

JF/LE

Councillor Jeff Fletcher

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7 March 2003

To all Councillors

Copy To:

Richard Stiff, Assistant Director for Resources and Planning

Dear Colleague

The Future of Halesowen CE VA Primary School and Hasbury CE Primary School

The initial consultation on the Primary School Review has ended and we have been considering the next steps. We received many responses from parents and carers of these two schools opposing any change. Unfortunately this is just not an option as the continuing fall in the birth rate, particularly in central Halesowen, may well make both schools, and particularly Halesowen VA CE Primary School, unviable. Both schools would shortly have to make significant reductions in spending, and this could only be achieved by very unwelcome decisions.

John Freeman met on Wednesday with both headteachers and chairs, with Rev Rob Hall, and with Rev David Morphy, Diocesan Director of Education, to consider what to do for the best.

I am very pleased indeed to say that the meeting reached a consensus. We have not yet worked out all the details, and there is much preparatory work still to do. But we all agreed that the best way of ensuring an excellent education for the medium and long terms for children wanting a Church of England school in Halesowen would be to invest in a single brand-new Church of England school offering state of the art learning facilities and to close both schools. This new school could be located either on the present Hasbury site, or adjacent to the existing Walton campus of Halesowen College on Council-owned land.

This is an exciting prospect and I am pleased that we have the support of both headteachers and chairs, and of the Diocese, in developing the first brand new primary school in Halesowen for many years; a new Church of England school that will be designed with 21st Century needs in mind.

The next steps are that we will be considering the details of the two options over the next few weeks, and coming to a view on which is the most practicable. Once we have done this, and I expect this to be shortly after Easter, we will be arranging meetings for parents and carers from both schools, for all the staff, and for the full governing bodies, to explain the proposals and to start a full consultation process.

John Freeman has written to all parents, staff and governors at the schools. We will be keeping you closely in touch with developments over the coming months, including the details of the proposed building work. I hope that the new school will be able to open between September 2004 and September 2005.

I look forward to telling you more of this exciting partnership between the Church of England and the Council over the next few months.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Jeff Fletcher
Lead Member for Education and Lifelong Learning