

Overview & Scrutiny Review Report

**REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN
CENTRAL BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET –
AREA 2**

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

April 2009

Review Panel Members

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Cllr Colin Barrett (substituting for Cllr Sally Davis on this review)
Cllr Marie Brewer
Cllr David Speirs
Cllr Nathan Hartley
Cllr Andrew Furse
Cllr Marian McNeir

Co-optees:

Chris Batten
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Other Co-optees

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Introduction

The Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel have undertaken a review of Primary school provision in the central Bath and North East Somerset Area 2.

This review is the final part of a wider review process through which all primary schools in Bath & North East Somerset will have been reviewed over the period September 2003 to July 2009.

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

Farmborough C of E VC Primary School
Marksbury C of E VC Primary School
St Mary's C of E VC Primary School (Timsbury)

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 focussing 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

Appendix I provides the full Terms of Reference for this Review.

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 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. The discussion paper (available at Appendix 2) included information on:

- current numbers on the roll (as at September 2008)
- historical numbers on roll (2003-2007)
- anticipated numbers of children in the area (2009 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 three primary schools involved in the review in January 2009. 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 16th March, 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:

	Item / speakers
5.30 pm	Chair's introduction
5.30 pm	Session 1 – Farmborough C of E VC School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head Teacher• Parent Governors• Public Speakers
5.50 pm	Session 2 – Marksbury C of E VC School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head Teacher• Parent Governors• Public Speakers
6.10 pm	Session 3 – St Mary's C of E VC, Timsbury <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head Teacher• Parent Governors• Public Speakers
6.30 pm	Final Comments from Panel
6.40 pm	Meeting Close

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

Whilst undertaking this review, and considering all the information put before them regarding the three schools, the Panel were mindful that care must be taken when analysing the educational performance results of small year groups and making comparisons with schools that are significantly different in size. In small schools one pupil can have a very marked effect on the percentage figures. OFSTED makes the following statement:

Care should be taken when analysing the results of small year groups and small schools. The effect of one additional pupil on, for example, a school percentage measure can be considerable, whereas in larger schools the effect will be less marked. This does not mean that analysing the performance of small cohorts is invalid. Rather it means that the findings from such analyses should be interpreted carefully, and may need to be augmented with other information or considered over more than one year.

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

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

Farmborough C of E VC Primary School

Educational Standards

Educational Standards at the school in 2008 at KS1 were below the LEA and national averages for reading and writing and above the national and LEA average for maths. At KS2 English, maths and science were all above the LEA and national averages.

The most recent OFSTED report concluded that Farmborough C of E VC Primary is a good school (Inspected March 2008).

Resources

Land

The school site is approximately 50% bigger than the recommended minimum size, the buildings are just over two thirds bigger than the recommended minimum size and the team games playing fields are more than 50% bigger than the required size.

Buildings

Outstanding planned maintenance required at the school is low. The school has the appropriate number of classrooms for its pupils on roll and there are no temporary buildings on site. The school has on site playing fields and a playgroup occupies a refurbished space on site. The school has sufficient small group and other space.

The school has an on site kitchen and also provides meals for Marksbury C of E VC Primary. Take up of school meals is 70%.

Funding

Total funding per pupil at the school is slightly above the area average.

Sufficiency of Places

The school is approximately 84% full. Average intake into Reception over the past six years has been 59% of available school capacity and the number on roll over the past few years has gradually fallen.

The Planned Admission Number (PAN) was reduced from 25 to 20 in 2007 and was further reduced to 15 for admissions in September 2008.

There is currently one known proposed development of 24 new homes in the area, at Timsbury, which is projected to generate 5 primary age pupils. Also a possible development of 30 dwellings at Farmborough would generate approximately 8 primary age pupils if it were to go ahead.

The map of pupil locations shows that children currently attending the school come from Farmborough and from across quite a wide area to the south of Farmborough as far as Midsomer Norton and from Peasedown to the east.

Recommendation:

- 1) No action is recommended at Farmborough C of E VC Primary school at the present time.**

Marksbury C of E VC Primary School

Educational Standards

Educational Standards at the school in 2008 at KS1 were below the LEA and national averages for reading, below the LEA and above the national average for writing and below the LEA and above the national average for maths. At KS2 English and maths were both below the LEA and national averages and science was above both the LEA and national average.

The most recent OFSTED report concluded that Marksbury C of E VC Primary is a good school (Inspected January 2008).

Resources

Land

The school site is approximately one quarter of the recommended minimum size, the buildings are approximately two thirds of the recommended minimum size and the school has no on site team games playing field.

Buildings

Outstanding planned maintenance required at the school is low. On completion of a new teaching resource space, the school now has sufficient classrooms for its number on roll. Two classrooms are undersized and one is a temporary building and separate from the main school. There is one temporary building on site. The hall is very undersized and the library is undersized. The school is on a very constrained site and has no on site playing fields. An off site field is leased for school use.

School meals are currently provided by Farmborough C of E VC Primary as Marksbury has no on site kitchen. Take up of school meals is 83%.

Funding

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

Sufficiency of Places

The school is over capacity and the number of pupils on roll has been steadily increasing over the past six years. The new foundation stage teaching resource space which was completed in Autumn 2008 has increased the net capacity from 90 to 105.

Marksbury's PAN was increased from 13 to 15 in 2008.

There is currently one known proposed development for 24 new homes in the area, at Timsbury, which is projected to generate 5 primary age pupils. Also a possible development of 30 dwellings at Farmborough would generate approximately 8 primary age pupils if it were to go ahead.

The map of pupil locations shows that the children currently attending the school come from a very wide rural area surrounding the school, across the central Bath and North East Somerset area.

Recommendation:

2) No action is recommended at Marksbury C of E VC Primary school at the present time.

St Mary's C of E VC Primary School Timsbury

Educational Standards

Educational Standards at the school in 2008 at KS1 were above the LEA and national average for reading and writing and above the national and level with the LEA average for maths. At KS2 English was above both the LEA and national average, above the national and level with the LEA average for maths and above the national and below the LEA average for science.

The most recent OFSTED report concluded that St. Mary's C of E VC Primary is a good school (Inspected January 2007).

Resources

Land

The school site is over three times bigger than the recommended minimum size, the buildings are just over 50% bigger than the recommended minimum size and the team games playing fields are nearly four times bigger than the required size. The school site was once occupied by a secondary school.

Buildings

Outstanding planned maintenance required at the school is high. The school has the appropriate number of classrooms for its number on roll. The IT suite is undersized and one classroom is on the first floor. An on site playgroup is accommodated in a newly completed extension. There is extensive circulation space as the school was once a secondary school. There are no temporary buildings on site. There is a large team games playing field on site.

The school has an on site kitchen and take up of school meals is 61%.

Funding

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

Sufficiency of Places

The school is approximately 97% full. Average intake into Reception over the past six years has been 95% of available school capacity and the school has experienced stable numbers over the past few years. The PAN has remained consistent at 30 for the past six years.

There is currently one known proposed development of 24 new homes in the immediate area, at Timsbury, which is projected to generate 5 primary age pupils. Also a possible development of 30 dwellings at Farmborough would generate approximately 8 primary age pupils if it were to go ahead.

The map of pupil locations shows that the majority of children currently attending the school come from Timsbury and Camerton and to the east and the remainder from quite a wide area mainly to the south.

Recommendation:

1) No action is recommended at St. Mary's C of E VC Primary school at the present time.

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:

- All three schools provide an inclusive community by both engaging with parents and carers of the children at the schools and by encouraging school facilities to be used by local community groups.
- The appearance of all three schools was of an excellent standard both externally and internally.
- The panel note that Farmborough Parish Council recognises that there is a lack of affordable housing in the area and that they are actively lobbying for this type of development to take place.
- The panel support Farmborough in its application for Eco-school status and in its fundraising efforts for solar panels.
- The panel feel that despite Marksbury's small site, the space is utilised well and were also impressed by the attempts the school makes to engage with parents and carers of children who live outside of the immediate area.
- The panel felt that although St. Mary's school occupies a large site, the space is used well by the school and by local groups.

NEXT STEPS

This report and recommendations will be brought to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 18th May 2009. After this, the Panel's recommendations will be incorporated in a report and submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children's Service for a Single Member Decision in July 2009.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Terms of Reference for the Review
Appendix 2	Discussion Paper
Appendix 3	Notes of the Contributor Session