

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 15 March 2005

Report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Update on the Secondary Schools Review

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Select Committee of the DfES expectations of local authorities preparing for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the progress made regarding consultation with Dudley secondary schools.

Background

2. BSF is a national initiative intended to transform secondary education through rebuilding or refurbishing every secondary school in England over a 10 – 15 year programme. The programme is focused on raising standards and encompasses a wide range of government policy areas including extended schools, integrated services, community use and social regeneration. It is much more than replacing buildings. The initiative is largely focused on the statutory ages range 11 – 16 and school-based learning.
3. 'Learning for the Future' is a local concept intended to develop the education vision for Dudley. It is focused on the whole age range from 0 – 19 and beyond. Whilst schools remain at the heart of statutory age provision, learning takes place in a wide range of other settings including on-line access, libraries, Pupil Referral Units, Community Centres and children educated other than at school (EOTAS). 'Learning for the Future' will join up the various initiatives and create flexible learning pathways based on personalised learning styles and preferences on a township model of core provision.
4. Surplus capacity in Dudley's primary schools is a serious concern. The decline in birth rates is threatening the educational and financial viability of an increasing number of primary schools. The impact of lower numbers of primary pupils became visible in secondary school admission numbers in 2004 and is strongly evident in figures for Year 7

admissions September 2005. Projections for the next few years indicate that without action secondary schools will be facing difficulties similar to primary schools.

5. In developing proposals for the removal of surplus capacity from secondary schools, the Council will be guided by similar principles and intentions to those detailed in the Primary Review Refresh Consultation Document:

- all schools must be financially and educationally viable;
- a sufficient number of local places will be available for local children;
- consideration will be given to integrated services and the extended role of schools within their community;
- consideration will be given to develop and maintain community cohesion;
- the balance between church and community school places will be maintained;
- the aims and actions of the SEN Strategy will be supported;
- consideration will be given to issues of physical access;
- consideration will be given to the quality of school buildings.

6. In addition, local authorities are expected to take full account of the government policy areas detailed in DfES and Partnership for Schools Guidance to BSF Wave 2 LEAs (November 2004). These are:

- school organisation;
- academies;
- specialist schools;
- secondary failure and under-performance;
- school workforce;
- ICT;
- access and inclusion for pupils with SEN and disability;
- children's services, extended schools and community links;
- the 14 – 19 agenda;
- curriculum;
- behaviour and attendance;
- health and safety.

7. Secondary headteachers have been consulted regarding the overall approach to developing the education vision for Dudley. The approach

must secure engagement and commitment from a broad range of stakeholders and potential partners including all Council Directorates, Area Committees, LSC, Health, Police, Fire and Transport Authorities, community groups, voluntary and private sectors. The majority of pupils likely to be affected by secondary school transformation are currently in primary schools. The consultation process should engage pupils and staff from all phases of education.

8. The overall approach is based on a consultation document similar to Primary Review Refresh 2004. The draft document is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. This first phase of consultation on developing the education vision for Dudley will start at the beginning of March and continue until June. Views will be summarised and published for further consideration before the end of July 2005. The vision must be dynamic and is likely to evolve further before inclusion in the documents required by the DfES for inclusion in the BSF programme.
9. 'Learning for the Future' is a major project with implications for the whole Council and a wide range of external partners. Further reports will be prepared in due course covering the project scope, governance arrangements and other relevant areas.
10. Any proposals developed for individual schools must follow statutory processes set out in legislation and DfES guidance; the requirements are briefly set out in paragraph 12.

Finance

11. The development of 'Learning for the Future' and associated project management has financial implications in securing the range of specialist skills. Further details will be included in future reports.

Law

12. Under Section 28 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 school organisation changes require a reasonable period of consultation with those likely to be affected by proposals for specific schools. Following consultation each proposal requires the publication of a statutory notice immediately preceding a defined time period during which representations may be made. The representation period varies for different types of school but in most cases is six weeks.

Where representations are received, proposals are referred to the independent School Organisation Committee for consideration and subsequently to the Adjudicator if the Committee cannot reach a unanimous decision within a defined period.

Equal Opportunities Policy

13. 'Learning for the Future' is concerned primarily with ensuring that all learners aged 0 – 19 and beyond have access to the quality of provision to which they are entitled.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that:
- the Select Committee notes the consultation document Learning for the Future – Developing the Education Vision for Dudley – Transforming Secondary Education.
 - the Select Committee considers a formal response as part of the consultation process.



John Freeman
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact Officer: Ray Watson
Assistant Director (Resources and Planning)
Ext 4395

Background Papers

Building Schools for the Future. Local authority education vision – policy guidelines for wave 2. November 2004. DfES / Partnership for Schools