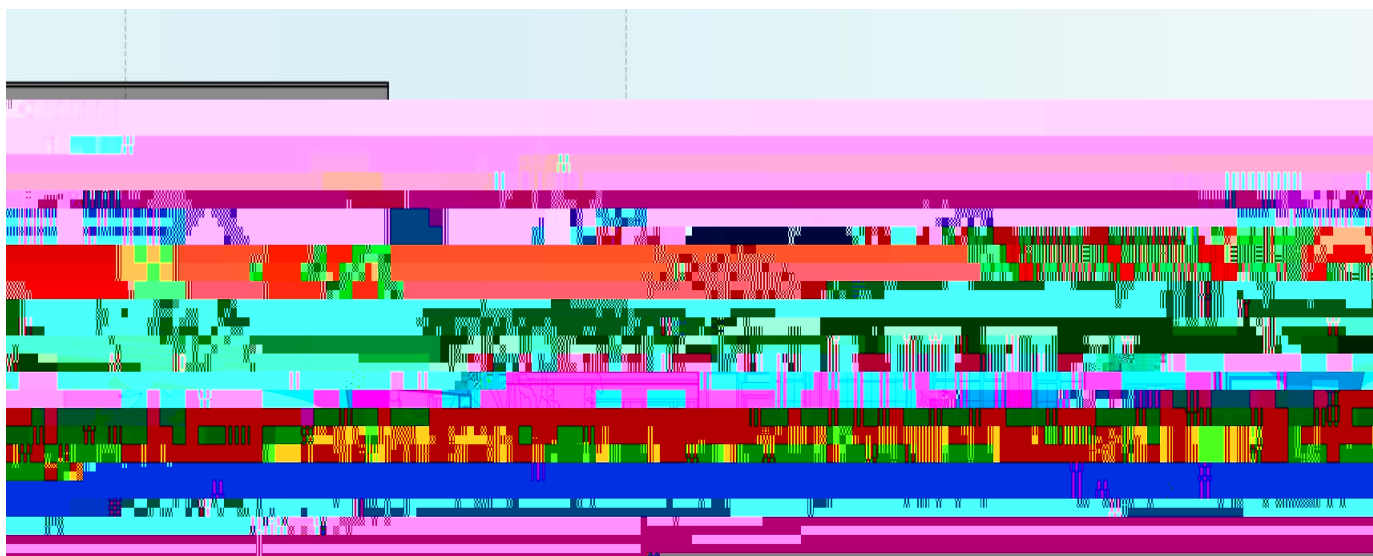




Primary School Expansion



A report from Overview & Scrutiny





Primary School Expansion

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Preface

By Cllr Jon Hunt

**Chairman Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2010-2011**

The rapid expansion of our city's primary schools in the face of a sharply rising birth rate has been a little-appreciated achievement.

It has challenged the city's ability to manage a large capital programme and has challenged many schools to handle much larger numbers of children.

With this in mind the children and education overview and scrutiny committee conducted a series of visits of schools as well as canvassing views from members, parents and the children themselves.

We were especially concerned about the implications for very young children of joining very large and potentially cramped schools. So we were heartened to find many examples of strong and inspirational leadership and teaching in these schools.

The report presented here highlights issues that have arisen from this programme. Some of these may also be relevant to other programmes in the future.

This has been my last review as chair of the children and education committee. As well as thanking members, witnesses and schools for their contri



Terms of Reference

1.1 Reasons for the Review

1.1.1 Birth rates across the City have increased dramatic



1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 To undertake this review we decided firstly to write to all of the primary schools which are included in the current phase of the expansion programme across the City to establish their concerns. In addition we issued an invitation to all City Councillors to highlight any local matters that had been brought to their attention with regard to local school expansion proposals. A call for evidence was issued in the press to seek parents views and a series of 6 targeted visits were



2 Background

2.1 Birth Rates in Birmingham

- 2.1.1 Between 2001 and 2008 there was a significant increase in the birth rate in Birmingham of over 3000 births, an increase of 21%. This increase in births is, in the main





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Finally it is also important to consider whether the schools selected have the management capability to cope with the additional pupils so factors such as the school's current size and its capacity to maintain standards and manage change were also considered. Appendix two contains the list of schools selected for phases 1 and 2 of the programme and also shows their current size in pupil numbers together with the overall future size they will reach over the next seven years.

2.5 How the Expansion Programme is Procured and Delivered

- 2.5.1 A variety of procurement routes are being utilised for the delivery of the additional places programme. These include the Birmingham Construction Partnership, the Local Education Partnership and through a traditionally tendered route (for the Voluntary Aided schools).
- 2.5.2 A key ethos adopted by the City Council in relation to this programme is that all school expansion schemes are developed in a way which seeks to maximise the impact on pupils learning and to address barriers to learning. To ensure that this is embedded from the start of the process the design teams include officers from the Transforming Education Team who work with schools to support the development of designs which support these aims and build upon the school's existing plans to raise achievement and attainment. Head teachers and governors participate in the design phase and they are supported throughout the change management process that this expansion programme entails by staff from the team.

2.6 What is the impact of Size on Primary schools?

- 2.6.1 Concerns have been raised, in particular by parents, about the potential negative impact of the expansion programme and the resultant creation of larger primary schools, both on the well being of individual children who may feel lost in the new larger school environment and also on the overall ethos, effectiveness and performance of the existing school. Primary schools are generally thought of as being small in terms of their total pupil numbers compared with most secondary schools. However primary schools also vary widely in size and can be anything from one form entry (meaning that the school admits 30 new pupils each year and the total number of pupils in the school is 210.) up to five form entry schools (which admit 150 new pupils each year and have a total pupil population of 1050).
- 2.6.2 According to a recent House of Commons briefing paper since 1950 the average size of UK maintained primary schools has gone through a cyclical trend in the range of 180 to 220 pupils. This compares with an average of 900 pupils for UK maintained secondary schools. However primary schools of 220 pupils in Birmingham would be considered to be small.



2.6.3 Expanding a primary school does not mean that pupils will be placed in larger classes as feared by some parents, as the School Standards Framework Act 1998 places a duty on Local Authorities to limit the size of infant classes for 5, 6 and 7 year olds taught by one teacher to 30 or fewer. This became a statutory responsibility for LA's and Schodddddd .5(purand 5 t4h1313 c



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- Head teachers recognise the importance of the sustained contribution of staff in raising standards and nurture their wellbeing and professional development.

2.6.8 The benefits of larger schools are cited as :

- Opportunities for young people to interact with a wide range of peers, and to prepare for secondary school;
- Capacity to develop a strong leadership team which will share the responsibility of knowing children and their families individually, and have direct and empowered links with the Head teacher and governors when necessary;
- Flexibility of organisation due to multiple year groups and a significant budget;
- Opportunities for staff to specialise and offer high quality support to colleagues;
- Capacity to retain high quality staff by offering a wide range of experience and consequent promotion opportunities within one organisation; and
- Opportunities to offer a very wide range of extra curricular activities due to the range of talents and interests of the staff.

2.6.9 Overall nationally, two form entry primary schools are considered large (total 420 places) In

3 Evidence

3.1 Feedback from Schools and City Councillors

- 3.1.1 The Committee wrote asking all the schools included within the primary expansion programme about their issues and concerns and received written submissions from eight schools. Members also undertook targeted visits to:
- Regents Park Community Primary School;
 - Starbank JI School ;
 - Somerville Primary School;
 - Nansen Primary School;
 - Audley Primary School; and
 - Greet Primary School.
- 3.1.2 This meant they were able to speak directly to Head teachers, staff school, governors and pupils about how they were addressing the challenges and developing new ways of working as well as any concerns they had relating to the planned expansion. It also enabled members to see for themselves the impact that the proposed physical changes to the buildings would have on the overall school site. One of the schools visited had expanded some time ago so this gave them



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- 3.1.6 All of the above result in the need to introduce and manage staggered lunchtimes / playtimes and PE lessons.
- 3.1.7 One school with impressive mobile classrooms had only two toilets for use by 60 pupils and staff facilities were located in a main building elsewhere.
- 3.1.8 One school would have liked to secure additional land just outside the boundary of the school to assist in alleviating the general pressure associated with expanding provision within the existing site.

Disruption

- 3.1.9 For those yet to undertake the construction phase concerns were raised about the possible disruption to pupils learning that might be caused by the building works being on site but in general this was felt to have been kept to a minimum by those schools we visited which have already been through the process.

Staffing issues

- 3.1.10 Additional teaching staff are clearly required when schools increase their intake of pupils but there are also implications for administrative and other support as well as kitchen staff.
- 3.1.11 One school pointed out that there were budget implications associated with appointing additional staff early to allow for an induction period to take place. It was also felt that the timing and short timescales allowed by the programme could put pressure on schools in terms of recruitment.

Leadership Issues

- 3.1.12 There are significant demands made on the time of the school leadership team in terms of project managing these projects.
- 3.1.13 Timetabling – Most schools recognised that it was more complicated to manage and ensure effective use of limited resources.
- 3.1.14 Both parents and Head teachers were keen to ensure actions were put in place to ensure the ethos of the schools was not changed by the expansion. We were told that one innovative way of ensuring this was to develop and organise around a “school within a school” model as set out on the next page.



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Nansen School

There is a good pastoral team in place, the school has a specific room called the "time out room" for young people to come into and it is staffed by a learning mentor and 2 other members of staff.

There is a welcoming atmosphere throughout the school: A local artist came into the school and painted murals on the walls. The time out room has a Forest theme to it.

The dining room is called "the palms", with a special top table for those children who have behaved especially well.

The transition between Junior and Secondary school is well embedded. A large number of the children take up a place at the secondary school situated opposite the school and the two schools carry out a number of joint exercises to help the pupils settle into the new school.

Greet Primary Play ground Mentors

Good pastoral support mechanisms are in place across the school to ensure children don't feel lost and isolated. They have introduced a system of "play leaders" across the year group where children from older year groups help the younger children integrate and offer support during play times. They also play a vital role in ensuring children are not isolated during break times.

Regents Park

Mediation service: A group of year 6 children are trained mediators. They apply for the role, are interviewed, selected and then trained by the senior learning mentor. At lunchtime, they are 'on duty' whereby they are available to help children settle playground disputes and squabbles. They have a designated area so children know where to go if they need help.

Play leaders: Some children are trained play leaders. These children support younger children by leading playground games and activities.

Library buddies: Children in years 5 and 6 have become 'library buddies' for children in reception and year 1. They come in early to help the younger children select suitable library books if parents are unable to stay for this.

School Council representatives: All classes from years 2 to 6 vote for their class councillor in a mock election. However, the youngest children are represented by selected children from year 6. These children go to reception and year 1 to seek their views and opinions






Pupil Place Planning

3.1.24 Concerns were raised about:

- Whether the pupil projections being used to justify the changes were robust enough to warrant the expansion of schools over time or if it might be necessary to decrease schools capacity again at some point in the future. One school indicated that they had previously had to reduce and now pupil numbers were being expanded;
- Sufficient secondary places being available in future for pupils as they moved through the system; and
- Ensuring that schools were being expanded as a result of local need and that places were being made available to children that lived locally.

3.2 Feedback from Pupils



“Play leaders help children play and there are also Mediators in the playground who help sort problems out”.

3.2.3 What do you think about plans to make the school bigger?



School Travel Plans

- 3.3.5 The school travel team is responsible for the production, annual review and publication of the Sustainable Modes Travel Strategy (which includes a requirement to review school travel plans). This is required as a result of a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. School travel plans provide a tailored approach to tackling congestion and engaging people to use more sustainable travel modes – walking, cycling and

- 3.3.12 The importance of having “champions” such as a named teacher or governor in schools in place to help drive forward change is a critical part of ensuring local ownership and ultimately the success of the school travel plan.
- 3.3.13 Going forward it is currently unclear what the future of the school travel team will be as the Directorate is shortly to undergo restructuring and the revenue funding from central government which funded 3 of the posts in the team has now ceased.
- 3.3.14 In addition the one off grants that used to be available to schools (which were also provided by central government) both as an incentive to schools to produce their travel plans and help to fund the necessary actions identified within the plan within the school boundaries (such as waiting shelters for parents, cycle sheds and changes to the school entrances to make them safer for pedestrians) are no longer available.

3.4 Consultation Processes

- 3.4.1 Members were advised of a number of consultation processes that are conducted locally both to get agreement to the principle of the expansion proposal then to agree the final details of the proposed build work. Some of these consultation processes are governed and prescribed by statute and the different processes can cause confusion as they run alongside each other

Statutory consultation process required for school expansion

- 3.4.2 This has the following stages:
- pre statutory (not prescribed): informative includes putting the proposal to governors , parents , pupils and staff; and
 - statutory involves publishing formal notices, setting out the full proposal at public meetings.
- 3.4.3 Discussions on the design process go on in parallel and this can cause confusion.

Planning Application consultation process

- 3.4.4 Planning applications are sought to be determined within an 8 week period (according to government guidelines)
- 3.4.5



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school travel plan data and issues. An updated travel plan and transport assessment is submitted with the planning application and reviewed by Transportation and Development Control. Public consultation comments are reviewed and a decision is recommended to Planning control for determination of the planning application.



4 Summary of Key Findings

4.1.1



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team and felt that it would be helpful if the team was involved earlier in the process when



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environment. Heads need to be able to develop other leaders, not just sharing leadership but distributing it so that year or phase team leaders become key players within the school. It is essential that that none of these upheavals and cultural changes impact on pupil attainment and it may be that this needs to be monitored over time.

- 5.1.8 One real challenge that remains for a number of schools relates to a loss of outside space as a result of the build work, particularly to enable the playing of team sports or for nature studies. In some schools, although they still met the required overall standard for playground space, it had been broken up into smaller pockets, around the new build development and as a result was less flexible. In addition we heard that a number of schools lost valued nature areas and had little outside space available for group games. Co

5.2 Suggested Actions

1. a) That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families encourages the primary school network that has developed for the Phase two schools to expand to include the Phase three schools. This will enable the sharing of best practice and support between all of the schools to be expanded, both in the management of the larger school sites, care of pupils and implementation of the programme.
b) That this network is formally aligned to the primary schools forum.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families explores with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture the potential for working together, both during and following the school expansion programme to develop "open space plans." These will increase access for schools to open green space/playing fields, both for nature studies as well for competitive sports like cricket, football and rounders. This may require Local Working Groups and involvement of other Strategic Directorates such as Development, Environment and Culture, and Homes and Neighbourhoods.
3. The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families works with schools to clarify and improve the overall consultation processes that are undertaken for school expansion and increase the opportunities for local residents, parents and Ward Councillors to become engaged, perhaps informally at an earlier stage.
4. That the Cabinet Member for Transportation and Regeneration encourages School Travel Plans to be updated at a much earlier stage, preferably prior to planning permission being sought. Links to the Travel Plan Team should ideally be in place at the design stage of the expansion proposals so that they are available for consultation with local residents who may have concerns about congestion.
5. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration works with the Transport, Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore the adequacy of the School Travel Plans in responding to issues of congestion and enforcement.
6. That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families explores if action can be taken to secure more timely information on births within the city including specific information on births from the Register Office.
7. That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families brings forward annual reports to the Children and Education O&S Committee which track the attainment of pupils, their general wellbeing and performance of the expanded schools.
8. That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families brings forward a report to the Children and Education O&S Committee on how plans are being developed to address the future impact of the growth in pupil numbers on Secondary School provision.



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9. That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families reports progress towards the achievement of these actions to the Children and Education O&S Committee in January 2012. The Committee will schedule subsequent progress reports thereafter.

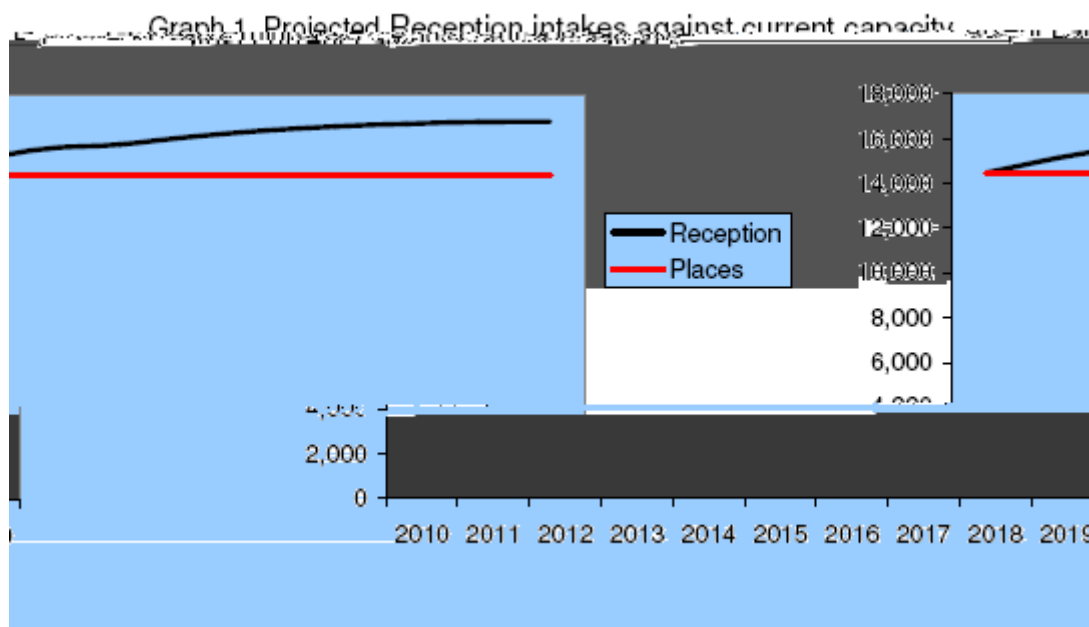
Appendix One Pupil Number Projections

Pupil Number Projections

The number of births in the city continues to grow year on year and there were over 17,000 births in 2007/08 – an increase of over 25% on the number seven years earlier. This is creating a pressure for primary school places that will continue for some years. The tables and graph below show the increasing numbers of pupils predicted to require a Reception place over the next ten years. Please note that the long term projections are based on estimates of births provided by the Office of National Statistics; since these children have not even been born yet, they are likely to be less reliable than the short-term projections up to 2012.

Table 1. Projected Reception intakes for the next ten years.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
14,485	15,143	15,665	15,828	16,185	16,451	16,643	16,759	16,839	16,857






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Table 2. Short, medium and long term increases in capacity required by ward

Ward	Current PAN	2012	2016	2019
Acocks Green	440	2%	9%	16%
Aston	570	5%	11%	16%
Bartley Green	270	0%	11%	11%
Billesley	255	6%	6%	6%
Bordesley Green	600	20%	45%	55%
Bournville	240	13%	13%	13%
Brandwood	330	27%	55%	45%
Edgbaston	60	50%	50%	50%
Erdington				



Appendix Two: School Expansion Programme

Phase 1 Temporary accommodation provided for September 2010 intake

School Name	Ward
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School Name	Ward	Total Additional Places over a seven year period	Current Admission No	Proposed Admission Number per year	Current Total School numbers	Proposed Total Capacity
Ward End Primary	Hodge Hill	420	60 (2FE)	120 (4FE)	420	840
Waverley all through (Initially at Starbank)	Bordesley Green	630	0	90	0	630
Yardley Primary	South Yardley	210	90 (3FE)	120 (3FE)	630	840
TOTAL		5971				

Appendix Four: Consultation Process

Consultations on Enlargement by Expansion Proposals	
1 Stages of School Organisation Consultation	Timescale
i) Pre Statutory Consultation	As appropriate – normally approximately 4 weeks. (Not prescribed)