
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 20th September 2006

SUBJECT: : Primary Review: Proposals for Alwoodley Primary Planning Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 **Introduction**

1.1 The report follows on from a previous report received by the Executive Board in November 2005. That report summarised a consultation which had taken place in Autumn 2005 on a proposal to close Fir Tree Primary School. In the light of some of the representations received during that consultation, Education Leeds sought authority to undertake further work in the area.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake public consultation on revised proposals for the Alwoodley Primary Planning Area.

2. **Proposals for the Alwoodley Primary Planning Area**

2.1 Education Leeds proposes a reduction of 30 Reception places in the primary provision in the area. This would be achieved through the closure of both Fir Tree Primary School and Archbishop Cranmer CE (Aided) Primary School and the establishment by the Church of England Diocese of a voluntary controlled 1.5 FE primary school on the Archbishop Cranmer school site, with a newly established children's centre for the community.

3. **Recommendation**

The report seeks approval to undertake formal public consultation on:

- The closure of Fir Tree Primary School in August 2007,
- The closure of Archbishop Cranmer CE Primary School in August 2007,
- the establishment of a 1.5 FE voluntary controlled Church of England primary school on the Archbishop Cranmer site in September 2007, allied to the establishment of a children's centre

Agenda Item:

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Electoral wards Affected:

Alwoodley
Moortown

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic Minorities

Women

Disabled People

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in

1.0 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake public consultation on a proposal affecting primary schools within the Alwoodley Primary Planning Area.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Alwoodley Planning Area comprises two community schools - Alwoodley and Fir Tree Primary Schools, and three voluntary aided schools - Archbishop Cranmer Church of England Primary School, St Paul's Catholic Primary School and the Jewish Primary School, Brodetsky. Informal consultation has been undertaken with the Heads and Chairs of Governors of these schools, the Alwoodley Ward Members and the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses. The objective of these meetings was to seek stakeholder views on the future of primary provision across the area and in the community.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 The purpose of any review of provision is to ensure that all schools are thriving and sustainable and that school buildings provide an inspiring environment in which to learn. A comprehensive analysis of surplus places, admission numbers, accommodation needs, standards and community links of all schools serving the

area has been undertaken in developing options for the future pattern of provision.

- 3.2** Fir Tree Primary School is the smallest in the area with only 106 pupils on roll having experienced falling rolls over several years. The school has the highest percentage of surplus places of all of the schools at 32%. Archbishop Cranmer Primary School has also suffered falling rolls and currently has 192 on roll, and although notionally the school has a surplus of 19%, it is in a building that could accommodate up to 315 pupils. Effectively the school is currently operating as a one form of entry school (Table 1). Intakes into both Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer Primary Schools are significantly lower than the schools' admission numbers of 30 and 45 respectively – only 11 children were admitted into Reception at Fir Tree and 19 into Reception at Archbishop Cranmer in September 2005 (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) January 2006). Allocations for September 2006 indicate figures of 17 and 8 respectively (August 2006). All primary schools in the area serve pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Around 40% of pupils at Alwoodley (around 155) and Fir Tree Primary Schools (around 40) are from non-white backgrounds and 35% of pupils at Archbishop Cranmer (around 65).
- 3.3** Wigton Moor planning area adjoins Alwoodley on the eastern side. Of the schools in this area, Highfield is the nearest to Fir Tree, about 10 minutes walk away. It has 45 places per year group and was filling until 2005/6. In January 2005 the school had 31 pupils in Reception. Allocations for September 2006 indicate that the school will again be full at 45.
- 3.4** There is more denominational provision in Alwoodley than most other planning areas, with a Catholic primary, a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school and a Jewish primary school. All of the faith schools have felt the impact of falling demographic demand to some degree and have seen reduced intakes in recent years. For example, in September 2003 the admission number of Brodetsky reduced from 60 to 45. An important consideration in this review of provision has been to ensure that sufficient places are available for families living in the area for which there is no faith requirement as part of the admissions policy.
- 3.5** Given the reduced primary population and the fact that its impact is not felt evenly across all schools, there remains a longstanding concern over the viability of the current pattern of provision in the area. Popular schools tend to continue to fill when pupil numbers decline by attracting pupils from a wider area and less popular schools tend to see an acceleration in the decline in their rolls. Current intakes into the five schools (157 pupils in September 2005, 143 allocated in September 2006) and future projections of around 150-160 pupils suggest that the 210 places currently available need to be reduced to around 180 (Table 2). This strongly indicates the need to consolidate provision into fewer, more sustainable schools.
- 3.6** During informal consultation it was suggested that the Alwoodley area is undergoing demographic change with an increasing number of families with a high number of children moving into the locality. In addition some asylum seekers are being placed in the area. There would need to be significant and sustained in-migration of families, however, for future reception demand to equal the current number of places available. In addition there are no significant housing developments in the area that have planning permission at this stage that would significantly increase the primary population.
- 3.7** Low pupil numbers have a direct impact on school budgets as funding is based on

pupil enrolment. Due to economies of scale and protective elements within the school budget formula, however, small schools also tend to cost more per pupil than larger schools. In 2005/6 budget, Fir Tree School costs £4,018 per pupil, compared with the Leeds average of £3,056, Archbishop Cranmer costs £3,329 per pupil. Managing falling rolls can place schools in an increasingly vulnerable situation. Lower pupil numbers results in lower funding, and consequently fewer staff and fewer resources and opportunities for the children. Small schools can find themselves having to make staff reductions in order to manage budget pressures and this can lead to difficulties in delivering a full curriculum.

3.8 Table 3 in the Appendix provides data on the improvement of schools at the end of Key Stage 2 at Level 4 from 2001 to 2005, and compares the results with the Leeds and national averages. In the most recent results all of the schools in the area show profiles above the LEA average. Table 4 provides a measure of value added between Key Stage 1 SATs and Key Stage 2 SATs for the 2003-5 KS2 cohorts. In recent years, results at Archbishop Cranmer have fluctuated close to the city average, whereas those of the other schools have been consistently above. Both Archbishop Cranmer and Fir Tree schools have similar percentages of pupils receiving free school meals, which are higher than the other schools in the area and the city average (Table 4).

3.9 Options for primary provision in the Alwoodley area

3.10 Options for rationalising provision in the area focus on the schools that have been most affected by demographic decline - Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer. During informal consultation three options have been suggested for consideration:

Option 1: Downsizing current provision to remove places, but retaining all schools.

Option 2: An amalgamation of Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer Primary Schools.

Option 3: Closure of Fir Tree Primary School

A brief commentary on these options is provided.

3.11 Option 1: Downsizing current provision to remove places, but retaining all schools

- This option would retain the existing choice of provision and there would be minimal disruption for pupils and their families and staff.
- The admission number of Archbishop Cranmer could be reduced to 30, reducing reception places by 15. Apart from Alwoodley Primary School, all other schools are already one form of entry. Alwoodley Primary Schools is a popular school and fills to its current admission number of 60.
- The number of surplus places would reduce only if appropriate adjustments to net capacities are possible, for example, through meaningful alternative use of surplus space. Archbishop Cranmer has recently redesignated its use of surplus space and this has resulted in a reduction in the number of surplus places in the school based on the net capacity formula.
- Current projections for Reception intakes indicate around 160 pupils across the schools in the area, whereas down-sizing Archbishop Cranmer to 30 places would still leave 195 places available (Table 2). It is not likely that this proposal would increase intakes to Fir Tree, because recent admissions to

Archbishop Cranmer are already fewer than 30. Therefore there would be very little change in the sustainability of provision, unless downsizing was also considered at Alwoodley Primary School.

- Retaining both Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer does not represent best value in the school estate because both schools would continue to operate in buildings that are too large for their pupil populations.
- Whilst the area would clearly benefit from provision of a Children's Centre, with a school site always the preferred location, to choose either school site in these circumstances could further undermine the viability of the other
- This option would not produce a capital receipt to reinvest in the school estate either locally or across the city.

3.12 Option 2: An amalgamation of Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer Primary Schools, on the Archbishop Cranmer site

- This option would reduce the number of reception places in the area by 30, leaving 180 reception places available.
- A good geographic distribution of schools in relation to where pupils live would be achieved.
- There is considerable overlap in the populations served by the two schools, but the Archbishop Cranmer site would be more central to the pupil population. The school building is sufficiently large to accommodate all of the pupils currently in both schools.
- Pupils at the two schools would benefit from coming together in a larger school that will have the resources to offer more opportunities
- The Archbishop Cranmer site is ideally situated for the establishment of a Children's Centre being central to the target population.
- The site has the additional advantage of offering the potential to develop a 0-19 campus because of its proximity to Allerton High School.
- The Church of England Diocese has indicated that it would support, subject to the outcome of formal consultation, an amalgamation of the two schools as a voluntary controlled school, on the current Archbishop Cranmer site, on the understanding that the governing body of the new school gives careful consideration to its name as a reflection of its C of E status.
- A site would be declared surplus to education requirements and could produce a capital receipt for reinvestment into the school estate.

3.13 Option 3: Closure of Fir Tree Primary School

- The number of reception places would reduce by 30 to 180.
- This option would provide a good geographic distribution of schools in relation to where pupils live.
- Future intakes could choose to access community provision at Alwoodley or Highfield Primary Schools or denominational provision, such as at Archbishop Cranmer Primary School. There are 17 pupils currently allocated to the Reception class of Fir Tree, including two placements (as at August 2006). All 17 would have gained admission to Alwoodley or Highfield if Fir Tree were not open and parents had preferenced these schools. Some children currently allocated to Alwoodley Primary School will be coming some distance and in future children from outside of the Alwoodley community could be expected to attend schools nearer to their homes.
- A few pupils that attend Fir Tree Primary School live on the Queenhills and Highwoods estates on the opposite side of the ring road. Other families living

in this locality already send their children to a variety of schools in the area, including Alwoodley, Archbishop Cranmer, Brodetsky, Moortown and Highfield Primary Schools.

- The Fir Tree site and location do not offer the best opportunity to develop Early Education, childcare, play activities and family support within a Children's Centre. It would not be as centrally located in relation to the majority of its target population.
- This option would probably require transitional arrangements that would provide a choice of community or church provision to pupils in the school at the time of closure.
- Pupils currently at Fir Tree Primary School could benefit from attending larger schools that have the resources to offer more opportunities.
- The Fir Tree site would be declared surplus to education requirements and could produce a capital receipt for reinvestment into the school estate.
- This option has already been subject to public consultation

3.14 Preferred Model of Provision

3.15 Education Leeds and the Church of England Diocese believe that to proceed with Option 2, the amalgamation of Fir Tree and Archbishop Cranmer Primary Schools, as a voluntary controlled school, would be the most appropriate way forward to secure a viable school in the heart of its community. This would provide a model of primary provision for the area based on a 60-place community primary school (Alwoodley), a 45-place Church of England (Voluntary controlled) Primary School (the new amalgamated school), a 30-place Catholic primary (St Paul's) and a 30-place Jewish primary (Brodetsky).

3.16 Education Leeds has been in extended discussion with the Church of England Diocese over the future status of the new primary school. Education Leeds and the Diocese's preference would be to establish a Voluntary Controlled primary school. This would reflect the historical links that Archbishop Cranmer has with the Church, while allowing the new school to reflect the strengths of both of the existing schools. In this case the school would have a church ethos, but the Local Education Authority would be the Admissions authority. Parents of future intakes would apply through the normal admissions process for a place in the school. Children on the roll of the existing schools at the point of closure would automatically be offered a place in the new school.

3.17 The proposed model would provide four viable schools for the future with a good geographical distribution to serve the needs of the local community. Fir Tree Primary School currently offers some specialist facilities, such as the Speaking and Listening facility (Oracy unit), and a community nursery is co-located with the school. These facilities are highly valued and it would be the intention of Education Leeds and the Early Years service to retain the services they offer, preferably on the site of the amalgamated school.

3.18 Fir Tree has a Pupil Development Centre (PDC) to support children who would benefit from early intervention in order to remove barriers to learning. Over the past 4 years a member of staff has worked alongside a PDC specialist with children at the school. Currently a member of staff is attending training that will enable the school to become a 'satellite PDC' that can operate independently, without the regular contact with the PDC specialist team. This does not have any outreach responsibilities, and requires one room to be refurbished, the cost of which will be met by the PDC

programme and Fir Tree jointly (£2,000 each). The facility could be relocated on the new site.

3.19 The Speaking and Listening unit at Fir Tree was established in February 2005 as part of the Oracy Project that includes eight primary schools in total. The facility at Fir Tree represents a model of good practice on how to improve speaking and listening skills among children who have English as a second language. The unit is used to provide training for teachers from the other seven schools in the Oracy Project. The only children who access the unit are those at Fir Tree. It is envisaged that all children at the eight schools, whatever their mother tongue, would benefit from this facility and would improve their oral skills through the programme. About £37,000 has been invested in the centre at Fir Tree, but a large proportion of this is in movable equipment that could be relocated on the new site without great expense or difficulty.

3.20 One option considered in similar situations might be the development of a federation of two or more of the schools in the area. Whilst this option may go some way to addressing the viability of education provision in small schools, there is no clear evidence that a federation would resolve the sustainability issues of the two schools, or protect the longer term interests of all of the schools in the area. The local population is no longer large enough to sustain two separate schools in either the medium or the long term.

3.21 Early Years

3.22 There is a community nursery based at Fir Tree primary school. In the Children's Centre Plan 2006-2008 provision has been identified for a Children's Centre in the Alwoodley area, meeting the needs in particular of families living on the Cranmer Bank Estate and the Lingfield Estate. Education Leeds and the Early Years Service believe that the location of the Children's Centre on the Archbishop Cranmer site would make the best contribution to the core offer for both an extended school and a Children's Centre. Whilst the Fir Tree site could also provide a Children's Centre, it is not as centrally located in relation to its target population, and does not offer the same potential to develop 0-19 provision as part of a campus that exists with the Archbishop Cranmer site adjacent to Allerton High School.

3.23 Special Educational Needs

3.24 Careful management of the impact of this proposal on pupils with Special Educational Needs will be built into the implementation phase, should it proceed.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

4.1 Planning primary school places is relevant to a number of key priorities identified in the Children and Young People's Plan, the Asset Management Plan and the Corporate Plan, in terms of managing the supply and demand of school places and school improvement. It is also relevant to the Closing the Gap agenda, with the planning of school places taking consideration of wider socio-economic factors and regeneration.

5.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There would be an annual revenue saving of approximately £120,000 from the closure of Fir Tree Primary School, although initially this could be reduced due to

potential costs incurred during the transitional period.

5.2 Over £430,000 was spent in 2002/3 at Fir Tree, in an attempt to downsize the accommodation available and create a smaller school that would be viable for the long-term. Unfortunately this has not happened and the enrolment of the school has continued to fall, to a point where it is about half the enrolment of a full 1FE school. In addition intakes in neighbouring schools are also feeling the effects of falling rolls and Education Leeds believes that clear strategic action is required to ensure that primary provision in the area is sustainable. There have been other, less substantial sums invested on various works for the day-to-day running of the school. Details are given in Table 5 of the Appendix.

5.3 It is acknowledged that there has been investment in the Fir Tree building. If this proposal proceeds, Education Leeds would declare the building surplus to educational requirements and it would be for the City Council to decide on the most appropriate future use of the building. If there is a capital receipt generated from the site, this could be used to fund primary review works, including improvements at the Archbishop Cranmer School site.

5.4 Legal Implications

5.5 The review of primary provision fulfils the LEA's statutory requirement to keep under review the supply and demand of school places.

5.6 Following consultation this proposal may lead to a statutory process being followed.

5.7 Equality Implications

5.8 The proposals have been subject to equality impact assessment. There are no anticipated significant differential impacts on the basis of ethnicity, disability or gender associated with the proposals. The five schools in the area have a variety of ethnic composition and the percentage of White/British pupils ranges from 60% in Alwoodley Primary to 99% in Brodetsky. The schools likely to be most impacted on by this proposal all have mixed ethnicity, the balance of which could shift. It is not likely, however, that this will impact negatively on pupils attainment.

5.9 Indicative Timescale

October/November 2006 – consultation meetings

December 2006 – Report to Executive Board summarising consultation

January 2007 – Statutory Notices published

April 2007 – School Organisation Committee decision

September 2007 - New school opens

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Executive Board is asked to approve that formal public consultation is undertaken on:

- the closure of Fir Tree Primary School in August 2007
- the closure of Archbishop Cranmer CE Aided Primary School in August 2007
- the establishment of a 1.5 FE voluntary controlled primary school on the Archbishop Cranmer site in September 2007

Appendix

Demographic Data

Table 1: Current Position

	Type of School	Nursery Roll Jan 2006	Ad. Limit	Reception (Jan 2006)	Number on Roll (Jan 2006)	NET Capacity	Surplus Places Jan 2006 (%)
Alwoodley	3 - 11 primary	76	60	60	401	420	19 (5%)
Archbishop Cranmer (VA)	5 - 11 primary		45	19	192	236	44 (19%)
Brodetsky (VA)	3 - 11 primary	31	45	38	276	315	39 (12%)
Fir Tree	5 - 11 primary		30	11	106	156	50 (32%)
St Paul's	5 - 11 primary		30	29	186	209	23 (11%)
Totals		107	210	157	1161	1359	175 (13%)

Table 2: School Intake Projections

School	2006	2007	2008	2009	Admission limit
Alwoodley	60	55	60	62	60
Archbishop Cranmer CE	18	18	19	18	45
Brodetsky	36	38	41	38	45
Fir Tree	11	11	13	12	30
St Paul's RC	24	25	26	25	30
Area totals	149	147	159	155	210

Table 3: Improvement Measure - Key Stage 2 combined SATs results Level 4+

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Alwoodley Primary	247	271	286	271	273
Archbishop Cranmer CE Prim	235	228	230	246	256
Brodetsky Primary	277	275	297	290	278
Fir Tree Primary	200	229	230	193	248
St Paul's RC Primary	282	241	264	273	259
LEA Average	234	236	238	238	241
National Average	233	234	234	237	240

Table 4: KS2 SATs data summer 2005

	KS2 percent Level 4+

	% Free School Meals (whole school)	English	Maths	Science	No. Pupils Tested	3 year average Value Added	SEN (cohort) %	
							With statements	Non-statemented SEN
Alwoodley Primary	14	85	88	100	60	101.7	1.7%(1)	20%(12)
Archbishop Cranmer CE Primary	32	84	81	91	32	99.7	0%(0)	15.6%(5)
Brodetsky Primary	4	88	94	97	32	101.0	0%(0)	15.6%(5)
Fir Tree Primary	27	78	83	87	23	100.7	0%(0)	8.2%(2)
St Paul's RC Primary	11	89	74	96	27	100.3	0%(0)	22.2%(6)
LEA Average	19	79	76	85		100.3	2.4%	15.5%
National Average		79	75	86		100.2	3.3%	18.9%

Table 5: Investment in Fir Tree Primary School over the period 2002 - 2004

FIR TREE PRIMARY CAPITAL PROJECTS		
Fin Year	Project Description	£000s
2002-03	Surplus Place Removal Scheme	432.7
2003-04	Electrical Works	16.6
2003-04	Kitchen Ventilation Works	33.3
2002-03	Devolved Capital (Various Works)	25.8
2003-04	Devolved Capital (Various Works)	5.4
2004-05	Devolved Capital (Various Works)	37.7
2005-6	Devolved Capital (various works)	20.6
2002-03	Seed Challenge: Staff Toilets Refurbishment	6.0
2003-04	Seed Challenge: Refurb New Library Windows	10.0
2005-6	DFES Travel Plan Grant	4.4
2006-7	Essential Electrical Works	60.0
		652.5