

REVIEW OF PRIMARY PROVISION IN THE MIDSOMER NORTON/WESTFIELD AREA

A Review By The Children And Young People Overview And Scrutiny Panel

October 2007

Introduction

The Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel have undertaken a review of Primary school provision in the Midsomer Norton and Westfield area.

This review is part of a wider review process through which all primary schools in Bath & North East Somerset are to be reviewed over the period September 2003 to May 2009.

Each school is initially to be reviewed alongside its partner schools in a geographical area. The schools being considered in the Midsomer Norton/Westfield area review are as follows:

Longvernal Primary
Midsomer Norton Primary
St.John's C of E Primary
Welton Primary
Westfield Primary

Purpose

The purpose of this review has been to make recommendations regarding the primary schools in this area in order to

- Maintain and improve educational standards
- Maximise the use of existing resources (land, buildings and funding)
- Increase access to high quality facilities for children, staff and the community
- Make the choice of a local school the natural and easy choice for parents

Objectives

The aims of this review have been for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider the Primary School provision across the area and to decide whether any changes are necessary (school closures, new schools, enlarging schools etc). If this were the case a further consultation process would be initiated focusing on the school(s) affected. It was also noted at the outset of the review that Councillors may simply acknowledge that the pattern of school provision is working effectively and that no changes are required in the short or medium-term.

The Panel have been considering whether to recommend actions to improve the following areas:

- Educational Standards
- Resources
 - Land
 - enough suitable land, removal of excess land
 - Buildings
 - condition, suitability and sufficiency of school accommodation
 - Funding
- Sufficiency of Places
 - enough places to meet current and forecast demand
 - removal of surplus places

.Review Methodology

The Panel have carried out a number of research and evidence gathering activities in order to inform their decisions in this review.

Reports from the Service

Members of the Panel received a copy of a discussion paper produced by Children's Services, which had also been issued to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school covered by the Review, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of the secondary schools serving the Midsomer Norton/Westfield area, senior officers and Advisors of Children's Services, the Bath & Wells Diocesan Board of Education, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton and Councillors representing the wards in which the schools are located - Midsomer Norton, North Redfield and Westfield. The discussion paper (available at Appendix 2) included information on:

- current numbers on the roll (as at September 2006)
- historical numbers on roll (2001-2005)
- anticipated numbers of children in the area (2007 and beyond)
- levels of recruitment against Standard Number / Planned Admission Number (PAN)
- unit cost per pupil
- outstanding planned maintenance
- school site and building areas

The Panel have been able to discuss these issues with the Service, and the information in the discussion paper has helped to inform their debate and consideration of the key issues.

School Visits

The Panel visited all five primary schools involved in the review in October 2007. They were able to talk to the Headteacher, and see the schools' facilities and layouts.

Contributor Session

A public contributor session was held by the Panel on Monday 8th October, and this marked the end of the evidence gathering stage of this review.

The Panel heard from a number of invited speakers as set out in the outline schedule below:

Session 1 - Ward Councillors
Session 2 - Longvernal Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speakers• Head Teacher• Parent Governors
Session 3 - Midsomer Norton Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speakers• Head Teacher• Parent Governors
Session 4 - St John's C of E Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speakers• Head Teacher• Parent Governors
Session 5 - Welton Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speakers• Head Teacher• Parent Governors
Session 6 - Westfield Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speakers• Head Teacher

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent Governors |
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Notes from this meeting are attached at Appendix 3.

At the Contributor session the Panel were able to ask questions of key stakeholders, and hear their views. It therefore provided the Panel with an excellent opportunity to gather evidence and also to facilitate discussion of the issues.

FINDINGS

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

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

Longvernal Primary

Educational Standards

Educational standards at the school in 2006 were below the LEA and national averages at Key Stage 1 (KS1) for reading and writing but above both averages for maths. At Key Stage 2 (KS2) English, maths and science were all below the LEA and national averages.

The Panel noted that in 2007 children made the overall progress that would be expected from the time they left KS1 to the time they left the school at the end of Year 6 and that standards at the school improved between 2006 and 2007. They wish to extend their congratulations to the staff, who are led by a strong management team for this improvement.

It was noted that the school has small class sizes and is able to provide a high level of small group attention.

A high proportion of the school's pupils (65%) have some form of additional needs. This would include pupils receiving School Action or School Action Plus support and Statemented pupils.

Resources

Land

The school site is large, being almost double the recommended minimum size based on the number of pupils at the school. Team games playing fields are close to (just over) the recommended/required sizes.

It was noted that the school community is making particularly good use of the exterior space in order to deliver the outdoor curriculum.

Buildings

The buildings are close to (just over) the recommended/required sizes. The school has sufficient accommodation although some of the classrooms are undersized and their size, shape and configuration raise suitability issues and inhibit delivery of the curriculum. In particular the Panel noted that the design of the L-shaped classrooms was not ideal for delivery of the curriculum. There are no temporary buildings on site.

The Panel found that the condition of the buildings was satisfactory with the newly refurbished entrance area being particularly pleasant and welcoming. Toilets were in good condition. The staffroom was felt to be particularly small.

It was noted that if the planned admission number were to increase there would be problems with the adequacy of the buildings.

The site and buildings are used by a range of community groups.

Children at the school can access wrap around childcare via the Breakfast Club and the on site After School Club and Holiday Club.

Funding

Costs per pupil are higher than average due to the school's relatively small number of pupils.

The most recent OFSTED inspection of 3rd November 2005 concluded that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sufficiency of Places

Longvernal lowered its Planned Admission Number (PAN) in 2004 to 20, due to falling numbers of pupils on roll. The school has experienced steadily decreasing numbers over the past few years, however numbers coming in to Reception have now stabilised at around 12. The school has 23 (19%) surplus places.

It was noted that there are significant numbers of pupils entering and leaving the school in the course of the school year..

There is sufficient space for any increased future demand, and the school should continue to work on increasing numbers admitted.

Midsomer Norton Primary

Educational Standards

Educational standards at the school in 2006 were above the LEA and national averages at KS1 for reading, writing and maths. At KS2 English, maths and science were all above the LEA and national averages.

The Panel noted that in 2007 children had made better progress overall than would be expected from the time they left KS1 to the time they left the school at the end of Year 6.

The Panel noted that it is difficult for the school to undertake small group work because of space issues within the buildings. Overall the Panel felt that despite the problems with the buildings (see further comments below), the school produced excellent results.

Just under a third of the school's pupils (29%) have some form of additional needs. This would include pupils receiving School Action or School Action Plus support and Statemented pupils.

Resources

Land

The school site is a little over the recommended minimum size, based on the number of pupils at the school. The team games playing fields are approximately 50% over the required size.

Overall the Panel felt that there was enough land but noted the school's concern that they couldn't undertake competitive games matches as the playing fields were not level. The Panel also felt that access to the school was awkward and unattractive and that there were limited outdoor learning and play facilities.

Buildings

The buildings are a little under the recommended size based on the number of pupils at the school. There is a local authority nursery on site.

The school has sufficient teaching accommodation but some of the spaces are undersized. Staff and administration accommodation is undersized. It was particularly noted that there are a high percentage of temporary buildings on site and that these were in poor condition.

The Panel found that IT provision was in a corridor and that the school were also using rooms in the local Methodist church to augment their space availability. Efficient use was being made of what space was available despite the obvious difficulties. Toilets were in a good condition.

Outstanding planned maintenance required at the school is very high. The Panel felt that this is a school that deserves improvements and were concerned that money should not be spent on patching up poor buildings. Rather, the Panel would be keen to see the Governing body work with the Local Authority to develop a longer-term plan for remodelling the school.

Children at the school can access wrap around childcare via the Breakfast Club and via the After School Clubs at Longvernal and Westfield Schools and the Holiday Club

at Longvernal School. (Staff from the After School Clubs at Longvernal and Westfield come to the school and provide an escort service at the end of the school day).

Funding

Total funding per pupil at the school is lower than the area average.

The most recent OFSTED inspection of 11th January 2005 concluded that the school provides good value for money.

Sufficiency of Places

The school is approximately 92% full. Average intake into Reception over the last six years has been 94% of available school capacity and therefore the number on roll over the past few years has remained high.

The PAN has remained at 45 over the past six years and the school has been consistently almost full. The school has 26 (8%) surplus places. The school therefore has enough places, but has limited capacity if there were to be an increase in demand in the future.

St. John's C of E Primary

Educational Standards

Educational standards at the school in 2006 were above the LEA and national averages at KS1 for reading, below the LEA average and the same as the national average for writing and below the LEA average but above the national average for maths. At KS2 English, maths and science were all above the LEA and national averages.

The Panel noted that in 2007 children made less progress overall than would be expected from the time they left KS1 to the time they left the school at the end of Year 6.

A small number of the school's pupils (14%) have some form of additional needs. This would include pupils receiving School Action or School Action Plus support and Statemented pupils.

Resources

Land

The school site is over the recommended minimum size, based on the number of pupils at the school. The team games playing fields are more than double the required size.

The Panel noted that there were good outdoor play areas, and availability of space for delivering the outdoor learning curriculum. They also noted the attractive entrance area to the school.

Buildings

The buildings are a little over the recommended size based on the numbers of pupils at the school. There is sufficient accommodation and no temporary buildings on site.

The Panel noted the impressive adaptation of the buildings. There was an issue with the roof in one area of the school, which was causing a leak into the building. However overall the buildings were in very good condition and well kept.

The school has a large hall as well as a studio area, and toilets are in good condition.

The Panel particularly felt that the interior displays in the corridors were attractive and were conducive to learning.

Children at the school can access partial wrap around childcare via the After School Club and Holiday Club at Longvernal School. (Staff from the After School Club at Longvernal come to the school and provide an escort service at the end of the school day). Consultation with parents/carers shows that breakfast club provision is not required, as the school offers an early drop off (8.15am) facility.

Funding

Costs per pupil are around A3300 lower than the average for this area.

The panel noted that the school had used the available funding effectively.

The most recent OFSTED inspection of 13th January 2003 concluded that the school provides good value for money.

Sufficiency of Places

The school is approximately 96% full. Average intake into Reception over the past six years has been 92% of available school capacity and therefore the number on roll over the past few years has remained high.

The PAN has remained consistent at 60 for the past six years. The school has 18 (4%) surplus places.

Welton Primary

Educational Standards

Educational standards at the school in 2006 were below the LEA and national averages at KS1 for reading, writing and maths. At KS2 English was above the LEA and national average, maths was below the LEA average but above the national average and science was above both the LEA and national averages.

The Panel noted that in 2007 children made the overall progress that would be expected from the time they left KS1 to the time they left the school at the end of Year 6.

They also observed a lack of space for small group work.

A small number of the school's pupils (10%) have some form of additional needs. This would include pupils receiving School Action or School Action Plus support and Statemented pupils.

Resources

Land

The school site is a little under the recommended minimum size, based on the number of pupils at the school. The team games playing fields are over the required size.

The panel noted that there were good playgrounds at the school with choice for pupils of where to play, and that work was planned for improving disabled access to the playgrounds.

Buildings

The buildings are approximately 20% smaller than the recommended size based on the number of pupils at the school.

The school has sufficient teaching spaces but has some undersized staff accommodation and is short of some other accommodation. There is one temporary building on site.

The Panel noted that there was a project planned to replace this temporary building. The school are working with the Local Authority on this and have some Seed Challenge money and some Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) from the Local Authority to help them carry this out.

The Panel felt that the layout of the entrance area was somewhat difficult, and that there was limited outdoor teaching space.

Children at the school can access wrap around childcare via the Breakfast Club and the on site After School Club.

Funding

Costs per pupil are only slightly higher than average.

The most recent OFSTED inspection of 6th May 2003 concluded that the school provides good value for money.

Sufficiency of Places

Average intake into Reception over the past six years has been 84% of available school capacity. As a result, the PAN was reduced to 25 in 2006 from its previous level of 30. The school is currently full with no surplus places.

Westfield Primary

Educational Standards

Educational standards at the school in 2006 were below the LEA and national averages at KS1 for reading, writing and maths. At KS2 English, maths and science were all below both the LEA and national averages.

The Panel noted that in 2007 children made the overall progress that would be expected from the time they left KS1 to the time they left the school at the end of Year 6. Standards are improving, and the Panel congratulate the staff on this, and have noted and endorse the comments made in the January 2007 OFSTED report that the new Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher are a strong leadership team.

The panel noted that children at the school make the progress that would be expected from the time they enter the school in Reception to the time they leave at the end of Year 6.

Just over a fifth of the school's pupils (21%) have some form of additional needs. This would include pupils receiving School Action or School Action Plus support and Statemented pupils.

Resources

Land

The school site is close to (just over) the recommended minimum size, based on the number of pupils at the school. The team games playing fields are approximately 50% over the required size.

The Panel felt that there was sufficient space on site and that it was of a good size.

Buildings

The buildings are a little under the recommended size based on numbers of pupils at the school. The school has sufficient teaching accommodation but has an undersized hall. The KS1 accommodation has undersized classrooms and shared external areas raise suitability issues and inhibit delivery of the curriculum. The Panel particularly noted the open-plan nature of some of these classrooms and the difficulty these posed to delivering the modern curriculum. There is one temporary building on site.

The new KS2 building was very good, as was the shared use of the swimming pool with Fosseway School next door.

The toilets were not the new model but every effort had been made to improve them.

Children at the school can access partial wrap around childcare via the on site After School Club and the Holiday Club at Longvernal School. Plans are currently under way to consult parents/carers concerning demand for Breakfast Club provision at the school.

Funding

Total funding per pupil at the school is lower than the area average.

The most recent OFSTED inspection of 30th January 2007 concluded that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sufficiency of Places

The PAN has remained consistent at 60 for the past six years, however the typical intake is nearer to 50 and the school has experienced steadily decreasing numbers over the last few years. The school has 28 (7%) surplus places.

CONCLUSION

Having duly considered all the evidence placed before them from Officers, Schools, Governors, members of the public, and gathered in the course of their visits and contributor session, the Panel have therefore reached the following conclusions:

- Numbers of pupils currently in the area are sufficient to support the five schools.
- Available information indicates that anticipated new housing developments in the area would lead to a small increase in the number of pupils per year group.
- Longvernal Primary School's intake at approximately 12 per year is low. If this were to continue for the next 2 to 3 years this would lead to numbers in the school of around 85, with 55 surplus places.
- When resources do become available in years to come through the Primary Building Schools for the Future programme, careful consideration will be required to ensure building work is focused on the most appropriate schools. At this stage further evaluation would be needed of surplus places in this cluster.

NEXT STEPS

This report and recommendations will be brought to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's meeting on 26th November 2007. After this, the Panel's recommendations will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, who will be asked through the existing O&S tracking process to provide a response to the Panel within six weeks.

Appendices