

CONSULTATION ON THE VIABILITY OF ALLENPARK INFANT SCHOOL

Report of the Director of Education

SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Pupil numbers at Allenspark Infant School have fallen significantly and projections are for this trend to continue (paragraph 5.1).
- 1.2 Pupil numbers directly affect the school budget and, the smaller a school becomes, the more difficult it is to provide for all the learning needs of the pupils, and this is the situation faced by Allenspark (paragraphs 5.2 and 5.4).
- 1.3 Following discussions with the governors and their request to look at the future of the school, the LEA produced the consultation document attached as Appendix One to this report (paragraphs 5.2 – 5.4).
- 1.4 The consultation document proposed two options: to take no action in anticipation that pupil numbers will increase in future years; to consider the closure of the school and for pupils to attend either Allenton or Moorhead Primary Schools. Alternative proposals were also welcomed (paragraphs 5.7 - 5.9).
- 1.5 Thirty responses were received. Three favoured taking no action, eighteen favoured option two to consider closure and nine suggested alternative proposals. Comments received, together with the Officers' comments are outlined in Appendix Four (paragraphs 5.10 -5.13).

OPTION CONSIDERED

- 2 Following the resignation of the last headteacher and discussions with officers, the governors of Allenspark Infant School took the decision to ask the LEA to consider the future viability of the school. The consultation document set out two clear options for the future, and invited any further suggestions. These options have been considered in determining the recommendation to cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing the closure of Allenspark Infant School and for pupils to attend Moorhead or Allenton Primary Schools from September 2003.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Pupil numbers at Allenpark Infant School have fallen year on year and are predicted to fall further by 2005.
- 4.2 There are significant budgetary pressures created in a school with falling pupil numbers, which affect the extent and quality of education provision. This impacts on a school's ability to provide the full range of curriculum resources to implement the curriculum. This is the situation faced by Allenpark.
- 4.3 LEAs are required to manage school place provision and ensure quality and value for money. Allenpark Infant School has over 28 per cent surplus places as outlined in the School Organisation Plan. The DfES requires the LEA to develop a plan of action for schools with over twenty-five per cent surplus places. The Audit Commission's benchmark for considering action is set at 15%.
- 4.4 There are places available at neighbouring schools, should Allenpark Infant School close.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 Allenpark Infant school is in a difficult position in that numbers have fallen over the last five years. In 1998 there were 100 pupils on roll and in 2002 there were 68 pupils on roll. The school currently has 51 pupils on roll. Numbers are estimated to drop further to 27 pupils by 2005.
- 5.2 The budgetary pressures created by low and declining pupil numbers are intense. The school's costs, covering premises, administration and energy, are to a very large extent fixed and gradually take up an increasing share of the school's budget. This inevitably impacts on a school's ability to provide the full range of staffing and curriculum resources necessary to implement the required curriculum for the full ability range and to provide for all the learning needs of the pupils. This will increasingly be the position at Allenpark Infant School.
- 5.3 Legally, every school has its budget and must work within that. The school has balanced its budget each year, but the head and governors have had to make repeated reductions in staffing and resources to achieve this. The predicted numbers for 2005 suggest that it may no longer be possible to construct a balanced budget.
- 5.4 At the start of the 2001/02 financial year, the school's staffing was a Head plus 4.5 teachers. One teacher left in summer 2001 and was not replaced. The 2002/03 budget plan included a reduction of 0.5 teachers. In the event, the head teacher left to take up another headship, so there are now 3.5 teachers and the school has a part-time acting head teacher. Appointment of a full time-head would again mean the need for further staffing reductions. This would clearly be the case with the 2003-2004 budget
- 5.5 Allenpark Infant School's Ofsted inspection in May 2002 outlined a positive ethos in the school and the very good relationship between the school, parents and pupils. The report noted that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory.
- 5.6 Although the Ofsted Report states that the school provides "satisfactory value for money", it clearly acknowledges "the amount of money the school receives is well above average".
- 5.7 At the time the previous head left in July 2002, there was discussion between officers and governors in the context of the School Organisation Plan. The governors agreed that the Council should look at the future of the school. The Education Service produced the consultation document attached as Appendix One to this report. The document proposed two options:
- to take no action in anticipation that pupil numbers will increase in future years
 - to consider the closure of the school and for pupils to attend either Allenton or Moorhead Primary Schools

Alternative proposals were also welcomed as part of the response sheet

- 5.8 The consultation document was circulated widely to allow as many responses as possible. The circulation list is attached as Appendix Two. The consultation process started on 27 January 2003 and closed on 10 March 2003.
- 5.9 A consultation open meeting was also held at Allenpark Infant School on 5 February 2003 for parents, staff and governors from Allenpark Infant, Moorhead Primary and Allenton Primary. The points raised during the meeting are shown in Appendix Three, together with officers' comments.
- 5.10 The responses to the options for consultation received are summarised in the following table:

Options	No. of responses
1. Take no action	3
2. To consider closure and for pupils to attend either Allenton or Moorhead primary schools.	18
3. Alternative Proposal	9
Total responses received:	30

There has been a low response from parents. There were only two responses for option 1, no response for option 2 and one response suggesting an alternative proposal.

Option 1 – Take no action - The three respondents comprised 2 parents and one member of school staff.

Option 2 – To consider closure and for pupils to attend Moorhead or Allenton Primary Schools - The eighteen respondents comprised:

- nine staff from a number of schools – Ashcroft Primary, Becket Primary, Chaddesden Park Infant, Chellaston Infant, Moorhead Primary, Nightingale Infant, Portway Infant, St Mary's Catholic Primary and Shelton Infant.
- one response from a local resident
- five responses from governors from various schools - Allenton Primary, Chellaston (unspecified school), Dale Primary, Normanton Village Infant and Southgate Infant
- two responses from community organisations – Derby West Indian Community Association and Asian Advisory Service.
- one response from the Church of England Diocese for option 2, but recognising smaller schools are possible in rural areas.

Alternative proposal – The nine responses suggesting an alternative proposal comprised:

- two from Allenpark Staff and Parent / Carer
- one staff response from St Chads CE (C) Nursery and Infant School

- three responses from governors, including Allentown Governing Body
 - one from Derbyshire Federation of Parent Teacher Associations
 - one from NUT
 - one from NASUWT.
- 5.11 The comments received on the consultation response sheets and Officers' comments are summarised in Appendix Four. There have been varied responses relating to the strengths of the school, uncertainty on the future of the school impacting on pupil numbers and suggestions that Allentown Infant School should become an annexe of either Allentown or Moorhead Primary Schools.
- 5.12 Officers' comments on the responses received are outlined in Appendix Four.
- 5.13 Five responses suggested forming a federated governing body between Allentown and another school.
- 5.14 The school governance regulations on federation of governing bodies provide that the governing bodies of two or more maintained schools may be federated under one single governing body, after complying with prescribed procedures. Proposals to federate do not require statutory proposals.
- 5.15 Forming a federated governing body is not really an option in this case. The trend in falling primary pupil numbers in the Allentown area and its impact on local schools, primarily Allentown Infant School, has resulted in this consultation exercise. The smaller the school becomes, the more difficult it is to provide for all the learning needs of the pupils. Federation will not make a substantial difference if numbers continue to fall.
- 5.16 The majority of the responses received, 18 out of 30 responses, favoured option two which was to consider closure of Allentown Infant School and for pupils to attend Moorhead or Allentown Primary Schools.
- 5.17 The history of good quality education provision at Allentown Infant School is recognised. In the circumstances, however, it is also important to consider this proposal to ensure that the children continue to receive a good local education with a wide-ranging curriculum supported by sufficient resources and staff.
- 5.18 Having considered all the factors and responses, it is concluded that approval should be given to publish a formal public notice on option two - closure of Allentown Infant School and for pupils to attend Moorhead or Allentown Primary Schools from September 2003.
- 5.19 In accordance with statutory requirements, a public notice would need to be published for a two-month statutory period, inviting comments and objections on the proposal. The public notice would be posted at the school, in the locality and published in the local press. At the end of the consultation period, a report on the outcome would be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

- 5.20 The report is likely to be presented to Cabinet on 24 June 2003. Proposals from this meeting would then be presented to the School Organisation Committee (SOC) on 26 June 2003. The SOC is responsible for determining the final outcome.
- 5.21 Should Cabinet and SOC approve the school closure in June 2003, the proposal can be implemented from September 2003. The Education Service is confident that the children will have provision for a good education, available locally in Allenton and Moorhead Primary Schools.
- 5.22 Parents of children currently attending Allentpark would be offered a choice of Moorhead Primary School, whose normal area already covers the school, and where pupils generally transfer for KS2, and Allenton Primary School. Sufficient places can be made available in either school to meet any pattern of parental preference.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The total annual savings within the funding formula for schools would be £75,174 if Allentpark were to be closed. These savings relate to Small School Protection, the flat rate amount allocated to all schools and the funding for premises factors. This represents 45% of Allentpark's total budget.
- 6.2 The existing policy is that savings from school closures or amalgamations are normally redistributed to other schools in the same Key Stage. There may be offsetting costs from redundancies or early retirements, though these may be incurred in any case because of the effect of falling pupil numbers on the school's budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The LEA will be required to publish formal statutory notices of a single proposal in accordance with the Standards and Framework Act 1998. Public notices would be followed by two-month consultation period, during which objections to the proposal could be made to the LEA.
- 7.2 At the end of the two-month period, a further report would be presented to Council Cabinet on 24 June 2003. Proposals from this meeting would then be presented to the School Organisation Committee on 26 June 2003. This committee would be responsible for determining the final outcome and the intended implementation date of September 2003.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Within the powers of the individual governing bodies, we would work closely with teaching and non-teaching staff at the school and do everything we could to ensure continued employment either at other schools, or elsewhere in the Council. This would involve full consultation with trade union representatives.
- 8.2 Every effort would be made to avoid compulsory redundancies. It is envisaged that continued employment maybe possible with the transfer of pupils and resources to the two local schools.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9. None.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10. None.

Contact Officer: Gurmail Nizzer / 01332 716951 / Gurmail.Nizzer@derby.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix One – Consultation document on the future viability of Allenpark Infant School

Appendix Two – Consultation document circulation list

Appendix Three – Allenpark Open meeting – points raised

Appendix Four – Responses received from consultation / LEA Comment

Background Papers: None



DERBY CITY COUNCIL
Education Service

Consultation on the viability of Allenpark Infant School

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DE1 3NN

January 2003

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Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ को पढ़ने या इसके किसी भाग का अनुवाद कराने के लिए सहायता चाहिए तो हम से सम्पर्क करें **01332 716924**

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਂ ਇਸਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਭਾਗ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਾਨ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। **01332 716924**

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کو پڑھنے میں یا کسی حصہ کا ترجمہ کرانے کی ضرورت ہو،
تو ہم سے رابطہ کریں، **01332 716924**

Introduction

This consultation document deals with the important issue of the viability of Allenpark Infant School. After discussion with Local Education Authority (LEA) officers, the governors of Allenpark Infant School took the decision to ask the LEA to consider the viability of the school.

Summary

Allenpark Infant School is in a difficult position as pupil numbers have fallen over the last five years. In 1998 there were 100 pupils on roll and in 2002 there were 68 pupils on roll. The school currently has 51 pupils on roll. Numbers are projected to drop further in 2004 and 2005.

Legally, every school has its own budget and must work within that. The school has only just balanced its budget each year. At the start of the 2001/02 financial year, the school's staffing was a Head plus 4.5 teachers. One teacher left in summer 2001 and was not replaced. The 2002/03 budget plan included a reduction of 0.5 teacher. In the event, the head teacher left to take up another headship, so there are now 3.5 teachers and the school has a part-time acting head teacher. Appointment of a full time-head would again mean the need for further staffing reductions.

The smaller the school becomes, the more difficult it therefore is to provide for all the learning needs of the pupils, and this is the situation faced by Allenpark. The question is: would future pupils have a better education in a larger school, with better funding.

In considering the governors request to look at the future of the school, the LEA has produced this consultation document, which suggests two options:

- to take no action in anticipation that pupil numbers will increase in future years.
- to consider the closure of the school and for pupils to attend either Allenton or Moorhead Primary Schools. We would, however, also welcome any alternative proposal you may suggest using the response sheet.

Consultation on the options in this paper will last until **10 March 2003**. There will be a meeting for the parents, governors and staff from Allenpark, Moorhead and Allenton Schools at Allenpark Infant School on **5 February 2003** at 6 p.m.

If a change is proposed we intend to report the outcome of the consultation to Council Cabinet on **1 April 2003**. We would publish the single proposal as a statutory notice as soon as possible after then.

I hope you will join the debate and let us know what you think.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Flack". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line. A period follows the signature.

Andrew Flack
Director of Education

1.0 General Considerations

- 1.1 The governors of Allentown Infant School have taken the decision to approach the LEA to consider the viability of the school.
- 1.2 There is a trend of falling primary pupil numbers in the Allentown area and there has been a decline in pupil numbers in most of the local schools. This falling trend is impacting particularly seriously on Allentown Infant, as the school previously had low numbers, which are continuing to fall. Numbers have fallen over the last five years as shown below. The forecast is for a continuing trend in falling numbers in future years:

Year	Pupils on roll
1998	100
1999	98
2000	85
2001	83
2002	68
2003	51
2004	38*
2005	27*

(*Estimated numbers from Allentown)

- 1.3 Allentown Infant is currently the smallest school in the city with a continuing trend in falling numbers. The unfortunate position for the school, as recognised by the school governors, is that pupil numbers have fallen year on year from 100 pupils on roll in 1998 to 51 pupils in 2003. This is a fall of half the pupils.
- 1.4 If numbers fall to 51 in 2003, this will mean a loss of 49 pupils since 1998. With only 51 pupils on roll in 2003, Allentown should be a school with two classes. It is very difficult for a school to operate with only two classes and deliver the full curriculum. There will be major problems if numbers continue to fall to 27 pupils by 2005 as estimated.
- 1.5 Allentown Infant School's budget, at £3,230 per pupil, is higher than all but one primary school and all but two secondary schools in the city. Around eighty per cent of a school's budget share is based on pupil numbers.
- 1.6 Schools are funded by formula. For infant age pupils, the amount of funding in the schools funding formula is £1,346 per pupil. This means a drop of 40 pupils in a school leads to approximately £50,000 loss in funding for a school. Falling numbers are having a major impact on the school. In addition to loss of funding due to lower pupil numbers, some national changes, such as changes in government grants, also mean the school will lose a further £11,000 in the next financial year.
- 1.7 The funding system produces a very low annual budget for Allentown Infant School. This budget is not sufficient to sustain staffing levels, deliver the full curriculum and develop curriculum resources. This affects the most critical issue, which are the learning opportunities for the pupils.

- 1.8 The school has only just balanced its budget each year. The governors understandably, used the small carry forwards from previous years to balance the budget in anticipation that numbers would increase in subsequent years. This has, unfortunately, not happened and numbers have, in fact, continued to fall.
- 1.9 With a lower budget share, this inevitably affects staffing levels. At the start of the 2001/02 financial year, the school's staffing was Head plus 4.5 teachers. One teacher left in summer 2001 and was not replaced. The school would not otherwise have balanced the budget.
- 1.10 The 2002/03 budget plan included a reduction in staffing of 0.5 teacher. In the event, the head teacher left to take up another headship, so the staffing is 3.5 teachers and the school has a part-time acting head from Chellaston Infant School. Appointment of a full time head would, again, mean the need for a further staffing reduction.
- 1.11 The school's Ofsted inspection in May 2002 outlined the positive ethos in the school and the very good relationship between the school, parents and pupils. The report outlined that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Standards in national tests show that the school's results are average in mathematics and writing, and above average in reading, when compared with similar schools. The overall quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory. At the time of the Ofsted inspection, there were 68 pupils on roll.
- 1.12 The Ofsted report indicated that the overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below what is expected for their age. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of children achieve the targets in the national Early Learning Goals in their personal, social, emotional, mathematical and physical development.
- 1.13 The Ofsted report outlined that the school's accommodation is less than satisfactory, although the school makes good use of the space it has. The report also indicates that, in order to improve further, there should be a provision of a dedicated outdoor area and suitably located toilets for children in the Foundation Stage.
- 1.14 One of the improvement points indicated in the report outlined that there is no dedicated outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage and resources for teaching and learning are less than satisfactory in literacy, religious education and history and geography.
- 1.15 The full requirements of the National Curriculum have to be met no matter the size of the school and the number of teaching staff. This means that teachers have to cover a number of curriculum subjects and areas of school organisation, providing clear direction and monitoring the impact of these across the school. The result is a considerable amount of strain on the teaching staff in a small school such as Allenpark Infant School. The difficulties of such multi-tasking often leads to the situation highlighted in the school's recent Ofsted Inspection; *"the management of the subjects is not rigorous and this is a key issue because it has had a negative impact on standards."* The school is addressing this as new procedures are being implemented.

- 1.16 Although the Ofsted Report states that the school provides “*satisfactory value for money*” but it clearly acknowledges that “*the amount of money the school receives is well above average*”. The budgetary pressures created by small and declining pupil numbers are intense. The school’s costs covering premises, administration and energy are to a very large extent fixed and gradually take up an increasing share of the school’s budget. This inevitably impacts on a school’s ability to provide the full range of curriculum resources necessary to implement the required wide-ranging curriculum for the full ability range. Quite naturally a small school may find it has to prioritise its spending on Literacy and Numeracy resources to the detriment of other areas of need. Again this is highlighted in the Ofsted Report: “*There are very limited resources in history, geography and art..... the range of books in the library is poor and insufficient. There are insufficient non-fiction books on topic subjects to support cross-curricular links and to encourage early research skills.*” The school is currently addressing this point.
- 1.17 Falling pupil numbers and the resulting drop in the school’s annual budget does not allow for sufficient investment in curriculum resources. £1,000 was spent on resources in 2000/01, which was the second lowest spend per pupil of any school in the city, despite the school having one of the highest budgets per pupil.
- 1.18 Numbers are currently projected to fall further, possibly as low as 27 pupils. This will result in a further reduction in the school’s budget share and make it extremely difficult for the governors to set a balanced budget.
- 1.19 School budgets have to be set on the basis of firm pupil number predictions. The governors are required to set a balanced budget, or with a licensed deficit, with the need to balance the budget over no more than two or three years.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 In considering the governors request to look at the future viability of the school, the LEA has produced this consultation document. The aim of the consultation is to come up with one preferred option, which may result in the need for the publication of formal statutory notices.

2.2 Option 1

To take no action. This option could involve delaying taking action for at least another year if there is a clear indication that pupil numbers will increase to a level to ensure future viability.

The continuing trend in falling numbers over the last five years, together with numbers predicted to fall to around 27 pupils by 2005, indicates this to be a limited option. Based on these numbers, we think it is difficult to be optimistic about the school’s ability to continue providing a good education for its pupils.

It is because of numbers that the governors and LEA are concerned with the future of the school and the education for the children.

2.3 Option 2

Based on existing pupil number information and the continuing trend in falling pupil numbers, which will affect the school's budget, one option is to consider the closure of Allenpark Infant School at the end of this school year, at the earliest.

If the proposal were to close the school, pupils could attend other local schools. The existing normal area could be divided between local schools, for example, Allenton and Moorhead Primary Schools. Many pupils from Allenpark currently go to these schools at junior transfer.

Depending on the preferred option, building may be needed to provide extra accommodation for additional pupils. The Council will need to ensure there is sufficient accommodation at these schools. Initial indications are that Allenton and Moorhead Primary Schools have sufficient accommodation for additional pupils.

2.4 Alternative Proposal

Staff, parents or governors may have different ideas that should be considered. An alternative proposal can be suggested during the consultation using the response sheet attached.

3.0 Personnel Issues

Prior to any formal proposals being made and the publication of statutory notices, we will undertake a full consultation exercise in which trade union and professional association representatives, together with all staff potentially affected, will be fully involved.

Within the powers of individual governing bodies, we would do everything possible to ensure employment at other schools.

If the proposal were to close the school, we would aim to work closely with teaching and non-teaching staff at the school and do everything we could to ensure continued employment either at other schools, or elsewhere in the Council.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 Consultation on the options in this paper will last until **10 March 2003**. By this time all interested parties will have had six weeks to consider the document and respond. Clearly the options will affect certain local schools, for example, Allenpark Infant, Allenton Primary and Moorhead Primary. There will be a meeting for the parents, governors and staff from these schools held at Allenpark Infant School on **Wednesday 5 February 2003 at 6 p.m.**

- 4.2 All the opinions expressed at the meeting and in writing, will be carefully considered as part of the consultation process. We intend the outcome of the consultation to be reported to Council Cabinet on **1 April 2003**. Following on

from this meeting, if a change is proposed, we would publish a single proposal in accordance with the Standards and Framework Act 1998. Public notices would be followed by a period of two months, during which objections to the proposal could be made to the LEA.

- 4.3 At the end of the two-month consultation, a further report would be presented to Council Cabinet on **24 June 2003**. Proposals from this meeting would then be presented to the School Organisation Committee on **26 June 2003**. This committee would be responsible for determining the final outcome.
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Response Sheet

The Council will consider all responses before it recommends a specific proposal. It would help us if you would use this form for your response.

Please return to:

**Gurmail Nizzer,
Education Service,
Middleton House,
27 St Mary's Gate,
Derby
DE1 3NN**

By 10 March 2003

If you would like further information on the consultation process, please contact Gurmail Nizzer on 716951.

It would help our analysis of the responses to know something about your interest. Please indicate, with an X, what the nature of your interest is and the school or schools you are connected with:

School / Area			
Parent / Carer			
School Staff			
School Governor			
Other, please indicate			
Are you responding as:			
An individual			
On behalf of a particular group / organisation			
Name of group / organisation			

Tick one of the following boxes to show your preference.

Option 1	Take no action	
Option 2	Closure of Allentown Infant School and plan for increased numbers at Allenton and Moorhead Primary schools	
Alternative Proposal	Please give us your alternative proposal over the page	

RESPONSE SHEET – ALLENPARK CONSULTATION
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Comments / Alternative proposal
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Response name:

Address:

**Please return to: Gurmail Nizzer,
Education Service,
Middleton House,
27 St Mary's Gate,
Derby
DE1 3NN**

By 10 March 2003

Circulation of Allenspark Infant consultation document

- Parents and Staff – Allenspark, Allenton and Moorhead
- Schools within two mile radius of Allenspark
- Chair and vice chairs of the above schools
- All remaining schools
- Early Years and Childcare Providers
- Councillors
- Libraries
- Derby Evening Telegraph / Radio Derby / RAM FM / Derby Trader
- NASUWT / NUT / SHA / NAHT / Unison
- Church of England and Catholic Dioceses
- Derby Association of Governors
- Southern Derbyshire Health Trust / Central Derby Primary Care Team
- Sure Start programme managers
- Umbrella / Step Forward / Citizens Advice Bureau / Child Concern
- Racial Equality Council / Asian Advisory Centre / Asian Women's Associations / Indian Community Centre / Pakistani Community Centre / West Indian Community Centre /

Consultation on the viability of Allenspark Infant School

Open Meeting held on Wednesday 5 February 2003

Allenspark Infant School

Points raised during meeting	LEA Comment
1. Why was an additional classroom built some years ago if the future viability of the school was going to be a problem?	<i>LEAs had a legal requirement to ensure Infant classes were below 30 from September 2001. In order to meet this requirement, additional classrooms were built at a number of schools in the city, including Allenspark, with government funding.</i>
2. The consultation process is being rushed and should have started much earlier. The proposed timescale makes redeployment of staff very difficult if closure is proposed from September 2003? The closure should be delayed particularly as the Council has no redeployment policy.	<i>There is a detailed statutory process that needs to be followed for any proposed school changes.</i> <i>If the proposal were to close the school, we would work closely with teaching and non-teaching staff at the school and their trade unions to do everything we could to ensure continued employment either at other schools, or elsewhere in the Council.</i>
3. Why can the normal area for Allenspark not be widened to allow more pupils to attend the school?	<i>This will impact on other local schools that are likely to oppose such a proposal. This will result in surplus places at those schools.</i> <i>Parents can currently, if they wish, express a preference for Allenspark even if they live outside the normal area.</i>
4. If the proposals are going to need capital investment at Moorhead or Allenton, why can these funds not be invested to keep Allenspark open?	<i>There is no proposal for significant capital investment at Allenton or Moorhead Primary schools.</i>
7. Where do the pupil forecasts originate?	<i>The projections follow discussions with the school.</i>
8. Why was the school advised not to advertise for a headship?	<i>It is extremely difficult to recruit for a headship at a school that has low pupil numbers. The school had a difficult budget position with falling pupil numbers and there was uncertainty over staffing levels in order to set a balanced budget, as required. Under the School Organisation Plan it was necessary to discuss the future of the school with Governors</i>

9. Why is a merger not possible? There were previous suggestions that this may be an option.	<i>This is not possible within the statutory framework. Mergers to form a primary school require the closure of one or both schools.</i>
10. Consideration should be given to establish a federation arrangement for the Allentown with a nearby school.	<p><i>The school governance regulations on federation of governing bodies provide that the governing bodies of two or more maintained schools may be federated under one single governing body after complying with prescribed procedures. The powers and responsibilities of the federation will originate from the powers of the constituent schools.</i></p> <p><i>Forming a federated governing body would not address the substantial budget difficulties that Allentown would face in future years, as it would still have to be funded as a separate school.</i></p>
11. There are real advantages in a small school. Pupils have benefited considerably from small class sizes. A small school has a caring environment, which benefits pupils. This is not possible in a larger school.	<p><i>Smaller schools can be very successful. However, the smaller the school becomes, the more difficult it is to provide for all the learning needs of the pupils, and this is the situation faced by Allentown.</i></p> <p><i>The question is: would future pupils have a better education in a larger school, with more efficient use of funding?</i></p>
12. Will Moorhead Primary be able to admit my child? Can Moorhead and Allentown accommodate additional pupils? How can the Council be certain about likely numbers? Moorhead Primary does not have the capacity to take further pupils. Is there a proposal to use the temporary classrooms at Moorhead Primary because there is not enough space? Is it not better to keep pupils at Allentown rather than have pupils in temporary accommodation?	<p><i>This will be dependent on the need to review normal areas for Allentown and Moorhead as part of this proposal. Moorhead Primary will have the capacity to admit additional pupils. One classroom is not currently used. In the short term, depending on pupil numbers, there may be a need to bring into use temporary classrooms at the school. However, it is unlikely that the temporary classrooms will need to come into use.</i></p> <p><i>Allentown and Moorhead will be able to accommodate additional pupils within existing accommodation.</i></p>
13. Can the financial balances from other schools budgets not be used to sustain the future of Allentown Infant's School? Can parents help in raising funds to keep the school going?	<i>This is not possible under the law as it stands. Parents could fund raise, but this is not a long-term solution.</i>

14. Is it possible to have a nursery unit at the school?	<i>This is not an option as there is not a shortfall in nursery places in the local area.</i>
15. If the school closes, what is the planned future use of the building?	<i>At this stage, there are no agreed plans for the future use of the building.</i>
16. The Council must already know what is going to happen?	<i>No decision has been made. The consultation process will form the basis of recommendations to Council Cabinet.</i>

**Responses to Allentown consultation –
LEA comment where comments have been made on the response sheet**

Option 1 – Take no action	LEA Comment
<p>1.</p> <p>Very fond memories of attending the school in 1928. The school should be merged and should not be demolished. It is part of Allenton, built in 1879.</p>	<p><i>The LEA very much recognises the difficulties in consulting on the future viability of a school and the place of the school in its community. The smaller the school becomes, the more difficult it therefore is to provide for the learning needs of the pupils, and this is the situation faced by Allentown. There are no plans to demolish the school.</i></p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Rumours about the school circulating over the last 18 months have had a major impact on current and predicted numbers. Consequently, these numbers are not a valid tool for making judgements about the future of the school.</p> <p>There are possibilities that land freed up by changes at Merrill School and closure of the Rolls Royce site at Nightingale road will be used for housing.</p> <p>One of the strengths of the school is its management of children with behaviour problems. This would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of all the staff. In order to reduce costs, consideration should be given to a school federation, where there is a shared headteacher.</p>	<p><i>After discussions with the Local Education Authority (LEA) officers, the governors of Allentown Infant School took the decision to ask the LEA to consider the future viability of the school. The school had 100 pupils on roll in 1998 and the school estimate numbers to fall as low as 27 by 2005 – a substantial fall even taking into account of the possible impact of rumours.</i></p> <p><i>These changes are not likely in the near future. If PFI funding for Merrill is approved by the DfES and Merrill School is located onto one site, the new school is not likely to open until September 2006, at the earliest. At this stage, there are no proposals for housing on the Rolls-Royce site in the Local Plan.</i></p> <p><i>The LEA recognises the school's good reputation and commitment of staff, which was also outlined by OfSTED.</i></p> <p><i>The school governance regulations on federation of governing bodies provide that the governing bodies of two or more maintained schools may be federated under one single governing body, after complying with prescribed procedures.</i></p> <p><i>Forming a federated governing body is not really an option. The trend in falling primary pupil numbers in the Allenton area and the impact on local schools,</i></p>