

# Decision Sheet

Ref: **DCS/41/2006**

**Decision Sheet Title:**

Publication of statutory notices for Cradley High School.

**Decision Maker:**

Councillor Liz Walker, Cabinet Member for Children's Services Directorate

**Ward(s) Affected:** Cradley and Foxcote

**Contains Exempt Information? Enter Yes or No:**

<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Decision</u></b></p> <p>To publish statutory notices to close Cradley High School with effect from 31 August 2008.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>Consultation on proposals to close Cradley High School started on 6 July and ended 28 September 2006. The consultation process was based on a document setting out the proposals and the reasons for them. The document was widely distributed and supported with meetings with Cradley High School pupils, parents, staff and governors. The proposal was also considered by the Halesowen Area Committee, Select Committee on Children's Services and other groups.</p> <p>The total number of responses received were relatively small.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>61 letters</li> <li>16 emails</li> <li>5 telephone calls</li> <li>2 complaints</li> <li>1 petition</li> <li>1 pledge list</li> </ul>

The nature of the responses mainly reflected support for the school and its importance to the pupils and local community. None of the responses including those from the governors and staff addressed the critical issue of falling pupils numbers or established how the school would maintain performance with less money next year.

The case for closure remains compelling. In summary:

- Cradley High School has not been fully subscribed since January 2002.
- The number of applicants has fallen every year for six years despite year on year improvements in GCSE results.
- In September 2006 there were only 34 first choice applications.
- By the closing date for on-line applications for September 2007 only five first preferences were registered (significantly lower than the 23% of the total). The number may grow following further checks of the paper applications.
- Cradley High School will have around 90 pupils fewer in January 2007 compared with January 2006 resulting in a significant budget reduction for 2007/08.
- The Governing Body will only be able to balance the budget by further staff reductions with impact on the quality of education and care provided.
- The buildings and site do not provide the range of opportunities available in other secondary schools. The likelihood of capital investment on this site given falling pupil numbers is extremely remote.

Year 11 will leave as normal in 2007. Current Year 10 will remain at Cradley and leave as year 11 in 2008. Current Years 7 (50), 8 (90) and 9 (93) will transfer to other Dudley secondary schools from September 2007.

Although there are sufficient places to accommodate 233 pupils in other Dudley schools, discussions are taking place with schools to:

- (1) increase the number of places in all of the nearest secondary schools to pupils' home addresses.
- (2) ensure support to sustain curriculum quality for year 10 pupils (Year 11 from September 2007) until the school closes.

	<p>It is anticipated that there will be sufficient information from these discussions to meet with Cradley High School parents over the next few weeks to ensure that: all parents have sufficient information to be able to make an informed choice and that practical arrangements can be put in place for September 2007 including staffing, accommodation, transfers, transport and SEN/EAL support.</p> <p>It is intended to publish the Statutory Notice on Wednesday 22 November. The representation period will run for six weeks from the date of publication.</p>
3.	<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b></p> <p>Until parents express preferences for alternative schools it will not be possible to estimate demand and cost of the transfers, e.g. uniform and transport support. This will be provided in accordance with existing policy.</p> <p>The schools' delegated budget for 2006/07 is around £2.4 million. At least £2 million is based on pupil numbers and this element will be allocated to other schools through the locally agreed formula.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>Legal Implications</u></b></p> <p>The procedures relating to this establishment, alteration or discontinuation of schools are principally contained in Chapter 11 (sections 28-35) and schedule 6 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.</p> <p>The consultation process has complied with legislation and guidance. The consultation responses are available to any member of the public on request.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>Authorisation</u></b></p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>(Cabinet Member's Signature)</b></p> <p><b>Cabinet Member for:</b> Children's Services</p>

	<p><b>In consultation with:</b> Director of Children's Services</p> <p>..... <b>(Director's Signature)</b></p>
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**Date:** 14 November 2006

**Decision Sheet prepared by:**

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(Resources)

**Background Papers:**