

REVIEW OF PRIMARY PLACES PHASE 6: AREA REVIEWS OF GREASBY, UPTON, MORETON AND WALLASEY AND AN UPDATE ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SPECIAL MEASURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report advises the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 6 Area Reviews of primary school places in the small planning areas of South and Wallasey, Greasby, Upton and Moreton. Following meetings with key stakeholders in each of these areas, this report contains a summary of provision in each area and puts forward recommendations for options for consultation, and comments briefly on some of the issues involved. The report provides an update on two primary schools in special measures, with recommendations for options in relation to these schools.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 16th October 2008, Cabinet instructed that Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review should comprise South Wallasey, North Wallasey, Leasowe, Moreton, Upton and Greasby. At its meeting of 19th March 2009 Cabinet made an allowance for an amendment to Phase 6:

(404, item 4) Should the Joint Church school be approved and implemented as in (2), the Leasowe area be moved from Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review to Phase 8 accordingly.

The minutes of this meeting are attached as Appendix A.

- 1.2 As in previous phases, the first stage of the Review has been to conduct a process where, on a confidential basis, meetings have taken place with key stakeholders in each of the areas under review. These stakeholders included Ward Councillors as well as officers of the Diocese of Chester and Shrewsbury, headteachers and chairs of governors of schools potentially affected by the Reviews. Following these confidential discussions, recommendations can now be made for options for consultation in the next stage of the review process.
- 1.3 In addition to the options described below there is considerable analytic and background material that was used as the basis for the identification of options; this is available for Members on request. A brief description of this material is included at Appendix B. Numbers on roll provided in this report are from the Annual School Census of January 2010.
- 1.4 At its meeting of 1st October 2009, Cabinet approved the inclusion of Manor Primary School in Phase 6 of the Review, following that schools placement by Ofsted in Special Measures on 3rd June 2009.
- 1.5 Since that meeting, on 9th December 2009, Well Lane Primary School was placed in Special Measures by Ofsted. This automatically triggers a review of the school, which is also reported here.

2.0 Greasby

- 2.1 The Greasby area is served by a single community primary school, a Catholic primary school, and by community Infant and Junior schools on separated sites.
- 2.2 None of the schools in this area have more than 25% surplus places, and just one (Greasby Infant) falls into the Wirral policy definition of a small school. Across schools in the area, surplus places are within the Audit Commission guidance level at 4.9%. There is no Wirral policy of amalgamating Infant and Junior schools, however it is right that this should be examined whenever the opportunity arises.

2.3 While Infant and Junior amalgamations do not automatically remove surplus places, there are educational, organisational and financial benefits to all-through primary education. Parents would no longer have to go through the admission process twice in primary phase. An all-through school helps staff to develop an in-depth knowledge of every child's individual needs and abilities from the start of statutory education. Key Stage 1 and 2 staff will be able to plan together to build on children's prior learning. Assessment of children's attainment and tracking of individual progress from age 4 to 11 is uniform and consistent, and schools can design and plan a whole school curriculum covering the full primary age range.

There would be more opportunities for younger and older children to work together and act as mentors and buddies to each other, which will support their personal and social development. Children would no longer have to change schools at age 7, avoiding the dip in progress which is sometimes seen when pupils transfer from Infant to Junior schools.

Costs associated with maintaining separate institutions would be saved, with the savings being fed into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils.

	Greasby Infant	Greasby Junior	Combined
2009 Net Capacity	180	308	488
2010 Number on roll	180	239	419
2010 Surplus place %	0	22.4	14.1
2015 Number on roll (projected)	180	240	420
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	0	22.1	13.9

2.4 Of the two sites, the Junior site would offer the best location for a primary school – the total site is above the recommended minimum for a school of 420 pupils (the Infant site is about 20% below the recommended minimum), and with a new extension to replace the existing temporary classrooms could accommodate all the pupils from both the Infant and Junior schools. The pre-school playgroup at the Infant site would also need to be relocated.

The question of amalgamation was considered and rejected recently when the most recent change of headteacher occurred, which was the retirement of the Infant headteacher. In this instance, the governing bodies of the two schools have indicated that they do not wish to pursue an amalgamation at this time. While surplus places at the Junior school are relatively high and projected to continue to be so, there may be scope to reduce capacity at the school, which has some temporary mobile accommodation.

2.5 In terms of size, all four Greasby schools are projected to remain at or above the Wirral policy definition of a small school. Surplus places are high at Greasby Junior, although lower than 25% and this will continue to be monitored. Contextual value added indicates that pupils at the community schools made the expected rate of progress in 2009 and over a three year average, whilst at the Catholic Aided school, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average.

Conclusion

2.6 There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

3.0 Upton

3.1 The small planning area of Upton contains three schools, a community Infant and

Junior school on a single site, and a Catholic Aided primary school. None are within the Wirral policy definition of a small school, and none have more than 25% surplus places, although surplus places are relatively high at Overchurch Junior School. Across schools in the area, surplus places are just above the Audit Commission's guidance level at 10.7%.

- 3.2 As in the Greasby area, the possibility of amalgamating Infant and Junior schools should be considered. Overchurch Infant and Junior occupy separate buildings on the same site, with shared kitchen and dining facilities. A preschool playgroup, Little Robins, occupies the former caretakers house. The following table provides the capacity, current and projected numbers on roll and surplus places for the two schools.

	Overchurch Infant	Overchurch Junior	Combined
2009 Net Capacity	269	412	681
2010 Number on roll	244	334	578
2010 Surplus place %	9.3	18.9	15.1
2015 Number on roll (projected)	265	350	615
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	1.5	15.1	9.7

As they share a site, no capital works would be required to establish Overchurch primary school. This amalgamation would have little impact on surplus places, but some financial return would be made to the overall school's budget. For example, the new school would receive a single lump sum, and would have one headteacher, not two. Efficiency savings would be fed back into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils. The other benefits noted in paragraph 2.3 would also apply.

Numbers on roll across the Infant and Junior schools are projected to grow by about 6% over the next five years, but this is well within the capacities of the existing buildings. Based on projected numbers, a primary school would have 615 pupils on roll in 2015. It is right that amalgamation of Infant and Junior schools should be considered. The governing bodies of the two schools have indicated that they do not wish to consider amalgamation at this point.

- 3.3 Over the next five years, numbers on roll across the three Upton schools are projected to remain relatively stable. Pupils attending the schools made the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average.

Conclusion

- 3.4 There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

4.0 Moreton

- 4.1 In the Moreton small planning area there are five primary schools. Three are community schools, one is Church of England Aided and the other Catholic Aided. All three of the community primary schools have more than 25% surplus places, and two of these, Eastway and Sandbrook, are also within the Wirral policy definition of a small school. The Catholic Aided primary school has recently made internal adaptations which reduced the Net Capacity of the school to below the 25% surplus place category. Across all the schools in this area, surplus places are high at 20.3%.

The following table provides the capacity, current and projected numbers on roll and surplus places for the two schools.

	Eastway	Lingham	Sandbrook
2009 Net Capacity	240	399	210
2010 Number on roll	174	240	142
2010 Surplus place %	27.5	39.9	32.4
2015 Number on roll (projected)	168	266	162
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	30.0	33.3	22.9

- 4.2 The presence and popularity of Christchurch CE Aided Primary School (Moreton) results in low levels of in-zone retention in community primary schools in this area. Eastway Primary demonstrates the highest degree of overlap with other Moreton schools, but in general mobility in this central Wirral area is highest with schools in the Upton, Hoylake and Meols areas. The following table summarises the key destinations of pupils by community catchment zone.

School	In-Zone retention	Christ Church CE	Other significant destinations (above 5%)
Eastway	31%	24%	10% Overchurch Infant/Junior; 9% Lingham; 9% Sandbrook
Lingham	34%	28%	11% Great Meols; 7% Overchurch Infant/Junior
Sandbrook	32%	35%	17% Overchurch Infant/Junior

- 4.3 Children's Centre satellites have recently been introduced at Eastway (in conjunction with the Salvation Army) and Lingham Primary Schools. Eastway Primary is also the site of a designated Special Educational Needs base, and as in a 5th November 2009 report to Cabinet, will also be the site for a co-located Area team, bringing together children's services professionals in one multi-disciplinary team to deliver services to that particular area. It is expected that the internal alterations to accommodate the Area team will reduce the Net Capacity at Eastway, and therefore surplus places at that school. The building at Lingham may lend itself to alterations or partial demolition, which will be considered in order to reduce surplus places at that school.
- 4.4 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to rise by about 9%. This would still leave at least two of the three community primary schools with more than 25% surplus places. Pupils attending the schools made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average. At Lingham, in 2009 pupils made more than the expected rate of progress.

Conclusion

- 4.5 The alterations at Eastway are expected to have some impact on reducing overall surplus places in this area, and there is scope to remove accommodation at Lingham Primary School which will be considered. There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that while there is a case for rationalising existing provision, there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change, although the area will be carefully monitored, and a further review carried out in due course or if circumstances change.
- 5.0 **North Wallasey**
- 5.1 The North Wallasey small planning area contains seven primary schools. Five are community schools, and two are Catholic Aided schools. None of these schools have

more than 25% surplus places, and none are small schools under the Wirral policy definition. Overall there were 4.3% surplus places across all seven schools in 2010, within the Audit Commission guidance level.

- 5.2 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to rise by about 2%. The admission numbers at Greenleas, Mount, New Brighton and Liscard Primary Schools have been raised slightly from 2011 onwards to accommodate the projected additional pupils.
- 5.3 Pupils attending all the community schools and Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009 and across a three year average. At Greenleas, in 2009 and over a three year average, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress. At St Albans Catholic Primary, pupils made the expected rate of progress in 2009, but did not make the expected rate of progress over a three year average.

Conclusion

- 5.4 Occupancy levels in North Wallasey are good, and this is projected to continue. It is too soon to say what the impact of the recently approved Joint Church school in Leasowe will be on pupil numbers in North Wallasey, which at present has no Church of England primary school. The opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change, although the area will be carefully monitored, and a further review carried out in due course or if circumstances change.

6.0 South Wallasey

- 6.1 The South Wallasey small planning area contains six primary schools. Five are community schools, and one is a Catholic Aided school. Three community primary schools and the Catholic Aided primary school have more than 25% surplus places, and one of these, Kingsway, is a small school under the Wirral policy definition. Across primary schools in the area, surplus places are high at 22.6%. There is also a Nursery school in this area – Brentwood Early Years Centre.

- 6.2 Current and projected numbers on roll at the primary schools in this area are as follows:

School	Net Capacity 2009	Current Roll 2010	Projected Roll 2015	Projected Surplus %
Egremont	399	287	269	32.5%
Kingsway	177	99	92	48%
Park	350	309	330	5.6%
Riverside	307	194	140	54.5%
Somerville	486	459	502	0%
St Joseph’s Wallasey	285	204	224	21.6%

- 6.3 Phase 3 of the Primary Places Review resulted in a reduction by one school in this area – Poulton Primary School was closed, and pupils guaranteed a place at Park Primary School, which is now being rebuilt under the Primary Capital Programme.
- 6.4 Analysis of where children live and go to school shows high levels of mobility in this area. Of the four schools with high surplus places, Kingsway Primary and Riverside Primary have the lowest levels of in-zone retention at 36% and 35% respectively, as shown in the table below.

School	In-Zone retention	Significant alternative destinations (above 5%)
Egremont	40%	28% Liscard; 9% Somerville; 6% Riverside; 5% New Brighton
Kingsway	36%	24% Riverside; 21% Somerville 5% Liscard
Riverside	35%	33% Somerville 14% Egremont 5% Kingsway 5% Liscard
St Joseph's Catholic	69% (Catholic choice pupils only)	22% St Albans (Catholic choice pupils only)

- 6.5 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to remain stable. As a new build school, Park Primary is likely to continue to be popular with parents.
- 6.6 Pupils attending all the community primary schools made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009 and across a three year average. At Egremont Primary School, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress over a three year average. At St Joseph's Catholic Primary (Wallasey), pupils made the expected rate of progress over a three year average, but made less than the expected rate of progress in 2009.
- 6.7 Despite school re-organisation resulting from Phase 3 of the review, it is clear that surplus places remain unacceptably high at schools in this area, and that while one school is already very small (Kingsway), another is projected to fall into the Wirral policy definition of a small school by 2015 (Riverside). Options for change should be considered.
- 6.8 **A: Closure of Kingsway Primary School**

In this option, Kingsway Primary School would be closed. Places would be allocated to former Kingsway pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places and the Key Stage 1 class size limit.

The closure of Kingsway Primary School was raised as a possible option in the previous review of the South Wallasey area under Phase 3 in 2006, but did not proceed to consultation (see 14th December 2006 minute). At that time, the school had 153 pupils. Four years on, there are now just 99 pupils on roll.

At alternative schools within a one mile radius of Kingsway (excluding those in Birkenhead) there were 437 surplus places in 2010. The catchment zone of Kingsway Primary would be divided between the neighbouring primary schools, Riverside Primary, Somerville Primary and Park Primary. At these three schools there are 181 current surplus places across the age range.

Kingsway has a half-time LA designated Foundation 1 (nursery) class, which in January 2010 was attended by 10 pupils. These places would need to be replicated in the local area, for example Somerville Primary School has a pre-school, but no Foundation 1 class, and consideration could be given to extending the official age range at Somerville to incorporate an F1 class, as was the case at Park Primary when Poulton Primary school closed.

The Kingsway site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

6.9 **B: Amalgamate Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary School**

In this option, both Kingsway Primary and Riverside Primary would be closed. A new school would then open on either site. Former pupils at both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. In 2006 at the last review, the combined roll of the two schools was around 470 pupils. On current numbers on roll, this has now fallen to around 300 pupils, and is projected to fall further to 232 pupils by 2015.

The closure of both schools to open a new school, regardless of site, is likely to involve a statutory competition to establish the operator of the new school, which is expected to be a Foundation school, rather than a community school. Further information about the statutory process, including competitions and Foundation schools is provided in Section 3 of the Cabinet report on Phase 5 of the Primary Places Review on the same agenda.

- **B1: On the Riverside site**

The Net Capacity at Riverside is 307 pupils – this school could accommodate all the pupils from both schools without any major capital works, although the opportunity could be taken to make enhancements.

- **B2: On the Kingsway site**

The Kingsway building would require a three classroom extension to accommodate all the pupils from both schools.

The existing sites of both schools are below the DFE recommended minimum site area for a new school of 232 pupils (based on the combined 2015 projection), although the Riverside site is closest at 80% of recommended size. The Kingsway site is quite restricted at only half the recommended site size.

6.10 It is important to note that the legal decisions in school re-organisation must be made before any commitment to capital works can be made, whether this is a simple refurbishment, minor or major extension, or a whole new school building.

Both sites are Council owned, and future uses of buildings and/or sites could be considered. Any proposed sale of a site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

Brentwood Early Years Centre

6.11 Brentwood Early Years Centre is an LA maintained nursery school with 40 full-time equivalent early years places for three and four year olds. In January 2010 there were 52 part-time pupils attending the school (equivalent to 26 full time pupils). The school is also registered with Ofsted to provide 20 full day care places for children aged birth to 5 years, 48 weeks of the year from 8 am to 6 pm, 10 out of school places for 3 to 5 year olds attending the "main" F1 provision, and 12 term-time only crèche places.

6.12 In 2000, the Foundation Stage curriculum was introduced nationally as a distinct phase of education for children aged 3 to 5, with six statutory areas of learning: creative development; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and communication language and literacy. Guidance makes it clear the importance of continuity and progression across the Foundation stage between F1 (nursery) and F2 (Reception). Across Wirral, just over half of all infant and primary schools have an LA designated F1 class, which allows this continuity to be managed, and eases the transition for pupils into "big school". Some schools have private pre-school provision on site, which while not part of the school, often allows a close working relationship to develop.

6.13 There are three maintained Early Years Centres in Wirral. Two of these, Ganney's Meadow in Woodchurch, and Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre, are now designated as Children's Centres for their respective areas. The site of the Children's Centre in the South Wallasey area is Seacombe Family Centre. Brentwood is now the only Early Years Centre not to have become a Children's Centre. The size of the school is equivalent to a single Foundation 1 class within a primary school setting.

6.14 There are sound educational reasons to operate continuous Foundation Stage provision through school-based Foundation 1 settings, and when discussing the future of primary education in the South Wallasey area, it is valid to consider whether the needs of the community currently served by Brentwood Early Years Centre could be equally or better met by early years provision within primary schools. On this basis, the following option is recommended for consultation.

6.15 C: Closure of Brentwood Early Years Centre

This option involves ceasing to maintain Brentwood Early Years Centre as a separate Nursery school, whilst maintaining Early Years provision in the local area.

The Decision Makers guidance on the closure of Nursery schools indicates that closure can only be approved if equivalent Foundation 1 places can be created at other local primary schools. For example, Somerville Primary School, to which the majority of former Brentwood pupils transfer when they reach F2, is the location for a pre-school of 26 full time equivalent places housed in a temporary mobile, and has expressed an interest in extending the school's age range to incorporate a full-size F1 class.

Within this option, consultation should include:

- C1 - Maintenance of the Brentwood site as Foundation 1 for Somerville Primary School – effectively Somerville would operate as a split site.

Foundation 1 pupils who would formerly have attended Somerville Pre-School and Brentwood Early Years Centre would be housed at the Brentwood building under the governance of Somerville Primary School – a combined roll of approximately 106 part time Foundation 1 pupils in 2010 – equivalent to 53 full time pupils.

- C2 - Replacing the Foundation 1 provision on the Somerville site.

This option would replace the existing mobile accommodation in use by the preschool with an extension to house the Foundation 1 pupils currently accommodated by both Early Years providers.

A major outcome of the 2007 consultation was the high value placed by parents on the extended facilities provided at Brentwood, such as affordable day care and crèche places, enabling parents to work or attend college, and any option for change should ensure that this facility is not lost.

6.16 Early Years Centres do not form part of the Authority's surplus place calculation, as they cater exclusively for pupils below statutory school age.

However, the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) demonstrates that Nursery school places are significantly more expensive to operate than Nursery class places. The following are 2010/11 AWPU for full time equivalent (FTE) child places:

- Nursery class FTE place = £2,546
- Nursery school FTE place = £5,044

This means there are potential revenue savings to be made from changing this Nursery school into a Nursery class, for example reducing institutional costs, single lump sum, single headteacher salary, which would benefit all schools as the released funding is redistributed automatically through the budget.

Conclusion

- 6.17 Surplus place levels in South Wallasey are unacceptably high, and this is projected to continue. The position of Brentwood Early Years Centre, whilst not related to surplus places, should also be considered as part of the re-organisation of primary provision in this area – there are sound educational reasons for school-based nursery classes with enhanced continuity in Foundation provision between F1 and F2, as well as financial savings resulting from maintaining fewer institutions which would be recycled automatically to the benefit of all Wirral's children. The opinion of officers is that consultation on these options for change should be considered, as set out above.
- 7.0 **Primary Schools in Special Measures - update**
- 7.1 **Manor Primary School**
- 7.2 On 3rd June 2009 Ofsted placed Manor Primary School in Special Measures, the most serious category of concern. Schools are placed in special measures if they are deemed to be failing to provide learners with an acceptable standard of education and where the people responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- 7.3 Under Section 15 of the Education Act 2005, as amended by Part 1 of Schedule 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority has a duty to provide a Statement of Action within 10 working days of a school being placed into an Ofsted category of concern and has met this requirement. Additional support is being given to the school, governor vacancies have now been filled, and at the most recent monitoring visit Ofsted judged the school to be making satisfactory progress. The monitoring report is attached as Appendix C.
- 7.4 The Local Authority has a duty to consider various intervention options when a school enters Special Measures, accordingly, these have been considered in relation to Manor Primary School during Phase 6 of the Review. In the case of Manor Primary School, this includes the scope for the school to be federated. On this basis, all primary schools within a 1 mile radius of Manor Primary were contacted and asked to express their views on the future of the school, with particular reference to entering into a federation with Manor Primary School. Manor Primary and three other primary schools responded with various degrees of interest.
- 7.5 On 28th April 2010, the governing body of Manor Primary School met to consider the options presented. This was followed by a meeting on 20th May 2010 at which the possibility of entering into a hard federation with one of the two schools who expressed an interest was considered. A hard federation under Section 26 of the Education Act 2002 means that the two schools will share a single governing body, whilst maintaining separate budgets, performance reporting and Ofsted inspections. It should be noted that the Authority cannot propose federations between schools – it is a matter for the two governing bodies to decide.
- 7.6 In 2005 when first reviewed, Manor Primary retained 70% of in-zone community/CE choice pupils. In 2009, the level of in-zone retention had fallen to 47%, with significant proportions attending Bidston Village CE Primary School (19%) and Hillside Primary School (8%). The catchment zone for the school was expanded to incorporate part of the former St Oswald's CE Primary School zone following the amalgamation of Vyner Primary and St Oswald's CE Primary Schools to form Bidston Village CE Primary School, and it may be that parents are continuing to follow their traditional patterns of preference as siblings follow through that school.
- 7.7 Wirral policy says that schools begin to experience difficulties when the roll falls below 180 pupils. In January 2010 there were 117 pupils on roll, projected to fall to 105 by 2015. New housing in the area is expected to generate about 20 total additional community choice pupils, although there is little sign of much impact on rolls from the first phase of housing development in Beechwood. Were the school to close, there are approximately 100 empty places at nearby Bidston Village CE Primary School, and a further 50 places at Hillside Primary School, as well as a small number of places at St Paul's Catholic Primary School.

7.8 Federation, if approved by both governing bodies, may help to resolve standards issues at Manor, but there remain high levels of surplus places, and the school will still face the challenges of operating as a small school. This will need to be monitored closely, with the possibility of further action if standards do not improve.

7.9 Well Lane Primary School

7.10 Another school forming part of Phase 5 of the Primary Places Review, Well Lane Primary School in the South Birkenhead planning area, was placed by Ofsted in Special Measures on 9th December 2009. The inspection report is attached as Appendix D.

7.11 As with any school in Special Measures, the Authority has a duty to consider whether the school should be closed. With one exception, Mersey Park Primary, surplus places are relatively high in schools across this area. The table below shows for each school the current Net Capacity, number on roll and percentage surplus, with the projected number on roll and percentage surplus in 2015. Shaded cells indicate 25% or more surplus places.

School	Capacity	2010 NOR	2010 Surplus %	2015 NOR (projected)	2015 Surplus %
Bedford Drive	406	340	16.3	370	8.9
Mersey Park	399	362	9.2	354	11.3
Well Lane	243	153	37.0	178	26.8
Rock Ferry	329	246	25.2	241	26.7
St Anne's Catholic	243	173	28.8	171	29.6

7.12 As demonstrated above, current projections indicate that surplus places are likely to remain high at three primary schools despite projected additional pupils at Well Lane Primary. Well Lane Primary is the base for an Area team in the stand alone block to the rear of the school.

7.13 During Phase 1 of the Primary Places Review in 2005, consultations on the closure of Well Lane Primary school were carried out with stakeholders in the South Birkenhead area. The outcome of that consultation was reported to Cabinet at its meeting of 18th July 2005. At that time, the closure of The Dell Primary School was considered a higher priority, and there were concerns about implications for class sizes at adjoining schools should both The Dell and Well Lane close at the same time.

7.14 When last considered for closure in 2005, 43% of in-zone community and Church of England choice pupils attended Well Lane Primary School, and the governing body made a strong case for retaining the school in order to serve its specific community. In 2009, however, just 25% of community/CE choice children who lived in Well Lane's zone attended the school, which means that 75% attend other community/CE primary schools. Unlike the situation for Manor Primary School, in the South Birkenhead planning area there are many primary schools within a small easily traversed area, and the patterns reflect an increase in parental mobility and parental choice as rolls have fallen. Almost as many pupils in Well Lane's catchment area now attend Mersey Park (25%), and Bedford Drive (21%), as attend Well Lane. Significant proportions also attend Rock Ferry (10%) and Devonshire Park (5%).

7.15 Despite a reduction in the Net Capacity from 351 pupils in 2003 to 243 from 2008, including the location of an Area team into part of the school, surplus places at Well Lane have been consistently high for many years and are projected to continue to be so. There is little further scope for rationalization of the existing building. The budget share per pupil at Well Lane was £4,087 in 2010/2011, above the Wirral average of £3,217.

7.16 In 2006, Ofsted judged Well Lane to require a "notice to improve" with particular reference to children's standards and achievements, the curriculum and attendance. In 2007, the school was judged by Ofsted as "satisfactory", however two years on in 2009 Well Lane has been judged as requiring Special Measures. The school has been placed in an Ofsted category of concern twice in a four year period. The Key Stage 2

2009 contextual value added measure indicates that pupils were not making the expected rate of progress.

7.17 Paragraph 5.12 of the 1st October 2009 report on the Phase 5 area said as follows:

“Factors involved in the inclusion of the closure of Well Lane Primary School in 2005’s consultation remain an issue, and it is right to consider whether the school should continue to be retained. It is recommended not to proceed to consultation on closure of Well Lane Primary School at this time. Standards at the school have improved in recent years, and projections indicate that the number on roll should increase over the next five years, although remaining a small school. The area will require careful monitoring and will be considered again in due course, or earlier if circumstances require.”

7.18 Well Lane’s placement in Special Measures constitutes a change in circumstances requiring a review. Closure of the school is one of the outcomes that must be considered.

7.19 Guidance to decision makers indicates there should be a presumption to approve proposals for closure of a school in Special Measures, subject only to checking that there will be sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard in the area to accommodate the displaced pupils and meet foreseeable demand.

7.20 In 2010, compared with 153 pupils on roll, there were 256 surplus places at alternative schools within the South Birkenhead planning area alone and 1,092 surplus places at the 26 schools (excluding St Laurence’s Catholic Primary School and Birkenhead High School Academy, and counting Infant and Junior separately) within a 2 mile radius. A list of the 26 schools, their capacity, current and projected roll and surplus places, plus 2009 and three year average contextual value added scores are given at Appendix E. It should be noted that in addition there is existing scope within the current accommodation to raise the admission number at Mersey Park Primary School (57 to 60).

7.21 The decision makers guidance criteria having been met, it is recommended to begin a consultation with stakeholders regarding a proposal for the closure of Well Lane Primary School. This will take place during Autumn term 2010, the outcome of which will then be reported back to Cabinet later in the year.

8.0 Next steps

8.1 If the Council decides to approve any or all of these options which require consultation, this would involve publishing the options within the areas and inviting comments and suggestions from as wide a range of stakeholders as can be practicably achieved. Most critically this would involve the parents and carers of children in the schools potentially affected. Consultation meetings would therefore be held where views can be expressed directly to LA officers and the Cabinet member. We would also invite written comments. The outcome of these consultations would then be reported back to Cabinet for further consideration, as would any further options that had emerged during the process and the consultation.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The recommendations contained in this report include options for the closure and amalgamation of schools, which in turn produce revenue savings, to the benefit of other schools as the funding is re-distributed. In the short term the Authority could be required to fund any staff severance costs following closures and amalgamation but they may be partly or entirely offset by savings.

10.0 Staffing Implications

10.1 There are none arising as a result of this report. If options are approved for consultation, there will be further detailed reports that will set out all the implications.

11.0 Risk assessment

11.1 Failure to address high levels of surplus places and the issues faced by small schools results in a high risk of wasting resources; consequently less funding would be spent directly on children's education, which could impact on standards.

12.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

12.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils. Consultations on the options set out in this report will need to address very carefully the impact of any preferred options on pupils which are served by the schools concerned.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

14.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

14.1 The provision of efficient and effective education is a vital part of serving local communities; inefficient use of resources is wasteful both in educational and physical resource terms.

15.0 Planning Implications

15.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.

15.2 Any proposals that may arise out of options after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

16.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

16.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

17.0 Social Inclusion Implications

17.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the Primary Capital Programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of any new school buildings, raising the school's profile within the community.

18.0 Local Member Support Implications

18.1 The schools specifically mentioned in the report and appendices, and the Wards in which they are situated, which are Seacombe, Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere and Rock Ferry.

19.0 Background Papers

School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DFE).

School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DFE requirements.

DFE guidance on Surplus Place Removal

Pupil and Capacity data held by the LA

Recommendations

(1) That consultations be undertaken regarding the following options for change in the South Wallasey small planning area:

- A - Closure of Kingsway Primary School
- B - Closure of Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary Schools in order to open a new establishment on the Riverside site (B1) or on the Kingsway site (B2)

- C – Closure of Brentwood Early Years Centre, to be converted to Early Years provision governed by Somerville Primary School either in situ on the Brentwood site (C1), or in new accommodation on the Somerville site (C2).
- (2) That consultations be undertaken regarding the closure of Well Lane Primary School in the South Birkenhead planning area, following that school's placement by Ofsted in Special Measures.
 - (3) That the governing body of Manor Primary School be supported in entering a federation, with close monitoring and a further review if standards do not improve.
 - (4) That all of the public consultations should provide opportunities for other options to be brought forward, considered and reported back to Cabinet.
 - (5) That the remaining Phase 6 small planning areas be reviewed again as necessary or through the usual review process.

Howard Cooper

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