

## **Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council**

### **Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 15 March 2005**

#### **Report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning**

#### **Update on the Primary Schools Review**

##### **Purpose**

1. The report summarises the responses to the Consultation Document Primary Review Refresh 2004, which ended on 31 January 2005 and outlines the proposals for the next steps. The 49 responses were broadly in support of the statements in the consultation document.

##### **Background**

2. The Primary Review Refresh Consultation Document is concerned with raising standards in education through the removal of surplus capacity from primary schools maintained by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. It is not about reducing the overall financing of all schools. It is about a more meaningful use of limited resources to ensure the development of excellent and sustainable schools in thriving communities.
3. Surplus capacity in Dudley's primary schools was highlighted in an external consultancy report prepared by KPMG in 1999, and in the OFSTED Inspection Reports of 2000 and 2002. The School Organisation Plans for 2001–06, 2002–07 and 2003–08 concluded that approximately 2,000 places would need to be removed to maintain a safety net of 10% surplus capacity. A surplus figure of 5% by 2007/08 would require approximately 3,100 places to be removed.
4. In developing proposals for the removal of surplus capacity from primary schools, the Council will be guided by the following principles and intentions:
  - 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 Inclusion Strategy will be supported;
  - consideration will be given to issues of physical access;
  - consideration will be given to the quality of school buildings.
5. The Primary Review Refresh Consultation Document is attached as Appendix 1. Final analysis of the responses will be presented to Select Committee on 15 March. Proposals and recommendations for specific school proposals will be developed following detailed analysis.
6. Legislation sets out statutory processes that must be followed in relation to school organisation changes. These are broadly set out in paragraph 8.

### **Finance**

7. School budgets are largely based on the number of pupils on roll. Approximately 55 of 82 primary schools have fewer pupils in 2005 than in 2004 and budgets will be proportionately affected. Without action, the large majority of primary schools will face increasing difficulties in managing inflation and other pressures as pupil numbers continue to fall.

### **Law**

8. 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**

9. The Primary Review is concerned primarily with ensuring that all children have access to the quality of education to which they are entitled.

## **Recommendations**

10. It is recommended that:
- the responses to the Primary Review Refresh Consultation Document and observations of Select Committee are summarised and published;
  - further detailed analysis is undertaken leading to proposals and recommendations for specific changes required to achieve the principles set out in paragraph 4 and remove
    - at least 2,000 surplus primary places (10% margin); or
    - at least 2,500 surplus primary places (7.5% margin); or
    - at least 3,000 surplus primary places (5% margin).



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## **Background Papers**

KPMG Report 1999  
OFSTED Inspection Reports 2000 and 2002  
School Organisation Plans 2001 – 06, 2002 – 07, 2003 - 08