Education (School Effectiveness) drew attention to difficulties caused to LEAs in planning resources for education social work when attendance targets were changed so regularly by the government. The point was also made that attendance was a problem not only in deprived areas but also in the more prosperous areas.

It was agreed that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning would write to parents emphasising the importance of attendance at school and to instigate a media campaign in this regard. The Director also indicated his intention to submit a report to the Committee on statistical information regarding attendance in the new municipal year.

83 PROGRESS REPORTS ON CRESTWOOD PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL
RUFFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND OLD PARK
SCHOOL

The Assistant Director of Education (School Effectiveness) reported orally on progress made in respect of Crestwood Park Primary School, Rufford Primary School and Old Park School since the matter had been reported on previously at the meeting of the Committee held on 7th December 2004.

OFSTED was satisfied that good progress was being made in relation to Crestwood Park Primary School and that reasonable progress was being made in relation to Old Park School. Rufford Primary School had succeeded in being removed from being in special measures.

RESOLVED

That the information reported on in respect of the above schools be noted and that further oral progress reports on Crestwood Park Primary School and Old Park School be made to a future meeting of the Committee, when considering school performance.

84 COMMITTEE IN PUBLIC SESSION

The meeting resumed in public session.

85 GOVERNOR VACANCIES

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted updating the Committee on Governor vacancies and indicating the activities being undertaken to encourage Governor recruitment and retention.

Some concern was expressed by one member that schools did not always take sufficient action to encourage staff to participate in governorship.

The representative of the Roman Catholic Church on the Committee welcomed the opportunity presented by the LEA for training on governorship.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN