

Representation To Leeds City Council Concerning Fountain Primary School

We are concerned about the future provision of education at Fountain Primary School in Morley. Fountain Primary was opened in September 2005 as a new school formed by the merger of former Cross Hall Junior School, Cross Hall Infant School and Elmfield Infant School. At this time all staff were served with redundancy notices and informed that they would be required to submit to a selection process for jobs in the new school. This experience was traumatic and we fully expected redundancies to be made. It was acknowledged at the time by Education Leeds Officials and at a recent meeting between staff and Chris Edwards that the amalgamation of three schools was unprecedented and occurred with unprecedented haste. Staff concerns that insufficient time and consideration had been given to the merger were brushed aside. Notwithstanding their doubts, the staff all worked very hard from day one to make the new school a success and morale was high.

Fountain Primary School was opened on two sites and therefore has the financial burden of running two separate buildings. Despite this we have been told we do not fulfil the criteria for split site funding. The new school was also formed with a very expensive senior staffing structure, which was approved by Education Leeds. Everyone hoped and believed that Fountain Primary School would have an exciting and successful future. All staff at the new school, from cleaning staff to Headteacher, worked hard to build a successful school and the signs were that Fountain Primary School was indeed flourishing.

During the Autumn term of the school's second year all staff were informed that due to falling roles, which determine funding, and a massive overspend, staffing reductions were necessary. The staffing losses would work out at about 20% of all staff and would include two full time support staff, two nursery nurses, two lunchtime supervisors, one member of the kitchen staff and five teachers. Staff morale has been in steady decline since then and this must have an effect on future progress and the children's education. The school had already found that three assistant heads could not be afforded and one post was lost at the end of the first year.

Staff at the school voted unanimously for industrial action and one days strike has already taken place with 100% support. Further action, including strikes, is planned. We submit the following for your consideration:

1. All our concerns can almost be summed up with two related questions, 'How has this disastrous financial situation developed so quickly in a new school and what effect will it have on the education of the pupils?'
2. We demand a full explanation for this situation and we feel that an independent enquiry into the setting up of Fountain Primary School is necessary. It has recently been acknowledged by Chris Edwards that errors were made in predicting pupil numbers. Another local school, Newlands Primary, was recently allowed to increase its pupil numbers to two- form entry and a brand new school, Asquith Primary, was built under PFI and remains unfilled. Staff and pupils at Fountain Primary School are both being badly affected as a result of these events.
3. We feel that a public apology to parents, pupils and staff at the school from those responsible for the situation is long overdue.

This is a very difficult time for all involved with Fountain Primary School and we appreciate the opportunity to bring these concerns to your attention. In the interests of more than 400 Morley children and their families we request that this situation be investigated thoroughly and resolved. We urge you not to let down the community that is Fountain Primary School.