

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.

Date: Thursday, 30 September
2004

Time: 9.30 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. Welcome New Members and Introductions
2. Apologies
3. Appointment of Chairman
4. Appointment of Vice Chairman
5. Minutes of previous meeting held on 5th February, 2004 (Pages 1 - 6)
6. Matters Arising
7. Minutes of a meeting of the Local Admissions Forum held on 13th May, 2004 (Pages 7 - 8)
8. Update to School Organisation Plan 2003/04-2007/08 (Pages 9 - 16)
9. Revised Guidance on Statutory Proposals to close Rural Schools and Consultation on the Education (Miscellaneous)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2004 (Pages 17 - 20)
10. Membership/Resignations/Terms of Reference (Pages 21 - 24)
11. Latest News from School Organisation Unit, DfES (Page 25)
12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE
5th February, 2004

Present:-

Councillor Boyes (in the Chair)	Rotherham MBC
Mr. B. Sampson	Diocese of Sheffield
Mr. M. Robertson	Diocese of Sheffield
Mrs. J. Scott	J. & I. Schools
Mr. P. Robins	J. & I. Schools
Mr. D. Smart	Junior Schools

Also in attendance were the following officers :-

Mr. R. Higginbottom	Education, Culture and Leisure Services
Mr. D. Hill	Education, Culture and Leisure Services
Mr. M. Harrop	Education, Culture and Leisure Services
Mrs. S. Green	Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. S. Birkin, Councillor Austen, Mrs. B. Watson, Mr. A. Walker, Mrs. A. Winfield, Mr. M. Whitehouse (resigned) and Mrs. P. Qureshi.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November, 2003 be received as a correct record.

3. MATTER ARISING – SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING – OFSTED/AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT

In accordance with Minute No. 7 of the previous meeting, Martin Harrop fed back information from a meeting which had taken place with Sheffield.

Sheffield was in a similar position to Rotherham in terms of smaller cohorts entering Primary Schools, discussion mainly being concerned with the Aston and Brinsworth areas and the proposed development at Waverley.

Information had been shared on numbers at Aston and Brinsworth Secondary schools and at Hinde House, Handsworth Grange and Westfield Secondary Schools, Handsworth Grange probably being the Secondary School closest to the Waverley development.

Sheffield has similar problems in terms of forecasting pupil numbers, but probably has more movement resulting from parental preferences. Westfield loses catchment area pupils to Aston, but also loses to Eckington in Derbyshire.

Westfield will be rebuilt and will be able to accommodate all of its (reduced) catchment area pupils in 2014. It was difficult to gauge how the rebuilt school might affect parental preferences, but Y7 numbers in the catchment will start to reduce from 2009.

Handsworth Grange imports pupils from Hinde House, but housing development at Waverley could be closer to the school than houses within the Hinde House catchment.

The position at all these schools will continue to be closely monitored and information will continue to be shared as appropriate.

The Committee raised questions regarding the possible affects on co-ordinated proposals for Aston Comprehensive in view of future new build and whether the school would be larger or smaller.

In terms of changes in entry numbers for Aston it was felt the difference would be marginal up to 2009.

One member commented that information regarding the capacity of Sheffield schools was not available to admission appeal panels.

Reference was made to the issue of building schools for catchment numbers if the demand was not great.

In summary, it was felt the pressure of numbers should ease slightly by 2009/10.

4. MINUTES OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Resolved:- That the minutes of the above meeting held on 27th November, 2003 be received as a true record.

5. MATTER ARISING – CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2005/06

Concern was expressed by Malcolm Robertson regarding the present consultation exercise. Some voluntary aided schools were uncertain about the procedure on model policies.

It was suggested that a special meeting be convened between Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors for all Aided schools.

Martin Harrop agreed to attend any meeting arranged in view of the consultation deadline of 1st March, 2004.

Martin Harrop pointed out the importance of ensuring the consultation was carried out thoroughly, which then meant that every second year schools would not have to undertake the same exercise.

6. STATUTORY PROPOSALS – REMOVAL OF SPECIFIC SEN PROVISION (VI UNITS) AT TREETON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND WATH COMPREHENSIVE, A LANGUAGE COLLEGE

The meeting considered a report which gave details of proposals at Wath Comprehensive, A Language College and Treeton CE Primary Schools to remove specific SEN Provision (VI Units).

Proposals have stood for six weeks. There have been no objections or comments to either proposal.

In the case of Treeton, the matter will have to be determined by the School Organisation Committee.

In the case of Wath, the LEA had to consider if, in the absence of any objections, it could determine the matter. In considering this, the LEA must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance concerning 'linked' proposals.

If the LEA had determined the Wath proposal, it could be seen as prejudicing the School Organisation Committee's discussion and decision. It had, therefore, been resolved to pass the matter to the SOC for decision.

Roger Higginbottom, Strategic Leader Inclusion, attended the meeting to explain the rationale of the proposal which it was felt, in essence, was changing the focus in which the service has worked. The proposal would create opportunities for the Local Authority, through specialist help, to work far more efficiently and effectively with the seven pupils concerned, who would also be given the option to remain in their present placements with additional support.

The long term issue is that pupils who are diagnosed with VI will be supported in mainstream provision within their local environment, without the need to travel long distances throughout the Borough.

The meeting was informed that VI was a very low incidence need.

During the consultation there had been no strong objections from all parties and parents had seen the logic of the proposal.

In considering the proposals, members had regard to the following:-

- the affects of the proposals on pupils and staff;
- advantages of children attending catchment schools
- peripatetic provision/risk assessment
- professional advice from the Head of the Eye Service
- development of curriculum expertise and use of technical equipment
- appointment of professional staff through Standards Fund
- Disability Discrimination Act
- "Every Child Matters"/DfES Action Plan

Reference was made to the Language Unit at Hillcrest School and whether there were any plans to make similar changes to this provision.

Roger Higginbottom referred to the success of the “6 Modules” work and outlined the differences between inclusion provision for VI pupils and the pupils at Hillcrest. This was related to the level of SEN and long term impact. Other changes to the provision of Severe and Moderate Learning Difficulties contained the same key element – creating future mechanisms for staff in special schools to work alongside local schools.

All present were in agreement to the proposal.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposals at Wath Comprehensive, A Language College and Treeton CE Primary Schools to remove specific SEN Provision (VI Units) be agreed.

(2) That the Secretary send out the appropriate decision letters.

7. SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN – FALL IN PRIMARY PUPIL NUMBERS

The meeting considered a report which gave information relating to changes that are already in the pipeline (eg through PFI), together with other likely reductions in net capacity, which will be possible due to the expected fall in pupil numbers as a result of the lower birth numbers feeding into primary schools.

The School Organisation Plan 2003/04 – 2007/08 had signified the need to lose 1350 places in the Primary School sector.

Annex 1 of the report set out possible reductions in Primary School Capacity in terms of what might happen through natural change, and in order to manage the reduction in places effectively without closing schools.

The meeting made reference to the following factors:-

- * impact on “popular” schools
- * capacity for 30 children in each year group
- * use of surplus space for community use – “Every Child Matters”

One member was of the view that lower class groups should be encouraged.

Martin Harrop explained that this may not necessarily lead to smaller class groups. In the main, however, admission numbers would make it easier for schools to adhere to an infant class size plan. The number of children in specific year groups would, however, depend on the number of applications and school budgets.

There would be no intention to restrict parental preferences.

Resolved:- That the information be received.

8. SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

Consideration was given to a report of an inspection carried out by HMIs from Ofsted in collaboration with the Audit Commission, which included visits to 15 Authorities.

The Education Network (TEN) has produced a Policy Briefing Note which provides a useful summary (attached at Appendix 1).

The report highlighted the influence of school place planning on school standards and social inclusion.

The report brings out a number of issues and provides examples of good practice in some of the Authorities visited. Some of the points raised included the following:-

- ensuring that the strategy for school place provision is fully aligned with the LEA's school improvement strategies
- making the school organisation plan a clear exposition of an authority's strategy and thereby an engine for debate rather than a bureaucratic exercise
- forging productive but challenging relationships with other admission authorities
- taking the lead in brokering partnerships between schools to ensure an equitable distribution of pupils with challenging behaviour

The latter two points fall under the remit of the Local Admissions Forum, which has begun to look at one of the other issues for consideration – mid-year transfers.

The main point related to the School Organisation Plan becoming part of one overall plan for the Local Authority in two years time.

David Hill referred to the task of the Working Group with particular reference to pupils with very challenging behaviour in the Secondary School sector. A report on this work would be submitted to a future meeting.

Further discussion and debate centred around the following issues:-

- class sizes/school funding and pupil numbers
- Government heavily investing in Key Stage 3 & 4 support
- league tables
- role of School Improvement around performance of other issues
- ways of improving "unpopular" schools

- balancing staff/pupil and parental expectations

One member paid credit to the work of Rotherham LEA for the excellent partnership work between schools.

Resolved:- That the report be received.

9. MEMBERSHIP/TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee discussed the issue of membership and attention was drawn to Item 6 of the current Membership and Terms of Reference. This stated that any individual member failing to attend three consecutive meetings of a School Organisation Committee, even where an alternative attended on his/her behalf, should resign.

In discussing membership it was noted that Mr. M. Whitehouse (Special Schools) representative had resigned from SOC and that Rev. G. Harbord had moved to Sheffield and subsequently resigned.

Resolved:- (1) That, on behalf of the School Organisation Committee, the Secretary write to the Racial Equality Council regarding the non-attendance of their nominees at four consecutive meetings.

(2) That, on behalf of the School Organisation Committee, the Secretary write to Mr. M. Whitehouse and Rev. Harbord thanking them for their work on this Committee over the past few years.

(3) That the Secretary explore ways of expanding the representation of the minority group.

(4) That the Secretary seek nominations to replace Mr. M. Whitehouse and Rev G. Harbord.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was agreed for Thursday, 24th June, 2004 at 9.30 a.m.

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM
THURSDAY, 13TH MAY, 2004**

Present:- Councillor Hodgkiss (in the Chair); Councillor Boyes. and Mrs. S. Green (Rotherham M.B.C.), Mrs. J. Griffiths (Rotherham M.B.C.), Mr. M. Harrop (Rotherham M.B.C.), Mrs. M. Jordan (Rotherham M.B.C.), Mr. B. N. Sampson (Church of England), Mr. M. Robertson (Church of England), Mr. P. Storey (Diocese of Hallam), Mr. F. McDermott (Diocese of Hallam), Mrs. P. Powell (Community Representative), Mr. F. Hedge (Community Representative) and Mr. G. Lancashire (Junior and Infant Schools)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Austen, Mrs. I. Hartley and Mrs. G. Atkin.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1ST APRIL, 2004

The minutes of the meeting held on the 1st April, 2004 were accepted as a true record.

3. ADMISSION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL 2005/06 - DRAFT BOOKLET

Consideration was given to the contents of a draft Booklet to parents on Rotherham's admission arrangements for entry to Secondary Schools in 2005/2006.

The changes are intended to make school admissions fairer for all parents and to improve the admission processes that parents often find stressful, the aim of the Authority being to encourage greater co-ordination and co-operation between the Authority, the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools and neighbouring local education authorities. It was hoped this would produce an admissions system which is streamlined and reduces the number of application forms parents have to complete where they apply for more than one school.

In the first year of introducing these changes in 2005/2006 the Authority shall be co-ordinating admission arrangements with all other local education authorities, but particularly those in South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster).

It will mean that every parent resident in Rotherham who has applied for a school place in any area of South Yorkshire will receive a single offer of a secondary school place on the same day from the authority.

The booklet outlined the following factors:-

- Five-step process of the new admission arrangements

- Co-ordinated admission arrangements
- Terminology
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Information on All Schools
- Eligibility for a Place
- Making an Application for a School Place
- How will Your Application be Processed?
- Transfers During the School Year
- Appeals for Admission to School
- Useful Contacts
- Additional Information
- Pupil and Student Transport Policy

A number of suggestions were made, discussed and noted for action.

Agreed:- (1) That the draft Booklet "Admission to Secondary School 2005/2006" be approved, subject to amendment, as discussed.

(2) That Martin Harrop and Marina Jordan, Joanne Griffiths and all other members of staff within the Admissions Section of the Local Authority, be thanked for their work in the compilation of the Booklet.

4. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the meeting arranged for Thursday, 8th July, 2004 be cancelled and that the next meeting be arranged for October/early November 2004, details of which to be circulated at the appropriate time.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member and Advisors, Education, Culture and Leisure Services
2.	Date:	7 th September 2004
3.	Title:	Update to the School Organisation Plan 2003/04 – 2007/08 (The SOP covers the whole of Rotherham)
4.	Programme Area:	EcaLS, Resources and Information

5. Summary

This report and update are for information only and there are no suggested action points over and above those contained within the original plan.

6. Recommendations

That this report and update be received and forwarded to the School Organisation Committee for information and discussion prior to publication.

7. Proposals and Details

This update has been produced in order to provide further information between full plans, which are produced on a three year cycle. The 2003/04 – 2007/08 plan was published on 28th November 2003.

8. Finance

There are no specific financial consequences as a result of receiving this report.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are none particularly associated with receiving this report.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The report is for information only and, therefore, no decision will affect the Policy and Performance agenda. The update does, however, make reference to the Best Value Performance indicators relating to the supply of school places, comparing the outturn figures with the estimates in the published SOP.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The School Organisation Plan 2003/04 – 2007/08 sets out how the LEA plans to meet its statutory responsibility to secure sufficient education provision within its area in order to promote higher standards of attainment.

There is no specific legislation requiring the production of this update, but DfES guidance suggests that it is good practice to do so in respect of demographic information.

The update should be forwarded to the School Organisation Committee for information and discussion prior to publication and distribution.

Contact Name : Martin Harrop, Principal Officer, Forward Planning
Resources and Information
Extension 2415

Update to the School Organisation Plan 2003/04 – 2007/08

The Education (School Organisation Plans) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003, which came into force on 1st June 2003, changed the requirements to publish a plan on an annual basis. The next plan should now be produced in 2006 (ie on a 3 yearly cycle), although there will be a move towards a Single Education Plan which will probably subsume the SOP. In the interim, the LEA has produced an update of some of the demographic and statistical information contained in the current SOP based on the actual rather than the estimated figures for 2003/04. Other changes, particularly relating to SEN provision, are also outlined. The relevant information includes references to Sections/pages in the current SOP and these are headed in bold type.

Section 1

Table 1 Best Value Performance Plan: Key Strategic Targets

% Schools with 25% + unfilled places

	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Outturn</u>	
Primary	7.5%	7.5%	(8 schools)
Secondary	5.9%	5.9%	(1 school)
% of unfilled places in all Primary schools	9.9%	9.6%	
% of unfilled places in all Secondary schools	6.1%	5.3%	
% of pupils in excess of school capacity in secondary schools	1.3%	1.5%	

Comment

The % of schools with 25% + outturn was as expected. However, in both the Primary and Secondary sectors the numbers entering Reception and Y7 were greater than estimated and, therefore, the % surplus figures were smaller in both cases. In line with this, the % of pupils in excess of school capacity in secondary schools rose, as anticipated, but to a slightly greater extent.

Section 7 (page 29 onwards)

Numbers entering Reception

7.6 Birth statistics and entry numbers have been as follows:-

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
Births	3161	3180	3156	3029	2937
	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04
Reception entry	3163	3162	3160	3049	3052

Comment

Between the years 99/00 and 02/03 the entry into Reception was at a very similar level to the births 5 years earlier. In 02/03 the difference between the two figures was +20 and there was some evidence to suggest that this would be likely to continue. The actual entry figure for 2003/04 of 3052 was +115 when compared to the birth figure.

Secondary Schools – Forecast for Y7 (7.8)

Forecast numbers were based on previous methodology. With secondary entry cohort numbers approaching their height, it was clear that a number of schools would reach their admission limit and the ultimate entry would very much depend on the number of late applications and the number of successful appeals – especially at those schools close to the border that continue to attract large numbers of extra-district preferences.

The final entry figure was 3840 compared to an estimate of 3777, an increase of 63.

Population - Year groups through the schools (7.11)

Primary

The loss/gain of pupils through the years is considered in order to estimate numbers in other year groups.

For Primary, the previous normal loss of pupils had changed to a gain which resulted in numbers being rolled forward with an addition of 20 pupils per year group. The actual figures showed:-

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
2002/03	3049	3176	3227	3222	3326	3409	(3593)
2003/04	(3052)	3055	3207	3256	3238	3326	3433

Changes for each year group ranged from 0 to +31 with an average of just under +18.

Secondary

Contrary to the position in the Primary sector, there continued to be a loss as year groups rolled forward in the Secondary sector. This had reduced, however, and a figure of just 4 was taken away from rolled forward figures in the SOP. The actual figures showed:-

	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
2002/03	3733	3788	3599	3662	(3603)
2003/04	(3840)	3732	3773	3595	3634

Changes for each year group ranged from –28 to –1 with an average of –12.

Comparison of Predictions with Actual Numbers on Roll (7.17)

The full breakdown was as follows:-

<u>Primary</u>	Estimate	Actual	Difference	% Difference
Reception	2957	3052	+95	+3.21%
Other Years	<u>19529</u>	<u>19515</u>	<u>-14</u>	<u>-0.07%</u>
Total	22486	22567	+81	+0.36%

Secondary

Y7	3777	3840	+63	+1.67%
Y8 – Y11	14766	14734	-32	-0.22%
Vlth form	<u>1867</u>	<u>1854</u>	<u>-13</u>	<u>-0.7%</u>
Total	20410	20428	+18	+0.09%
Overall Total	42,896	42,995	+99	+0.23%

Table 4 (Section 7)

If the actuals for 2003/04 are inserted into Table 4, the projected figures would now be as follows:-

	R	Y1	Y2	T	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	T	T
03/04	3052	3055	3207	9314	3256	3238	3326	3433	13253	22567
04/05	2984	3072	3075	9131	3227	3276	3258	3346	13107	22238
05/06	2787	3004	3092	8883	3095	3247	3296	3278	12916	21799
06/07	2877	2807	3024	8708	3112	3115	3267	3316	12810	21518
07/08	2877	2897	2827	8601	3044	3132	3135	3287	12598	21199

	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	T	Vlth	T	T
03/04	3840	3732	3773	3595	3634	18574	1854	20428	42995
04/05	3704	3836	3728	3769	3591	18628	1912	20540	42778
05/06	3675	3700	3832	3724	3765	18696	1904	20600	42399
06/07	3556	3671	3696	3828	3720	18471	1920	20391	41909
07/08	3580	3552	3667	3692	3824	18315	1932	20247	41446

Comment

Clearly, although the overall trends remain the same, the predicted numbers on roll are larger than previously forecast in the SOP as a result of the increased numbers entering Reception and Y7.

The predicted numbers on roll compared to capacity now show:-

	<u>NOR 07/08</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Primary	21199	24788
Secondary	20247	21248

Section 9 Primary Schools

Tables 6 – 17 in the SOP show the development of numbers for the 12 planning areas. A comparison of the predicted numbers on roll for 2003/04 compared to the actual numbers for each area is shown below:-

		Predicted No on Roll 03/ 04	Actual No on Roll 03/04	Difference
Table 6	Aston/Aughton	1523	1595	+72
Table 7	Bramley/Wickersley	1837	1864	+27
Table 8	Brinsworth/Catcliffe	1487	1513	+26
Table 9	Dalton/Thrybergh	1121	1109	-12
Table 10	Dinnington	1806	1795	-11
Table 11	Maltby	1927	1923	-4
Table 12	North & West	3384	3366	-18
Table 13	Rawmarsh	1661	1639	-22
Table 14	South & East	3419	3406	-13
Table 15	Swinton	1246	1222	-24
Table 16	Wales/Thurcroft	1406	1418	+12
Table 17	Wath	1669	1717	+48
Total		22486	22567	+81

It is important to note, however, that the predicted numbers are based on births, plus the possible outcome of parental preference. They do not take account of changes in housing. Those changes are highlighted in the commentary and in Appendix 7 (page 80) of the SOP.

The specific references in Appendix 7 in relation to the above relate to:-

<u>Area</u>	<u>No of houses</u>
Cortonwood Colliery, Brampton (Wath)	530
Sunnyside, Bramley (Bramley/Wickersley)	772
Sheffield Road, Fence { Aston/Aughton }	492
Mansfield Road, Aston { Aston/Aughton }	199
East of Stockwell Avenue, Wales (Wales/Thurcroft)	432

The commentaries for each of the areas with a plus figure in the above table, give details of the additional housing and signal a likely increase in the number on roll compared to the base figures.

Section 10 (page 47) Secondary Schools

This section of the SOP highlights the fact that the current assessed surplus is low. Only Kimberworth Comprehensive has 25%+ surplus places, but the school will close in 2004. The prediction for the period of the Plan was for total numbers on roll to fall between 2002/03 and 2007/08 by a very small amount following increases up to 2005/06.

The number on roll did increase in 2003/04 and the actual figure 20428 was just 18 higher than predicted, although the Y7 figure was underestimated by 63.

The prediction for Numbers on Roll and Capacity for Secondary Schools in 2007/08 have altered very little as a consequence of the actual entry in 2003/04. The final figures for Table 20 would now show the following:-

<u>No on Roll 2007/08</u>	<u>Capacity following PFI Changes</u>	<u>Surplus (DfES)</u>	<u>Surplus Actual</u>
20285	20738	676 (3.3%)	453 (2.2%)

Section 11 (page 55) - Special Education Provision

Table 21 of the SOP gives details of the Special School provision in Rotherham. At the time of production of the SOP, proposals for statutory changes at 5 of the 7 Special Schools were being considered. The proposals were all agreed by the School Organisation Committee (SOC) and these are outlined as follows:-

<u>School</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Provision</u>	<u>Recognised Accommodation No</u>
Abbey	from 5 – 16	MLD	135
	to 7 – 16	Moderate/Complex Learning Difficulties	100
Green Arbour	from 5 – 16	MLD (Aut)	140
	to 7 – 16	Moderate/Complex and Language & Communication Difficulties	100
Hilltop	from 2 – 19	SLD	98
	to 2 – 19	SLD	80
Kelford	from 2 – 19	SLD	108
	to 2 – 19	SLD	80
Milton	from 5 – 16	MLD	115
	to 7 – 16	Moderate/Complex Learning Difficulties	100

All of the above changes are being phased in to ensure that no pupil loses a place already taken up. For Hilltop and Kelford the changes will be fully effective by September 2007, whilst for Abbey, Green Arbour and Milton the changes will be fully in place by September 2005.

Table 22 (page 56)

This table gives details of Additional Integrated Unit Provision attached to Mainstream Schools. A proposal to add a dedicated unit to cater for the needs of 15-20 pupils in Key Stage 3/ 4 who have mild to moderate autistic spectrum disorder at Swinton Community School, A Maths & Computing College has now been approved.

Two further proposals – to discontinue the EBD (Primary) unit at Rawmarsh Sandhill and to add an EBD (Primary) unit at Wales Primary have also been published and, in the absence of comments/objections in the representation period, have been determined by the LEA.

It should be noted that this paper is simply an update to the information contained within the previously published School Organisation Plan 2003/04 – 2007/08. No further specific conclusions are drawn concerning the need to add or remove school places. The next full plan will be produced in 2006 as part of, or as an appendix to the Single Education Plan (subject to legislation). A further update will be produced in 2005.

If you wish to make any comment or seek further information on this update, then please contact Martin Harrop on 01709 822415.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

- 1 Meeting:** Cabinet Member and Advisers, Education, Culture and Leisure Services
- 2 Date of Meeting:** 27th July 2004
- 3 Title:** **Revised Guidance on Statutory Proposals to Close Rural Schools and Consultation on the Education (Miscellaneous) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2004.**
- 4 Originating Officer:** Martin Harrop
Principal Officer, Planning, Resources and Information
Ext 2415

- 5 Issue:**
To inform members of the above and to provide opportunity to respond to the consultation.

- 6 Summary:**
The revised guidance (see attached) replaces the previous DfES guidance for decision makers (ie the School Organisation Committee LEA/Adjudicator) on closure of rural schools.

The proposed regulations would amend parts of three pieces of current school organisation legislation – the Education (School Organisation Proposals) (England) Regulations 1999, the Education (School Organisation Committee) (England) Regulations 1999 and the Education (References to Adjudicator) Regulations 1999.

- 7 Clearance/Consultation:**
The DfES has also forwarded details on to the secretary of the School Organisation Committee and the SOC will have opportunity to consider the guidance and proposals at a meeting to be held in September.

- 8 Timing:**
The revised guidance, which is statutory, comes into effect from 1st October.

The consultation asks for comments by 30th September and it is intended that regulations 2-4 and 11-13 will come into force in the Autumn and regulations 5-10 in February 2005.

The latter are the regulations, which relate to membership of the SOC.

- 9 Background:**
Current guidance for decision makers on rural schools advises a presumption against closure and lists a number of areas, which need to be carefully considered. The new guidance goes beyond that in putting a requirement on proposes to provide evidence to the SOC to show that such matters have carefully been considered.

The proposed changes to regulations are mostly technical and include:

- i) amending current conditions for proposals depending on PFI funding to provide approval to be conditional on the National Credit Approval (NCA) following the

signing of the PFI contract and provide a new condition for projects to be funded under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

- ii) amending regulations to make it a requirement to publish proposals where the lower age limit of a school is raised by at least one year (inadvertently removed in the 2003 amendment regulations).
- iii) amending the Adjudicator regulations to allow reference to be made to more than one Adjudicator and for one to be appointed as 'lead' Adjudicator who will decide proposals where those appointed cannot agree.

The most significant changes and the ones where action may/will be required are:

- iv) amending the definition of 'relevant school' to include nursery schools which will then also enable, through further amendment, the inclusion of a nursery school representative within the Schools Group of the SOC where there is at least one such school in the area. The requirement to include a Special School Representative is removed but only where there is no special school within the LEA area.

10 Argument:

Whilst no response is necessary in respect of i) to iii) above, there should be a response to iv).

There is no objection to the inclusion of a nursery school representative but, the current regulations in the Schedule, paragraph 3 (2) also state that 'where the number of pupils at schools of a particular category is less than 5% of the number of pupils at relevant schools no member of the school group should be a member of the governing body of a school of that category'. This seems to contradict the new regulations and could also mean that a representative of, for example, a secondary school (who is also a governor at a nursery school) may not be eligible for the SOC.

It should also be noted that DfES guidance on SOCs advises that groups should have no more than seven members and should have an odd number of members. Rotherham's schools group already has seven members.

11 Risks and Uncertainties:

If the points above are not made to the DfES, then the new regulations are likely to cause some confusion and could lead, in at least one case, to disqualification from membership of the Rotherham SOC.

12 Finance:

There are no specific financial consequences as a result of responding to this consultation.

13 Sustainability:

As above. Individual decisions such as closure of rural schools would have sustainability issues but those would be addressed if and when any proposals were put forward.

14 Wards Affected:

None specifically.

15 References:

See title and summary for details of regulations concerned.

16 Presentation:

Inclusion of a nursery school representative on the SOC is welcomed, but the consequences and possible contradictions within the regulations and guidance must be resolved.

17 Recommendations:

That:

- i) the revised statutory guidance on proposals to close rural schools be noted.**
- ii) the comments, as contained in the report, on the proposed changes to the relevant school organisation regulations be forwarded to the DfES.**
- iii) this report be forwarded to the SOC to be included on the agenda for the meeting to be held in September.**

REVISED PARAGRAPHS 52-3 OF SECTION 1 TO “GUIDANCE ON STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR DECISION MAKERS (SOCs and Schools Adjudicators)”

Rural schools and sites

52. In considering statutory proposals to close a rural school, the Decision Maker should have regard to the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities. There is therefore a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that no rural school should ever close, but the case for closure should be strong and the proposals clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. **In order to assist the SOC, those proposing closure must provide evidence to the SOC to show that they have carefully considered:**

- The transport implications of rural school closures, including the welfare and safety of the children, the recurrent cost to the LEA of transporting pupils to school further away, **the quality and availability of transport links to the alternative provision**, the effects on road traffic congestion, and the environmental costs of pupils travelling further to schools.
- The overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility.
- **Alternatives to closure** including the potential for federation with another local school to increase the school’s viability; the scope for Extended School **or children’s centre status to provide local community services and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc.**

52A. It is the responsibility of the Decision Maker to decide whether a school is to be regarded as rural for the purpose of considering proposals for closure under this guidance. The Department’s register of schools - Edubase - includes a rural/urban indicator for each school in England based on an assessment by the Office for National Statistics. The Decision Maker should have regard to this indicator. Where a school is not recorded as rural on Edubase, the SOC may nonetheless wish to consider evidence provided by interested parties that a particular school should be regarded as rural. **The Office for National Statistics have introduced new rural/urban indicators**, and may be prepared to advise in cases of doubt, as may the Countryside Agency.

53. Where a school is situated on more than one site, proposals are required to close one of the sites if any of the other sites is a mile or more away from it. The Decision Maker should take into account the same sort of factors in deciding whether to approve the closure of one of the sites of a rural school, and there is a presumption against their closure also, particularly where schools have recently been amalgamated and there has been an understanding that education would continue on the site.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE - 2004**MEMBERSHIP LIST**

Councillor Georgina Boyes (**Chair**)

Councillor Sue Ellis

Councillor Jane Austen

Councillor Amy Rushforth (Substitute)

Mr. P. Robins

Mr. D. Smart

Mrs. B. Watson

Mr. Malcolm Robertson

Mr. Barry Sampson

John Korzeniewski, Executive Director, Learning and Skills Council South
Yorkshire

Mr. Patrick White

Mrs. A. M. Winfield

Frank McDermott

Patrick Lennighan

Mrs. Jackie Scott

Sue Norton - **Substitute**

Alan Walker

Irene Hartley - **Substitute**

Sue Walker

Or Sharon Blagden

Joyce Williams – **Substitute**

Arshad Karamat Ullah

Mohammed Shakil

Shabana Ahmed

Kabir Hussain

Mr. M. Sulleman

All the above are representing:-

LEA - 3 Members

Councillor Georgina Boyes
Councillor Sue Ellis
Councillor Jane Austen
Or Councillor Amy Rushforth

Church of England – 3 Members

Mr. Malcolm Robertson
Mr. Barry Sampson
(currently one vacancy)

Roman Catholic – 3 Members

Mrs. A. M. Winfield
Frank McDermott
Patrick Lennighan

Post 16 - Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire – 1 member

Christopher Duff

Schools:-

11-16 Secondary School Governor – 1 Member

Alan Walker

11-18 Secondary School Governor – 1 Member

One Vacancy
Irene Hartley - Substitute

Junior and Infant School Governor – 2 Members

Mr. P. Robins
Mrs. Jackie Scott
Sue Norton - Substitute

Infant School Governor – 1 Member

Mrs. B. Watson

Junior School Governor – 1 Member

Mr. D. Smart (or Mrs. Joyce Williams)

Special School Governor – 1 Member

Vacancy

Minority Communities Group

Arshad Karamat Ullah

Mohammed Shakil

Shabana Ahmed

Kabir Hussain

Sue Walker (Early Years & Child Care Services)

Sharon Blagden (Early Years & Child Care Services)

Mr. M. Sulleman, Yorkshire Kashmir Trust

Voting:- Each group to have a single vote.

Quorum:- 3 groups out of the 6 must be represented with a minimum of 6 members.

Updated 30th June, 2004.

U:Members List (no addresses)

SG/

AGENDA ITEM 9

MEMBERSHIP

Advertisement placed in School Governors' Newsletter for Special Schools representative (to replace Maurice Whitehouse)

NO RESPONSES RECEIVED (NB: CANNOT BE AN ELECTED MEMBER WHO IS ON A SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY)

Advertisement sent out in mail circulation to Disability Forum (Access Liaison Group) organised by Sharon Crook, Business Support Officer, Economic and Development Services

NO RESPONSES RECEIVED

Advertisement sent out via mail circulation from REMA (Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance) seeking nominations to expand Minority Group

Responses received from:-

Arshad Karamat Ullah

Mohammed Shakil

Shabana Ahmed

Kabir Hussain

Mohammed Sulleman

IN ADDITION:-

Letter sent to Racial Equality Council regarding Mrs. Qureshi and Mr. Mohammed's attendance Decision to be taken by Executive Committee regarding alternative representation.

Letter sent to Sue Birkin regarding the need to consider substitutes for Alan Walker (11-16 Secondary Schools) and Bronwen Watson (Infant Schools)

RESIGNATIONS

Sue Birkin – due to ill-health

Reverend Geoffrey Harbord – replaced by Patrick White

