

## **Bathavon Area Review**

A review by the Education, Youth, Culture & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE ON 29th JUNE 2005

### **Aim of review**

The aims of these primary school reviews which are being carried out by the Education, Youth, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel across all school clusters are the removal of surplus places, improving the funding per pupil across the Local Education Authority, and thereby improving the overall quality of the education environment to achieve a better education for all pupils in Bath and North East Somerset.

### **General**

The Panel were unanimously of the opinion that no re-organisation of the primary schools within the Bathavon cluster area was necessary and there was no need for any consideration of this issue within this review. The issue of school amalgamation is not relevant in this cluster.

The Panel noted that all 3 schools were successful and achieved high standards. They are all closely linked to their local communities and are well-supported by parents. They further noted that there had been very few admission appeals for these schools during the past 3 years indicating that parental choice is being satisfied in this cluster. The Panel wished it noted that their recommendations implied no reflection on the quality of the education provided in the schools which was uniformly good and they recognised the schools' commitment to high educational standards.

The panel has gathered a great deal of evidence, undertaken visits, listened to contributions and studied current statistics and future trends. The underlying factor recognised by the panel is that current surplus places in the cluster are 47(10%) (September 04 against an actual take up of 459) with the majority of surplus places at one school. All schools in the cluster are arranged as 'All through' Primary schools.

Population trends show a levelling, or a small reduction in the numbers of primary school age children in the coming years. The Panel took into consideration that within 4 years the situation and trend may be different. They also made a general observation that potential additional housing planned in the area in the immediate future might halt the predicted decline in numbers of children in the cluster.

The Panel made the following specific recommendations with regard to the individual schools:

**None of the recommendations below would be subject to statutory consultation.**

## 1. Batheaston C of E VC Primary School

The current numbers on roll are 216 (maximum size being 219 pupils) with a standard number of 30. There are 7 classes, one for each age group. The Planned Admission Number is currently 30.

The school is slightly oversubscribed. The panel noted the large number of staff (45) which includes 2 headteachers (who job-share) + 7 teaching staff, the rest comprising part time assistants, special needs assistants and speech/occupational therapists, but further noted that the school manages their resources within budget. In addition the panel noted the school's connections with two Bath secondary schools and with Bath Spa University College teacher-training department.

Ofsted recognise Batheaston as a successful inclusive school and that it manages a large number of SEN children very well.

The panel noted that Batheaston has set up activities for the pupils on Wednesday afternoons, to allow staff non-contact time. The children can go home, but nearly all of them opt to go to attend the range of workshops run by the assistants, parents and sports coaches. This is achieved by extension of the school day (shorter breaks) so the curriculum is carried out in 4.5 days. The Panel would welcome feedback in a year's time on the school community's experience of this arrangement.

### **Outside**

The panel noted that the appearance of the playground has since been improved following parents work on the area. The school are looking at developing an environmental area using B&NES seed funding and devolved formula capital which the panel would support. The school buildings seem very scattered. The site is undersized without its own playing field, but has the use of a church field across the road. However, this facility has poor access arrangements.

### **Accommodation**

A new hall must be a priority as the PE curriculum cannot be delivered in the present building. The temporary classrooms are in moderate repair. The Panel recognised the school's long term wishes but recommends that the school should look at how they use their current capital funds for their priorities.

### **Panel Recommendations**

Panel recommend that the school governors continue dialogue with the LEA with regard to the effective use of capital for the improvement of the buildings and open areas. The Panel also recommend that the LEA talk to the diocese about improving the access to the playing field.

The Panel do not consider that the school needs any re-organisation or changes.

## 2. Bathford Cof E VC Primary School

The current numbers on roll are 131 (maximum size being 175 pupils) with a standard number of 25. There are 6 classes, for 7 age groups. The Planned Admission Number is currently 25 but this is planned to be reduced to 22 in September 2006. It is considered that this will manage the small reduction in pupil numbers. Note this is the minimum SN that can be considered for this school. This will bring the Net Capacity to 154.

The panel noted that neighbouring schools in the cluster are full, so Bathford is in a position to absorb any extra children moving into the area. The panel raised concern that the village has an ageing population and the houses are increasingly unaffordable for young families. However, the Bailbrook development and other small housing developments in the area may provide extra pupils.

### **Accommodation**

The school has no hall or multi-use area which means that the school cannot deliver full PE curriculum.

The design of the buildings in the main block is not suitable for their purpose; although the Panel noted that the staff make commendable efforts to make the limited available space as useful as possible. The temporary Elliott buildings are in a poor condition. The site is 150% of required size but development potential is unlikely because of surrounding conservation area. However, the school could consider using devolved formula capital to address achievable projects such as the limited staff toilet facilities.

The panel noted existence of the Bathford Charitable Trust which was for educational projects. The school put in £24K from this towards the IT suite. The panel noted the excellent parental support (especially fundraising) for the school. Also that efforts have been made to make the buildings as usable as possible, given their limitations.

### **Panel Recommendations**

Panel recommend that, subject to the appropriate prioritisation of LEA capital budgets there is a need to take into consideration the totally inadequate 'corridor' used as a 'hall' for assembly, sport and lunch.

The Panel do not consider that the school needs any re-organisation or changes.

#### **3. Bathampton Primary school (Community)**

The current numbers on roll are 116 (maximum size being 105 pupils) with a standard number of 15. There are 4 classes, broadly arranged as reception/yr1, yr1/yr2, yr3/yr4 and yr5/yr6. The Planned Admission Number is currently 15 rising to 18 temporarily giving the Net Capacity of 116.

The Panel noted that this is a well-maintained school with a good state of decoration. The experienced staff manage their mixed-age groups well. The panel noted the school council's initiative on respecting the privacy of pupils at all times

### **Accommodation**

The school has pleasant outside playing areas and make good use of them. The old swimming pool area was used mainly as storage facility.

The site is 138% of required size but the open space is in the green belt so there is unlikely to be development potential to fund educational facilities.

### **Panel Recommendations**

The Panel recommend an imaginative development of the site of the old swimming pool which is currently an unsightly storage area. The governors assisted by LEA officers should consider options, expense and technical difficulties. Implementation could use devolved formula capital and possibly B&NES seed capital

The Panel do not consider that the school needs any re-organisation or changes.

Councillor Andrew Furse

Chair of the Education, Youth, Culture and Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Panel

17th June 2005