

# Primary Schools in Leeds

## A Framework for Managing School Places

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## POLICY FOR THE PLANNING OF SCHOOL PLACES

### 1.0 Purpose

#### 1.1 Background

Over the past five years, the Primary Review has reviewed provision in 24 primary planning areas. As at the end of January 2006, these reviews have resulted in agreed actions targeted at reducing surplus places and securing sustainable schools in 20 Primary Planning Areas. Tables 1 - 3 list implemented changes to provision, the number of surplus places removed and the associated funding that is redistributed through the school's budget formula. Table 4 lists the areas currently under review.

**Table 1: Changes to provision in September 2002**

PRIMARY AREA	School Closure	Discontinued	New school opens	Places removed	Savings generated for the Education Budget
<b>Otley</b>	Thomas Chippendale PS	Aug 2002	Ashfield PS Westgate PS All Saints PS	450	£215,000
	Ashfield IS	Aug 2002			
	Westgate IS	Aug 2002			
	All Saints IS	Aug 2002			
	All Saints PS	Aug 2002			
<b>Cookridge</b>	Tinshill PS	Aug 2002		253	£123,000
<b>Chapel Allerton</b>	Leopold PS	Aug 2002		216	£104,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>919</b>	<b>£442,000</b>

**Table 2: Changes to provision in September 2004**

Planning Area	School closure	Discontinued	New school opens	Places removed	Savings generated for the Education Budget
<b>Bramley</b>	Sandford Primary School	Aug 2004	Hollybush Primary School	210	£120,000
	Wyther Park Primary School	Aug 2004			
<b>Drighlington</b>	Drighlington Infant	Aug 2004	Drighlington Primary School	0	£104,000
	Drighlington Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>Garforth</b>	Garforth Barleyhill Infant School	Aug 2004	Strawberry Fields Primary School	40	£90,000
	West Garforth Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>Hyde Park</b>	Royal Park Primary School	Aug 2004		257	£136,000
<b>Meanwood</b>	Bentley Primary School	Aug 2004		315	£128,000
<b>Methley</b>	Methley Infant and Nursery School	Aug 2004	Methley Primary School	0	£97,000
	Methley Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>Morley South</b>	Blackgates Infant School	Aug 2004	Blackgates Primary School	102	£104,000
	Blackgates Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>Osmondthorpe</b>	Osmondthorpe Primary School	Aug 2004	Meadowfield Primary School	148	£170,000
	Whitebridge Primary School	Aug 2004			
<b>Pudsey</b>	Waterloo Infant School	Aug 2004	Pudsey Waterloo Primary School	0	£75,000
	Waterloo Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>Woodsford</b>	Langdale Primary School and Nursery	Aug 2004		90	£99,000
<b>Yeadon</b>	Yeadon South View Infant School	Aug 2004	Rufford Park Primary School	127	£92,000
	Yeadon South View Junior School	Aug 2004			
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>1289</b>	<b>£1,215,000</b>

**Table 3: Changes to Provision in September 2005**

PRIMARY AREA	School closure	Discontinued	New school opens	Places removed	Savings generated for the Education Budget
<b>Allerton Bywater</b>	Great & Little Preston Infant School	Aug 2005	Great Preston C of E Primary	94	£76,000
	Great & Little Preston Junior School	Aug 2005			
<b>Holbeck</b>	Hillside Primary School	Aug 2005	New Bewerley Primary School	201	£118,000
	Greenwood Primary School	Aug 2005			
<b>Morley Central</b>	Cross Hall Infant School	Aug 2005	Fountain Primary School	188	£146,000
	Cross Hall Junior School	Aug 2005			
	Morley Elmfield Infant School	Aug 2005			
<b>Seacroft</b>	Asket Hill Primary School	Aug 2005		210	£120,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>693</b>	<b>£460,000</b>

**Table 4. Current Proposals (subject to statutory process)**

PRIMARY AREA	Proposal	Proposed date of Closure	New school opens	Current status
<b>Alwoodley</b>	Closure or amalgamation	Aug 2007		Education Leeds undertaking further work following consultation
<b>Far Headingley</b>	Close Beckett Park PS	Aug 2006		Closure confirmed at School Organisation Committee meeting in March 2006
<b>Headingley</b>	Close Headingley PS	Aug 2006	VC school on St Michael's site	Closure confirmed by School Organisation Committee January 2006
	Close St Michael's C of E	Aug 2006		
<b>Meanwood</b>	Close Miles Hill PS	Aug 2007	New school on Potternewton site	Education Leeds and schools considering alternative option of federation following consultation
	Close Potternewton PS	Aug 2007		
<b>Stanningley</b>	Close Rodley PS	Aug 2006	New school on Aireview site	Final decision to proceed from School Organisation Committee December 2005
	Close Aireview PS	Aug 2006		
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	Amalgamation of Mount St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Richmond Hill	Subject to consultation and decisions on funding for a new school		

**1.2** Reviews of primary provision have not focused on individual schools, but have considered all schools within an area selected because one or more of the following conditions exist:

- there is at least one school with 25% or more surplus places
- there are significant surplus places across schools in an area and demographic projections do not support an increase in the number of pupils.
- There are one or more small schools in an area and concerns exist about their long-term viability
- A school is in Special Measures or there are concerns over a school's ability to deliver a full primary curriculum
- The Asset Management Plan indicates serious issues in respect of school buildings

This policy document replaces the existing Strategy for School Reorganisations approved by the Executive Board of the City Council in January 2005. It establishes a framework for action that reflects the current demographic context and recent government policy changes.

**1.3** The purpose of this policy document is to:

- Provide a consistent framework for the structure of primary provision across the city

- discuss the appropriateness of 'small schools' in an urban setting and propose a preferred size model;
- describe the rationale for taking action in respect of falling pupil numbers
- set out the criteria that would lead to a review of primary school provision in a given area.
- ensure that all stakeholders know their roles and responsibilities

## **2.0 National and Local Policy Context**

**2.1** All Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure that schools in their area are sufficient in number, character and resources to provide a high standard of education suitable for pupils of different ages, abilities and special education needs. They have a duty to promote the best education for not only those children currently in a school, but also future generations of children. Establishing an organisational structure that promotes the optimum for all children and their communities supports this objective.

**2.2** The Leeds policy towards the structure of primary provision is a clear articulation of the City Council's Closing the Gap priorities and the 5 Outcomes specified by the 'Every Child Matters' agenda:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic wellbeing

## **3.0 National and Local Demographic Context**

**3.1** Data from the Office of National Statistics shows a sustained fall in national birth rates since the early 1990s, falling to a national low in the number of births each year in 2001 and 2002 of approximately 561,000 (compared to a peak of 1,014,700 in 1964!). Since 2004 there have been small annual increases. Data from the Office for National Statistics suggests that there may be small increases over the next few years, but that essentially birth rates have now stabilised.

**3.2** This national birth pattern is reflected in the local picture in Leeds. Births in the city have fallen since their peak in the early 1990s when there were nearly 10,000 children born per year. A steady year on year decline followed and by 2001 there were only around 7,500 births in the city. Since 2001 we have seen increases of between 200 and 300 births per year. Increases in the birth rate are not uniform across the city but appear to be concentrated in certain areas, such as Harehills, Burmantofts and Holbeck.

**3.3** The structure of primary provision, in particular primary school size, has become an important issue for many authorities because of the declining birth rate and the impacts of falling rolls. Admissions into primary schools peaked in Leeds in 1995, when there were 9,388 children in reception classes. The following year there was a peak total of 63,118 children in the primary sector, since when both intakes into Reception and the primary population have steadily declined. In January 2006 there were 7,441 pupils in reception classes, nearly 2000 fewer than in 1995, and a primary sector total of 55,010. The total number of pupils in primary schools will continue to fall for as long as the number of pupils entering reception is lower than the number of children progressing from Year 6 to Year 7. Projections suggest that the primary population will stabilise at about 54,000 in 2010, based on forecasts of births provided by the Office for National Statistics.

- 3.4** In 2001/02 there were nearly 10,000 surplus places in Primary School in Leeds, 14.5% of the total number of places available. A number of different strategies have been effective in reducing the number of surplus places, including formal reorganisations of provision. Between 2002 and 2005 36 primary phase schools have been either closed or amalgamated. Other strategies used to manage surplus include supporting schools to implement alternative uses of surplus accommodation. By January 2006 the number of surplus places had fallen to around 6,700 or 11%. The number of surplus places will increase over the next few years, and in some areas more than others, unless the supply and demand for places continues to be actively managed.
- 3.5** Critical to consideration of surplus places is the issue of primary school size. Although the falling birth rate has been a city wide problem, its impact has not been felt evenly across all schools. As overall pupil numbers fall, some schools are affected more quickly than others. Popular schools tend to continue to fill, while less popular schools see an acceleration in the decline in their rolls. The Authority is required to account for any maintained school that has 25% or more of its places empty (reported through the annual survey to the DfES). Where these schools are also performing poorly (where they are in an OfSTED category), there is an assumption that authorities will consider the long-term future of the school. In 2001/2 there were 45 primary phase schools in Leeds with 25% or more surplus places. As a result of reorganisation actions there were 34 such schools in September 2005. Of these 9 are already subject to area reviews, although specific proposals for these areas are not yet agreed.
- 3.6** Schools are funded on the basis of a national model which is based on per capita funding, while allowing local authorities some flexibility in the per capita formula that is used to distribute the education budget. When school rolls are falling, there are therefore direct implications for schools budgets. Irrespective of the size of school, the management of a school that is contracting poses a difficult challenge. The compromises that may be necessary to remain within budget (reduction in support staff, reorganisation of classes into mixed-ages) may all have an impact on the capacity of the school to deliver the quality of education the school and the Authority would want. Reflecting the impact that the demographic context has on the provision of education services, the DfES issued guidance in March 2005 for schools and authorities on how to manage falling rolls (Tackling Falling Primary School Rolls, DfES).
- 3.7** For smaller schools, the impact of demographic change may be even more severe (loss of non-contact time for the headteacher, cross key-stage classes) and may ultimately create the need for organisational arrangements normally seen in small rural schools in order to balance the budget. Managing falling rolls in an already small school increases vulnerability, raising concerns about viability, the ability of the school to deliver a full curriculum and /or the value for money it provides. In addition small schools are a financial drain on resources that are shared across all schools in an authority.
- 4.0 Primary Provision in Leeds**
- 4.1** The pattern of primary school provision in Leeds reflects the complexity of the demography and topography of the city. There are 225 primary phase schools in Leeds (January 2006), which range in size from 63 to 634 pupils. Table 5 shows the number of primary schools by size and number on roll. 104 through primary schools, 5 infant schools and 2 junior schools have less than 210 pupils on roll.

**Table 5: Sizes of Primary Schools in Leeds**

NOR Band	Forms of Entry	Number of Schools			
		Infant	Junior	Primary	Total
420 – 630	2-3 FE	0	0	8	<b>8</b>
315 – 419	1.5 – 2 FE	0	0	45	<b>45</b>
210 – 314	1 – 1.5 FE	0	3	58	<b>61</b>
0 – 209	Below 1 FE	5	2	104	<b>111</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	5	5	215	<b>225</b>

**4.2** 31 of all primary schools actually have fewer than 150 pupils. These include 6 Catholic schools, 10 Church of England Schools and 15 community schools, which are distributed across the city. About a third are located in village settings. However, Leeds is a predominantly urban authority and many of these schools are located within the inner city or in areas where alternative education provision is easily accessible to the vast majority of parents. It is within this context that consideration has to be given to the pattern of provision across the city and whether it is appropriate to maintain small schools.

## **5.0 School Size**

**5.1** The following sections present some essential considerations in relation to the size of schools. Focus is on both small schools and the optimum size of schools in the Leeds context. Some of the concerns related to small schools operate at school level, while others are linked to the wider pattern of provision across the city.

### **5.2 What is a small school?**

**5.3** There is no standard definition of a small school, although consideration of what constitutes small tends to be related to additional costs. Coopers and Lybrand, (Good Management in Small Schools, 1993), took 200 pupils as the number below which a school could be described as small, whereas the Audit Commission (Rationalising Primary School Provision, 1990), identified that the unit costs of primary schools begins to rise steeply when a school has between 80 and 90 pupils. The DfES considers a school under 100 to be small and those under 50 to be very small (Tackling Falling Primary School Rolls, 2005). In Leeds, the level below which primary schools receive additional funding support is 190 pupils.

### **5.4 The Cost of Small Schools**

**5.5** Smaller schools cost more per pupil to support and maintain than larger schools. This is the main reason why the appropriateness of maintaining an increasing number of smaller schools has to be questioned. Given the limited resources available to provide to schools, we should therefore work on the premise that small schools should only be maintained for valid educational or practical reasons. The DfES considers schools with 80-100 pupils to cost 16% more per pupil than larger schools. In Rationalising Primary School Provision, the Audit Commission states that: *“If small schools are maintained where they are not justified, funds are pre-empted to provide an expensive form of education for a minority of pupils who have no particular claim on the extra resources involved”*.

**5.6** In Leeds, schools receive additional financial support when the school roll falls below 190, delivered through lump sum allocations and small school protection factors. Table 6 below shows the Primary population as at the statutory January count each year, the number of schools and average size. It shows the number of schools with fewer than 190 on roll, the number with fewer than 150 pupils on roll and those with between 150 and 190 on roll. Between 1999 and 2004 there was an increase in the number of schools with fewer than 190 pupils.

The total number of schools in Leeds with fewer than 190 pupils has reduced in recent years because of targeted action on schools with low pupil numbers and the highest levels of surplus places. In 2004 as many as 40 schools had less than 150 pupils, whereas this has reduced to 31 as a result of targeted action which prioritised areas where there was at least one very small school (although there are still more now than in the late 1990s). There are, however, an increasing number of schools that have between 150 and 190 pupils. This number is likely to increase as the total number of pupils in primary schools continues to fall.

**5.7** Table 6 shows that from a high point in 1997 the Primary school population has decreased by over 8,000 (13%) whilst the number of schools has reduced by 20 (8%). Despite the recent closure and amalgamation of schools to remove surplus capacity the average size of school has decreased over this period. Had the programme of rationalisation not been undertaken, the average size of school would have decreased even more and there would be many more small schools than presently.

**Table 6: Size of Schools 1996-2006**

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of schools	245	245	245	244	244	244	244	241	241	230	225
Number of Pupils 4+ and above	62,175	63,139	62,590	62,300	61,499	60,551	59,496	58,135	56,826	55,834	55,010
Average school size	253.78	257.71	255.47	255.33	252.05	248.16	243.84	241.22	235.79	242.76	244.49
Number with less than 190 pupils	60	56	61	61	67	74	80	80	90	78	77
of which											
Number 150 to 190	26	32	33	32	36	38	42	44	50	46	46
Number with less than 150	34	24	28	29	31	36	38	36	40	32	31

**5.8** The funding formula is designed to deliver adequate funding to all schools regardless of size. This is delivered through the use of a number of lump sum allocations and a small school curriculum protection factor, which kicks in when a school has fewer than 190 pupils. In the financial year 2004-5, £681,000 was allocated in small school curriculum protection to schools with fewer than 190 pupils. An additional £530,000 was allocated as small school salary protection to schools with less 10 teachers.

What we find as a result of budget protection and lump sum allocations is that per pupil funding increases for small schools, which are allocated a disproportionate amount of the total formula funding. In 2004/5 the average funding across the city was £2,885 per pupil. At school level, per pupil funding ranged from just over £4,300 per pupil for the smallest schools, to below average for some of the larger schools which received less than £2,500 per pupil.



**5.9** The revenue costs of maintaining smaller schools are clear. It is also important that we also consider the 'overhead' costs associated with maintaining more schools than are necessary. These overhead costs include the headteacher and deputy headteacher salaries, administrative staff and premises costs (revenue items) as well as the capital costs of maintaining and developing the school buildings. An average of £150,000 from the budget formula that is spent on fixed costs is redistributed through the budget formula when a school closes. Over the past few years around £2 million has been redistributed through the budget formula through school closures.

**5.10** While we maintain more schools than are actually required, funding is diverted from resources used directly for educating children towards premises and overhead costs. Each surplus place in a school represents costs which could be redirected into resources which more directly benefit children – on teachers, support staff and other educational resources. There is an average saving of £449 for each surplus place removed. The gross saving generated per place removed is a function of the size of the school to be closed. The smaller the school, the greater the savings per place removed. For example, each surplus place removed in a school with 150 pupils generates a saving of around £650. The objective of the removal of surplus places and reducing the number of small schools in Leeds is to target resources more efficiently by consolidating provision into larger schools. A pattern of provision based on fewer small schools and larger, more cost-effective schools would ensure that the maximum amount of revenue and capital funding is made available to schools to target raising achievement.

The savings figures provided in this report are those that are redistributed through the Education budget and include factors such as premises costs, assuming that the relevant school sites are not retained by the City Council. When a school site no longer required for educational purposes is retained for alternative use, costs are incurred by the City Council.

#### **5.11 Financial Viability**

**5.12** Although many schools manage to maintain a balanced budget during a period of pupil number contraction, the challenge of downsizing *can* lead to difficulties. These may arise when the rate of pupil number decline has been very steep and has not allowed sufficient time for a planned reduction in resources. Alternatively, the school may experience pupil number fluctuations that are impossible to plan for.

The funding formula in Leeds offers protection to schools in these situations by ensuring that each school receives at least 97% of the cash that it received in the previous year through the use of a Safety net factor. In addition the funding formula ensures that each school is funded for the required number of teachers in key stage 1 in order to implement the Government Class size pledge.

**5.13** A more intractable situation associated with a school that has become small is where consistently low year groups are insufficient to meet the full cost of a class teacher. This situation is typically found in a school where falling rolls have reduced the number of pupils to below the 1FE threshold. Strategies to manage this include mixed-age classes and in some cases cross-stage classes. When numbers continue to fall schools can find that they are in a situation where redundancies are unavoidable if the schools is to avoid budget deficit.

**5.14** In order to reduce costs, schools have to make difficult decisions about reducing resources. These reductions may impact on the capacity of the school to maintain a high standard of education (e.g. loss of non-contact time, fewer support staff, mixed-age classes) and may ultimately lead to a very stretched organisation that is unable to cope with challenge or to improve.

#### **5.15 Diversity and Choice**

- 5.16** The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 places a duty on local authorities to act as a commissioner of services for pupils and parents. This includes the duty to promote choice and diversity in relation to the provision of school places and ensuring fair access. Parental demand for schools of a particular character or size within a local community and consultation with local providers over extended use are among the factors to be considered when planning provision.
- 5.17** A case is often presented that size of school is an important consideration for parents and maintaining small schools is perceived to be a way of offering parents choice and diversity of provision. Many of the small schools that exist in Leeds are located in inner city areas of high deprivation. It is often suggested by the communities served by these schools that the small class sizes they offer are appropriate for the children that the schools serve.
- 5.18** Across Leeds there are a total of 29 Catholic Primary Schools, and 39 Church of England Primary Schools (Voluntary and Controlled). There can sometimes be a presumption that denominational provision is protected from review on the grounds of diversity, despite the fact that some denominational schools are also feeling the impact of falling primary rolls. This is in fact not the case. The planning of school places is aimed at maintaining the balance of denominational provision within the authority. To this end Education Leeds therefore works in partnership with the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses to ensure that all schools are sustainable.
- 5.19** The majority of schools in Leeds are located in an urban environment – 165 primary phase schools in Leeds are located within a five mile radius of the city centre. Other areas such as Guiseley, Morley, Otley, Boston Spa, Wetherby and Garforth are all peri-urban and parents have choice in local schools. Some schools within Leeds are considered to be rural and the DfES is in the process of updating its list of schools classified as rural (based on geographic areas), which will be finalised following consultation with LEAs at the end of June 2006. The schools in Leeds that meet the government's criteria for rural status are mainly those in village settings that are isolated from other provision. Government regulations that presume rural schools should be protected from closure recognise that it can be justified to maintain small schools in rural areas where communities are isolated. However, there may be cases where closing a rural school is recommended as in the best interest of educational provision in an area. Such decisions should always be considered in the light of the environmental and social impact on the local community and the degree of choice of alternative provision.
- 5.20** We think of primary schools as the heart of their community. They need to be considered therefore within their local, geographic context, taking into consideration a range of factors, including wider socio-economics factors, regeneration activities and equalities. School organisation planning supports the closing the gap agenda in a number of ways, by ensuring that all families can access quality provision. It also offers the opportunity to support community cohesion through the creation of mixed schools that reflect the diversity of Leeds.
- 5.21 Size and attainment**
- 5.22** In 2003, the Audit commission reported that *“the relationship between the structure of school provision and school standards is neither direct nor straightforward. There are no general rules that can be applied to all circumstances”*<sup>1</sup>
- 5.23** Although the issue of school size has been the subject of discussion for many years, the evidence of its impact on pupil achievement is still inconclusive. In many cases, apparent differences can be explained by other factors such as socio-economic status.
- 5.24** A relevant factor in the context of this policy is the challenge of managing falling rolls and whether this is more acute in smaller school situations. The concept of “withering on the

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<sup>1</sup> Audit Commission

vine” is based on real experiences of schools where reduced staff capacity and a lowering of morale combine to reduce the educational experience of pupils and standards. The converse has however, also been experienced, where schools that are decreasing in size have maintained a high standard. It has to be acknowledged that managing contraction and the associated reduction in resources, nevertheless poses a risk that can impact on the capacity to deliver a full curriculum and maintain standards.

## 6.0 Through Primary Schools

6.1 Over the past few years, a number of infant and junior schools have been amalgamated in Leeds into through primary schools (9 sets). Although the direct relationship between school structure and attainment is unclear, recent national analysis<sup>2</sup> has concluded that there is a general plateau at Year 3 and that the transfer between an infant and junior school at this stage in a child’s education could impede pupil progress. In a primary school, children benefit from the consistency and familiarity of one team of staff and schemes of works and policies that underpin the work of the whole school. Teachers have the opportunity to work across a broader age range and to enhance the effectiveness of curriculum planning and leadership. Primary Schools are also better placed to deliver the National Curriculum in a continuous and coherent way, with a single school ethos. Through primary schools allow Governors to consider targeting spending across the key stages working with a broad base budget with more flexibility as a result.

Although primarily concerned with the statutory age group, the increasing emphasis on the development of services to children of the 0-5 age range and their families is consistent with ‘through’ school development. The traditional extension of school based activities beyond the traditional learning environment would suggest the need for consolidation of resources inherent in the establishment of ‘through’ schools.

## 7.0 The Benefits of Larger Primary Schools

7.1 The policy highlights the benefits, opportunities and economies of scale a larger primary school (2 forms of entry or 420 pupils in total) can provide. A larger school has the following characteristics and opportunities:

**Curriculum** – a larger staff team and budget gives flexibility and opportunity to develop strengths and expertise in more areas (e.g. dyslexia, gifted and talented provision), For example, staff can lead a single subject across the school encouraging in depth focus in the delivery of that subject; there are likely to be more opportunities for the teaching of non-core subjects (e.g. foreign languages, citizenship) and to provide a range of different curriculum opportunities to support excellence and enjoyment.

**Staff** – Teaching in a large school can offer staff a range of professional development opportunities. For example, teaching in a large school offers access access to a greater range of staff talent and expertise impacting positively both on pupil provision and personal professional development; they may be opportunities to gain a broader professional experience from working with a wider range of ages; there may be more opportunities to offer enrichment or extra-curricular provision. A larger school is also more likely to offer non—contact time for staff and the leadership team, with greater scope to focus on school improvement.

**Pupils** – Pupils have increased social opportunities through pursuit of a wider range activities including extended school provision; children’s ability to forge relationships and celebrate diversity are enhanced in a larger school where there is likely to be increased inclusion and diversity. Pupils also have access to a greater range of staff talent and expertise which can bring a host of additional benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Ruddick, Cambridge University, research commissioned by TES, Nov. 1992

**Parents** – As schools move to greater community focus, larger schools are more likely to be able to offer extended use and additional facilities, such as ‘wrap-around’ care, adult education etc.

**Resources** – A larger budget offers flexibility to improve facilities (e.g. ICT hardware, disabled access adaptations) and facilitate the development of initiatives, including the appointment of a varied range of support staff.

**7.2** The model of a larger school provides a helpful baseline in developing options for the reorganisation of schools and considering the situations of schools with falling rolls. This does not imply a desire in Leeds to develop a uniform system of larger schools nor does it under-value the quality of provision in schools that are below this size, in particular full one form of entry schools.

## **8.0 Federations and Collaborations**

**8.1** The Education Act 2002 provides certain freedoms which had not previously existed, one of which enables two or more schools either to federate under a single governing body or to "arrange for the joint discharge of functions either through whole governing bodies or through joint committees". A Federation is where up to five schools (this can just be primary schools or it can be a mixture of primary, secondary and special) come together under one or more headteachers, but under a single governing body. A federation can include any or all categories of schools – community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided and foundation - and each school retains its own status and character. A less formal joining of schools is through a collaboration, where schools can agree joint functions or committees to make strategic decisions or agree on matters of common interest.

Federations offer governing bodies an opportunity to take a strategic view of the future direction of their schools to strengthen the provision available. They can offer schools:

- opportunities to learn from and support each other and share expertise to deliver higher quality provision
- the opportunity for joint staffing arrangements, including specialist teachers,
- wider career opportunities and broader staff training
- economies of scale in resourcing provision

**8.2** Federations and Collaborations are not a panacea where pupil numbers continue to fall or where schools are not expected to increase in size. It is questionable whether the federation of two small schools would result in more efficient use of funds to support teaching and learning. Federations do not necessarily result in significant financial savings to release funds that can be ploughed into additional teaching or other support and in some cases could require more funding to be directed to management. This would very much depend on the particular circumstances and structure of a federation and the resources available. In terms of the overall education budget, the cost of funding small schools that are federated is the same as maintaining the small schools themselves, as they continue to be funded as individual institutions. Federations of larger schools are likely to offer more potential to realise the advantages of increased collaboration.

**8.3** Increasing linkages between schools through federations and collaborations is one option to consider where a review of provision is being undertaken. Federation could remove the potential competitive aspects that may already be there between schools and produce greater community cohesion. However, it should only be supported where the outcomes will be improved educational experiences for children.

## **9.0 Extended Schools**

**9.1** A key plank of the delivery of integrated children's services and delivery of the DfES Five Year Strategy is extended schools. What is required of an extended school will vary from community to community but essentially all primary schools whether themselves or in clusters should be able to offer their parents the core offer of: affordable childcare from 8am to 6pm all year round, a wide range of study support activities, parenting support opportunities and swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services for pupils.

**9.2** Extended schools offer the opportunity to make better use of existing buildings. Schools with surplus accommodation can look at a range of options and benefits in delivering a range of services on site, such as Early Years provision and Children's Centres. The development of extended services is an important consideration when rationalising school space across an area. However, for extended schools to fulfil the Children's Services agenda, they need to be sustainable and thriving institutions that can reach a high number of parents. Extended schools are not a panacea for falling school rolls, although they may redistribute preference patterns.

## **10.0 Emerging Issues**

The Education and Inspection Bill currently before Parliament proposes significant changes to the way in which education is delivered, how schools are managed and brings to the forefront a variety of issues which explicitly impact upon school organisation. For example, the Bill proposes that competitions are held for all new schools, that the local authority promotes choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of school places, and it proposes the abolition of the School Organisation Committee, with the Local Authority taking over their existing functions. The full impact of the Bill will become clear as the details emerge through the committee stage and policies and processes will be adapted as appropriate.

## **11.0 Summary**

**11.1** This policy provides the context for the planning of primary school places in Leeds. The key objectives of the planning of primary school places are (not in priority order) to:

- ensure that all primary schools are successful, thriving and sustainable schools that offer good value for money and provide an efficient and effective use of available resources
- strengthen the important role primary schools play within local communities by supporting the capacity of schools to become extended schools, supporting closer working between universal services, offering a range of services to children, families and the wider community and enabling schools to contribute to the delivery of the five outcomes required by the Every Child Matters agenda
- encourage inclusive opportunities to meet the needs of children with special educational needs or emotional and behavioural problems, working with Special Inclusive Learning Centres.
- promote collaborative relationships between primary, secondary and special schools designed to improve standards and promote community cohesion by sharing and disseminating best and successful practice.
- ensure the efficient use of school buildings by balancing the supply and demand for school places and ensuring primary schools operate in an appropriate physical environment, equipped to accommodate new curriculum initiatives and to support a range of learning styles.

- Ensure that schools are able to attract and retain sufficient numbers of high quality school staff<sup>3</sup>

**11.2** The attached framework outlines the processes followed when primary provision is reviewed. It outlines the criteria that trigger a review of provision, the process for developing options for change, the current statutory process and implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Every Child Matters : Change for Children in Schools DfES 2005*

## FRAMEWORK FOR THE REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES 2006-2008

### 1. Purpose

This framework lays out the review process followed in Leeds and indicates where the primary provision meets the criteria for review over the 2006-2008 period.

### 2.0 Criteria for Review

**2.1** Primary schools in Leeds are grouped into 57 Primary Planning Areas – groups of schools that serve geographic areas across the city. Concerns about an individual school may be the trigger for reviewing provision, but reviews of provision will continue to focus on all schools within a primary planning area as the initial unit of analysis, widening to consider adjacent Planning Areas where appropriate. A Primary Planning Area is selected for a review of provision where one or more of the following conditions exist:

- there is at least one school with **25%** or more surplus places
- there are low intakes into primary schools in an area and demographic projections do not support an increase in the number of pupils.
- There are one or more small schools defined as having fewer than **190** pupils in an area and concerns exist about their long-term viability
- A school is in Special Measures or there are concerns over a school's ability to deliver a full primary curriculum
- The Asset Management Plan indicates serious issues in respect of school buildings
- Pupil number projections suggest there are insufficient places to meet demand.

**2.2** The size threshold that Leeds City Council is recommended to adopt is **190 or fewer pupils**. This is based on the level at which the small schools allowance is currently triggered. This threshold will function in a similar way to the 25% or more surplus places trigger, indicating a need to consider whether there is a need for a review of places and provision in the area. Schools with fewer than 190 pupils are likely to exhibit some of the characteristics associated with small schools – surplus places, falling numbers on roll that are projected to continue or at best not improve, existing or predicted budget difficulties and a low intake of pupils nearest to the school.

**2.3** There is a presumption that Authorities should have regard to the need to preserve access to local schools for rural communities. Although this does not mean that a rural school should never close, the case for doing so should be carefully considered.

**2.4** Education Leeds works in close partnership with the Church of England and Catholic Diocese and therefore includes all schools in the review process, irrespective of denominational status. A collaborative approach is taken towards any reorganisation of provision that affects the number of denominational places available across the city and within primary planning areas. The review process will, therefore, always include denominational schools.

### 3.0 Developing plans for action

**3.1** Data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census taken each January is analysed annually to assess which schools have reached the triggers of either 25% or more surplus or 190 or fewer pupils. From there, possible options for change are considered in the context of future projections for schools in the relevant planning areas. The result of this review may be a decision to take no action but to continue monitoring the situation. Alternatively, a decision could be taken to formally review provision in an area with a view to developing options in detail with stakeholders.

- 3.2 When developing individual proposals that add, remove or relocate places, assessment of a range of issues is considered within an equalities impact framework. Demographic data, both current and projected, is the main driver that shapes proposals to ensure that the supply of provision is appropriate to meet demand in terms of the required forms of entry. Supporting this analysis consideration is also given to:
- The geographic distribution of schools and other environmental factors, such as travelling distances and access
  - Resource management and cost effectiveness
  - The coherence and continuity of the curriculum and school standards
  - Vulnerable children and SEN
  - Early Year and Children's Centre provision
  - Community cohesion issues and needs and extended schools opportunities
  - The appropriateness of buildings – their location, design and layout, proximity and fitness for purpose
- 3.3 It is the intention of Education Leeds to link key policy strands together through the review process. Any changes to provision will be considered within the Every Child Matters and No Child Left Behind Framework, capitalising on opportunities to establish extended schools and integrated children's services on an area specific basis. During the review process schools in a Planning Area will be supported to become extended or community schools through links with external agencies, providers of a range of services and a range of resourcing options. Examples include breakfast clubs, pre-school provision, after school care provision, health services (eg. accommodation for school nurses), accommodation for adult education etc, the opportunity to increase inclusion and partnerships as part of the Inclusion Strategy and development of Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs).
- 3.4 Early considerations of the issues that need to be addressed and the development of options will therefore include discussions with schools within a primary planning area and colleagues from a number of different backgrounds - Early Years, Extended Schools, Social Services and Health, Regeneration and Housing.
- 4.0 The Statutory Process (as at June 2006)**
- 4.1 Once a preferred proposal is identified by the Executive Team of Education Leeds, and approved by Education Leeds Board, the Executive Board of the Council is asked to approve formal consultation on the proposal. Over a 6 week period, consultation is undertaken with staff, governors, parents and the community of affected schools through meetings and the opportunity for people to present their views in writing. At the end of this period, all of the responses are collated and analysed and reported back to the Executive Board, with a recommendation on the way forward.
- 4.2 If a decision is made to continue with the reorganisation proposal, the City Council publishes a statutory notice in the Yorkshire Evening Post, at the main entrances to affected schools and other conspicuous places. People are invited to submit statutory representations, which can be both in support of the proposal or an objection to it. All appropriate documentation is forwarded to the School Organisation Committee (SOC), who, if there are objections, will decide whether or not to approve the proposal. If the SOC fails to reach a unanimous decision, it will refer the proposal to the School Adjudicator, appointed by the DfES. In the event that there are no objections to a proposal, the decision on final approval will fall to the Executive Board of the City Council.



- 4.3 The Education and Inspection Bill currently indicates significant changes to the statutory process and decision-making on school provision. For example, the White Paper proposes that School Organisation Committees are abolished and the Authority, as a commissioner of provision, would take decisions on proposed new schools promoted by trusts or other providers. The review process will adapt to reflect any legislative changes arising from a new Education Bill.

## **5.0 Implementation**

- 5.1 There are several stages to the implementation of proposals, which have to be taken in sequence in order to ensure that schools are staffed and equipped to provide for pupils affected by changes to provision, and in the case of new schools so that they can open in time. Comprehensive strategies are in place to support schools, staff, children and parents through the change process.

Education Leeds works directly with schools to plan a comprehensive range of appropriate actions to successfully implement change, with focus on ensuring mitigation against any short term risks to young people's attainment and progress in learning. Implementation includes ongoing support for schools affected by reorganisation and regular monitoring and evaluation of their progress.

## **6.0 Other Strategies for Surplus Place Removal**

A strategic approach is adopted for the removal of surplus places in schools that have surplus but are required due to demand or their geographic location. This involves a number of actions that support the key objective of reducing the number of surplus places, while improving standards, enhancing the quality of school buildings and promoting the concept of extended or community schools. This links with a range of strategic plans including the Early Years Childcare Development Plan, the Asset Management Plan, the School Improvement Strategy and the Inclusion Strategy, as well as incorporating creative local solutions.