

KEY DECISION REPORT

SERVICE AREA:

LIFELONG LEARNING

SUBJECT MATTER:

REVIEW OF DENTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

DATE OF DECISION:

9th February 2004

**DECISION TAKER
(S):**

Councillor G Cooney- Cabinet Deputy for Lifelong learning

**REPORTING
OFFICER (S):**

Head of School Organisation and Social Inclusion

REPORT SUMMARY:

The provision of primary school places in Denton has been subject to review as part of the Council's ongoing review of primary school provision across Tameside.

The Council's aims in carrying out the review of school provision is four fold, namely to:

1. Remove surplus places by considering the balance between the supply and the projected demand of school places.
2. Provide a quality environment to meet the educational needs of pupils.
3. Maximise the efficient and effective use of resources.
4. Improve the condition of school buildings

The review, published in October 2004, outlined four options for future provision, which the Council believes will reduce surplus capacity and meet the needs of a modern curriculum.

Consultation took place during November and December 2004 and January 2005

The final report is the result of the consultation process. It summarizes the comments and concerns voiced by parents, governors and staff at the schools, together with the views of other interested parties.

All options include closure of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base. Options for other schools relate to a reduction in pupil places

The Council recognises that schools are more than 'bricks and mortar', and that each school has its own unique ethos and part to play in the community it serves. However, the review has to objectively consider the number of places needed, take the opportunity to improve the building stock and meet the needs of the children both today and in the future.

The comments received show:

- Strong support for Option A

- Opposition to 1.5-form entry schools and the inclusion of mixed-age classes.

The response from Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base opposes the closure of the school.

Whilst the Council recognises the concerns of the governors, staff and parents of Central Primary School, given the low numbers of pupils at the school (92 as of 20/1/05) and its high surplus capacity, closure is considered to be the only viable way forward.

With regard to Linden Road Primary School, the governors, staff and parents support its reduction from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry school (Option A)

With regard to Corrie Primary School, the governors, staff and parents support a reduction in its net capacity from 469 to 420 (Option A).

The Council recommends the adoption of Option A.

School numbers will be kept under review to ensure that all schools remain a viable size to sustain future existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

:

It is recommended that the proposals set out in Option A are adopted as follows: -

1. Statutory notices are published to cease to maintain Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base with effect from 31st August 2006.
2. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the admission number at Linden Road Primary School from 60 to 30 from September 2006; and that an options appraisal is undertaken to ascertain the best way to remodel the school.
3. The net capacity of Corrie Primary School is reduced from 469 to 420 (67 to 60 indicated admission number) and that an options appraisal is undertaken to ascertain the best way to remodel the school.
4. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Corrie Primary School from 78 (39fte) to 52 (26fte) places from September 2006.
5. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Greswell Primary School from 60 (30fte) to 52 (26fte) with effect from 1st September 2006.
6. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Denton West End Primary School from 66 (33fte) to 52 (26fte) places from September 2006.
7. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Dane Bank Primary School from 40 (20fte) to 26 (13fte) places from September 2006.

8. An options appraisal is undertaken as to the best way to improve the condition, suitability and access of the remaining Denton community primary school buildings.

JUSTIFICATION FOR DECISION;

Adopting the recommendations will assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory requirements to secure sufficient and suitable places for pupils in its area, and its duty to consider action in relation to surplus places.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REJECTED (IF ANY):

Options Rejected:

The option put forward by the governors of Central Primary School ie:-

- Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 210 (1 form entry)
- Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 315 (1.5 form entry)
- Reduction of net capacity at Greswell to 315 (1.5 form entry)
- Reduction of net capacity at Russell Scott to 315 (1.5 form entry)

Rationale for Rejection:

The option put forward by Central governors addresses surplus capacity in Denton as a whole, but does not address the issue of the rapidly declining numbers at Central nor the long term financial viability of an urban school with a net capacity that provides for less than one form of entry, and is currently attracting very small numbers.

MEMBERS AND OFFICERS CONSULTED:

A copy of the report was circulated to:

- Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base, Corrie Primary School, Greswell Primary School, Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base, Denton West End Primary School, Manor Green Primary School, Russell Scott Primary School, Dane Bank Primary School, St Anne's Primary School, St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School and St John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School
- Diocesan partners
- Professional Associations
- Parent Partnership Service
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Ward Councillors
- Cllr D Dickinson, Opposition Spokesperson for Education

In the course of consultation on options, the Council has met with:

- Parents, staff and governors of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base, Corrie Primary School, Greswell Primary School, Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base and Russell Scott Primary School.
- Staff and Governors of Denton West End Primary School, Dane Bank Primary School, Manor Green Primary School and St Anne's Primary School.
- Representatives from the Dioceses
- Unions
- Ward Councillors

Trade union representatives attended staff meetings.

All consultees were given the opportunity to respond in writing.

**FINANCIAL
IMPLICATIONS:
(Authorised by
Borough Treasurer)**

One objective of the review is to save money currently being wasted by having too much school capacity so that more money can be directly invested in children's' education, rather than in unnecessary overheads and premises. The Cabinet Deputy needs to carefully consider the non-financial reasons for choosing the recommended option that would save the least of all the options set out and weigh those against being able to re-invest more.

**LEGAL
IMPLICATIONS:
(Authorised by
Borough Solicitor)**

The LEA has a statutory duty to secure the efficient and effective use of resources to deliver a 21st Century curriculum. In order to undertake that duty a comprehensive review and consultation exercise has been undertaken in compliance with the School Standards and Framework Act and guidance made there under. The duty of the decision maker is to undertake a balancing act to make a decision, which secures the most efficient and effective use of resources.

RISK MANAGEMENT:

There is a risk that not pursuing the recommendations in the review would contribute to the Council being unable to fulfill its statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996, to secure sufficient and suitable place for pupils in its area.

**LINKS TO
COMMUNITY PLAN:**

The Community Strategy is centred around building a cohesive community. The proposals outlined in this report will promote access to a high quality education experience for children in Denton by ensuring that education provision meets their long-term needs. They therefore contribute directly to 'A Learning Community' by providing young people with a good start in life, and to 'Supportive Communities' by extending the use of schools to the wider community. There is indirect contribution to 'A Prosperous Society' by increasing life chances for young people, a 'Healthy Population' as more prosperous adults are generally healthier, and 'a Safe Environment' as greater success in school reduces disaffection and anti social behaviour.

**REFERENCE
DOCUMENTS:**

All consultation documents and responses are held by Joan Fludder and may be consulted on request by contacting: joan.fludder@tameside.gov.uk, or by telephoning 0161 342 3302.

CONTENTS

| Section | | Page |
|--------------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Background | 2 |
| 2 | Basis for Consultation | 4 |
| 3 | Consultation Process | 6 |
| 4 | Responses to Consultation | 7 |
| 5 | Financial Considerations | 24 |
| 6 | Standards | 25 |
| 7 | Forward Planning | 25 |
| 8 | Monitoring | 25 |
| 9 | Summary | 26 |
| 10 | Recommendations | 27 |
| 11 | APPENDICES | 28 |
| Appendix 1: | Denton Review Consultation Paper | |
| Appendix 2: | Schedule of Consultation Meeting Dates | |
| Appendix 3: | Map of Area | |

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Rationale for the Review

The Council has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996, to secure sufficient and suitable places for pupils in its area. In addition, the DfES places a duty on Local Authorities to specifically consider action in relation to surplus places.

In undertaking this duty, the Council is working through a process of review of primary provision in each area of Tameside. Ashton, Mossley and Dukinfield area reviews have been undertaken, and following the completion of the review of Denton, reviews of the remaining areas will take place.

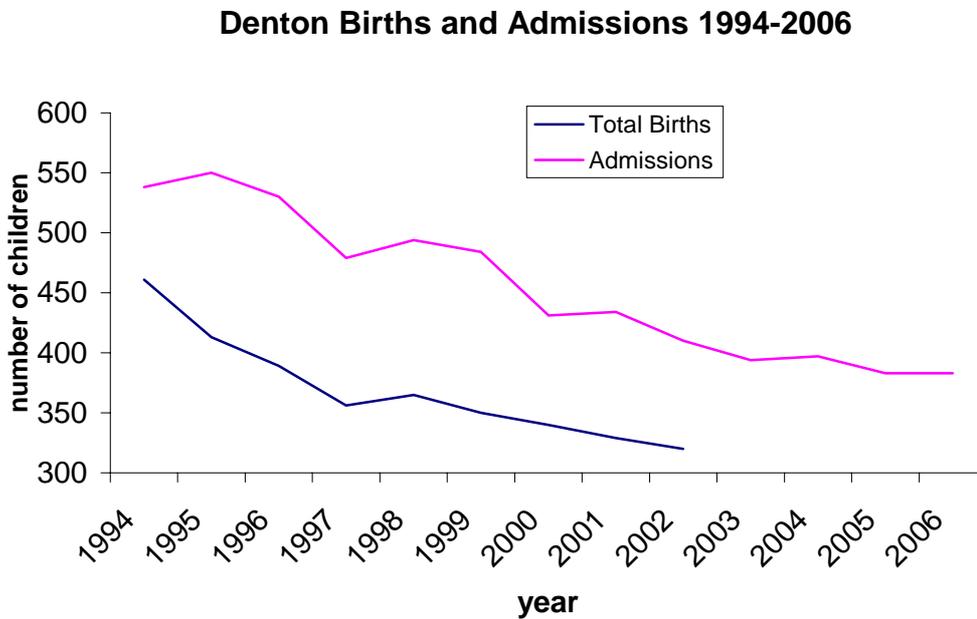
1.2 Review Process

A Report was compiled (reproduced at Appendix 1) setting out the detail of the provision of places in Denton (Denton Community Primary Places Review). The Report considered current and predicted numbers, nursery provision and school standards.

The Report found that:

- The 9 Denton community primary schools continue to be under subscribed.
- Primary numbers are predicted to decline over the next few years. Current indications are that the number of surplus places will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

Chart of births and admissions in Denton



- Surplus places in Denton are localised and due to individual school locations, amongst other factors.

January 2004 census data

- All schools except Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base and St Anne's Primary School have nursery provision.
- The largest numbers of surplus places, based on net capacity, are at Denton Central, Russell Scott, Corrie and Linden Road primary schools.
- Of the 400 nursery places in Denton community primary schools approximately 28% are surplus. Current indications are that the number of surplus places in nurseries will continue to rise.
- There is no one obvious solution for resolving the issues of surplus places in Dukinfield. A range of options needed to be considered.
- The Diocese of Salford is undertaking a concurrent review of primary school places across Tameside, which includes 2 Denton schools (St Mary's and St John Fisher).

2 BASIS FOR CONSULTATION

The Report on the review of Denton Primary Schools (Appendix 1), considered by the Cabinet Deputy for Lifelong Learning on 17 September 2004, proposed that consultation be undertaken on the basis of:

Option A:

| | Number of places removed |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Closure of Denton Central | 176 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 210 (1 form entry) | 184 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 420 (2 form entry) | 54 |
| Total number of places removed | 414 |
| Number of places remaining | $3026-414= 2612$ |
| Forecast number of places required | 2419 |
| Places remaining minus forecast number of places required (2009) | $2612-2419=193$ |
| Area surplus 2009 | 193 |
| Percentage surplus Jan 2009 | 7.3% |

Option B:

| | Number of places removed |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Closure of Denton Central | 176 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 210 (1 form entry) | 184 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 420 (2 form entry) | 54 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Greswell to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 47 |
| Total number of places removed | 461 |
| Number of places remaining | $3026-461= 2565$ |
| Forecast number of places required | 2419 |
| Places remaining minus forecast number of places required (2009) | $2565-2419=146$ |
| Area surplus 2009 | 146 |
| Percentage surplus Jan 2009 | 6.0% |

Option C:

| | Number of places removed |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Closure of Denton Central | 176 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 79 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 159 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Russell Scott to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 46 |
| Total number of places removed | 460 |
| Number of places remaining | $3026-460= 2566$ |
| Forecast number of places required | 2419 |
| Places remaining minus forecast number of places required (2009) | $2566-2419 = 147$ |
| Area surplus 2009 | 147 |
| Percentage surplus Jan 2009 | 6.0% |

Option D:

| | Number of places removed |
|--|--------------------------|
| Closure of Denton Central | 176 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 210 (1.5 form entry) | 79 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 420 (2 form entry) | 54 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Greswell to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 47 |
| Reduction of net capacity at Russell Scott to 315 (1.5 form entry) | 46 |
| Total number of places removed | 402 |
| Number of places remaining | 3026-402= 2624 |
| Forecast number of places required in 2009 | 2419 |
| Places remaining minus forecast number of places required (2009) | 2624-2419 = 205 |
| Area surplus 2009 | 205 |
| Percentage surplus Jan 2009 | 7.8% |

2.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR REDISTRIBUTING PLACES IN NURSERIES IN LINE WITH THE ABOVE OPTIONS

Option A

| School | Proposed Published Admission Number for schools in option A | Nursery places based on proposed Published Admission Number | Current nursery places | Proposed Change in Nursery Places |
|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Corrie Primary School | 60 | 52 | 78 | -26 |
| Linden Road | 30 | 52 (allowing for St Anne's pupils) | 52 | 0 |
| Greswell | 51 | 52 | 60 | -8 |
| Denton West End | 60 | 52 | 66 | -14 |
| Manor Green | 60 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Russell Scott | 51 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Dane Bank | 30 | 26 | 40 | -14 |
| Totals | | 338 | 400 | -62 |

Option B

| School | Proposed Published Admission Number for schools in option B | Nursery places based on proposed Published Admission Number | Current nursery places | Proposed Change in Nursery Places |
|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Corrie Primary School | 60 | 52 | 78 | -26 |
| Linden Road | 30 | 52 (allowing for St Anne's pupils) | 52 | 0 |
| Greswell | 45 | 39 | 60 | -21 |
| Denton West End | 60 | 52 | 66 | -14 |
| Manor Green | 60 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Russell Scott | 51 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Dane Bank | 30 | 26 | 40 | -14 |
| Totals | | 325 | 400 | -75 |

Option C

| School | Proposed Published Admission Number for schools in option C | Nursery places based on proposed Published Admission Number | Current nursery places | Proposed Change in Nursery Places |
|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Corrie Primary School | 45 | 39 | 78 | -39 |
| Linden Road | 45 | 52 including provision for St Anne's | 52 | 0 |
| Greswell | 51 | 52 | 60 | -8 |
| Denton West End | 60 | 52 | 66 | -14 |
| Manor Green | 60 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Russell Scott | 45 | 39 | 52 | -13 |
| Dane Bank | 30 | 26 | 40 | -14 |
| Totals | | 312 | 400 | -88 |

Option D

| School | Proposed Published Admission Number for schools in option D | Nursery places based on proposed Published Admission Number | Current nursery places | Proposed Change in Nursery Places |
|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Corrie Primary School | 60 | 52 | 78 | -26 |
| Linden Road | 45 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Greswell | 45 | 39 | 60 | -21 |
| Denton West End | 60 | 52 | 66 | -14 |
| Manor Green | 60 | 52 | 52 | 0 |
| Russell Scott | 45 | 39 | 52 | -13 |
| Dane Bank | 30 | 26 | 40 | -14 |
| Totals | | 312 | 400 | -88 |

A determination of the way forward was to be decided as a Key Decision on February 9th 2005.

3 CONSULTATION PROCESS

During November 2004 – January 2005, consultation was undertaken with the following on the four options for reducing surplus places and improving education provision as proposed in the Report:

- Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base, Corrie Primary School, Greswell Primary School, Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base, Denton West End Primary School, Manor Green Primary School, Russell Scott Primary School, Dane Bank Primary School, St Anne's, St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School and St John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School
- Diocesan partners
- Professional Associations
- Parent Partnership Service
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Ward Councillors
- Cllr D Dickinson, Opposition Spokesperson for Education

Copies of the Denton Community Primary School Review were distributed to parents attending the consultation meetings. A number of copies were also sent to individuals on request.

In the course of consultation on the options, the Council has met with:

- Parents, staff and governors of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base, Corrie Primary School, Greswell Primary School, Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base and Russell Scott Primary School.
- Staff and Governors of Denton West End Primary School, Dane Bank Primary School, Manor Green Primary School and St Anne's Primary School.
- Representatives from the Dioceses
- Unions
- Ward Councillors

Trade union representatives attended staff meetings.

All consultees were given the opportunity to respond in writing.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

The Council received 119 written responses to the consultation by the due date. Most of these responses were from staff, parents and governors of Denton community primary schools (113). The other 6 were variously from the unions (2) Dioceses (1) Ward Councillors (2) and Andrew Bennett, MP (1). A written response was made to all those who could be identified.

The responses from each school have been grouped into comments and concerns, and alternative proposals, followed by the Council's response.

No written responses to the consultation document were received from Dane Bank Primary School and Manor Green Primary School.

At a meeting of Denton Primary Headteachers held on 19 October 2004, there was unanimous agreement from those present that Option A was the preferred option for all Denton primary schools.

4.1 Response from Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base

Five of the 119 written responses received by the Council were associated with Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base (2 letters from parents, 1 from a local resident, a response from Denton Central governors and Denton Central staff).

A petition against the closure of the school and containing approximately 395 signatures accompanied the response from parents.

4.1.1 Summary

The governors, parents and staff of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base are strongly opposed to the closure of the school.

Respondents felt that the decision to close Denton Central has already been taken and that consultation is a pointless exercise.

The governing body has put forward an alternative suggestion, which does not necessitate closure of any of the 9 Denton community primary schools. – (see page 14)

4.1.2 Comments

Comments were received about the school ethos, extra curricular activities and the local community.

4.1.3 School ethos

- Staff are caring and understand the needs of the children.
- Pupils are taught to care for each other.
- Pupils participate in the life of the school (office duties, door duty, ringing the bell).
- Pupils in the ASD Resource Base have the added bonus of integration along side teaching appropriate to their individual needs.

4.1.4 Extra curricular activities/links with the community

- Care for the child is of all day importance with staff running lunchtime activities.
- The school hosts a 'Mums and Tots' group on Thursday afternoons.

4.1.5 Local community

- Some nearby housing is older than the school and young families move away for more up to date accommodation.

4.1.6 Concerns Raised

- All options favour the closure of Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base.
- Redeployment of staff.
- Timescale of the review/consultation process.
- Parents are already transferring children to other schools.
- Future of the ASD Resource Base is uncertain.
- Decision to close Central has already been taken.
- Implications of a diocesan review of Roman Catholic primary schools.
- Future of existing pupils.
- Removal of parental choice.
- Loss of expertise in teaching children with special educational needs.
- Emotional and social issues resulting from school closure.
- Premature closure of the school.

4.1.7 LEA response to Issues Raised in the Denton Central Primary School Response.

| Concern | LEA Response |
|---|---|
| <p>This (the review) is not a consultation document. The agenda has already been decided.</p> | <p>No decision has been made. Officers have taken the consultation process extremely seriously. Formal consultation meetings have been held with parents, staff and governors. Meetings have also taken place with Diocesan representatives, professional associations, ward councillors and other stakeholders. All correspondence received in connection with the review has been responded to and the Key Decision Report seeks to address all the concerns raised during the consultation process.</p> <p>In some proposed reorganisations, the council has either amended the proposal following consultation, or decided not to proceed with the proposal. It is important that people do voice their views and all views will be considered carefully during the key decision process.</p> |
| <p>All options favour the closure of Denton Central. Did the LEA attempt to find an option where Denton Central could remain open? Has the LEA considered any of the other Denton schools for closure, or the possibility of 2 schools merging?</p> | <p>When a school has a high surplus capacity, is attracting low numbers and has no potential to increase numbers by, for example, the addition of nursery facilities, the only viable options for the school are either to reduce its admission number to reflect the smaller intake or to close. Denton Central has an admission number of 25 and has therefore no potential to reduce in size.</p> <p>Given the low numbers of pupils enrolling for the school and its high surplus capacity, closure is being put forward for consultation.</p> <p>The position at each individual school was given full consideration and options for reduction in capacity put forward for 5 schools.</p> |

| Concern | LEA Response |
|---|--|
| <p>At many of the meetings that have been held since the consultation document was released, we have asked about the “redeployment” of Denton Central staff. We are still awaiting an answer.</p> | <p>At the meeting held at Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base on 8 November, Human Resources advised staff that the authority has in place a recently updated staffing reductions policy, which outlines the authority's commitment to ensuring that all staff are found suitable alternative employment. Staff would not be made compulsorily redundant.</p> <p>All staff will be given the opportunity of meeting HR staff on an individual basis. These meetings are already taking place.</p> |
| <p>The timescale of this whole process is questionable. Having to wait four months for the key decision to be taken is appalling!</p> | <p>The procedures for making organisation changes to mainstream schools (such as school closures and changes to the size of a school) are set out in the DfES Guidance document “School Organisation: Making Changes (Ref: DfES/0395/2003). There are 5 statutory stages for a statutory proposal, of which consultation is the first. The consultation stage commenced on Monday 1 November with a briefing session for all staff and governors. The LEA considered that a 10 week consultation period, ending 14 January 2005, would allow adequate time for those being consulted to form a considered view on the proposals. The Key Decision date of 9 February 2005 is the soonest date practical after the end of the consultation period allowing for the views of consultees to be taken into account and the Key Decision paper to be written.</p> |
| <p>Many parents have already begun to remove their children from Denton Central, as they are not in a position to discuss this issue as it does not fit into the timescale of the LEA's “ Consultation “process”.</p> | <p>Parents were advised at the parents' meeting on 8 November 2004 not to rush into transferring their children. The LEA agreed to meet with parents again after the Key Decision had been made. Staff were made aware of this. It would have been premature to discuss places for children at other schools before a decision has been made. However, should a parent insist on transferring their child, the LEA has no statutory power to prevent this.</p> |
| <p>The future of the ASD Resource Base is uncertain.</p> | <p>The decision as to where to move the ASD Resource Base is part of the Review of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), which was initiated prior to this review. The MLD Review will continue following this Key Decision.</p> |

| Concern | LEA Response |
|--|---|
| <p>Denton Central's lack of Nursery provision-the document itself proves that children do not necessarily move up into the Reception class of the Nursery school they attended. So even if we had a Nursery, this may not have boosted our Reception class intake.</p> <p>Staff & Governing Body were unaware that any survey had taken place.</p> | <p>It was unnecessary to carry out a full survey, as plans of the school site indicate that it is not large enough to accommodate a Foundation stage which includes nursery provision.</p> |
| <p>When will the Diocese Of Salford be making their decision about the Roman Catholic schools in Denton? What implications will this decision have on the "consultation" process?</p> | <p>The Salford Diocese is currently undertaking a review of all Roman Catholic primary schools in Tameside, however, a time scale for consultation has not been published. The outcome of this Review will not be affected by that of the Salford Diocese. The proposed reduction in the number of pupil places for each option takes into account potential provision in the Roman Catholic sector.</p> |
| <p>The four options available give this school no option, nothing about which we are being consulted.</p> | <p>When a school has a high surplus capacity and is attracting low numbers and has no potential to increase numbers by, for example, the addition of nursery facilities, the only viable options for the school are either to reduce its admission number to reflect the smaller intake or to close. Central Primary has an admission number of 25 and has therefore no potential to reduce in size.</p> <p>Given the low numbers of pupils enrolling for the school and its high surplus capacity, closure is being put forward for consultation</p> <p>The consultation document includes options for other Denton Primary Schools.</p> |

| Concern | LEA Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Parents have been panicked into sending their children to other schools earlier than necessary</p> | <p>Parents were advised at the parents' meeting on 8 November 2004 not to rush into transferring their children. The LEA agreed to meet with parents again after the Key Decision had been made. Staff were made aware of this. It would have been premature to discuss places for children at other schools before a decision has been made. However, should a parent insist on transferring their child, the LEA has no statutory power to prevent this.</p> |
| <p>We believe that the LEA have not searched hard enough for a fifth alternative to the review document which could have included the amalgamation of Denton Central with another school, possibly including a new build financed by the sale of the land on which Denton Central currently stands.</p> | <p>Previous amalgamations have been concerned with either bringing together infant and junior buildings or bringing together schools with surplus places and significant building issues. In Denton, Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base is not attracting children (admission numbers for Denton Central over the past 3 years have been in the low teens, replacing year 6 classes with numbers in the high twenties) and there are 6 other schools within a 1-mile radius that can provide for parental preference.</p> |
| <p>The staff at Denton Central have been put into limbo since the document was published in October because the LEA insist that the decision is 'in consultation' and cannot comment on anything.</p> | <p>Changes to schools affect a range of people – pupils, parents, teachers, governors and local people and need to be considered carefully. In 1999 the Government introduced new procedures that must be followed by the LEA when it proposes to make changes to schools. Consultation is the first of 5 statutory stages for a statutory proposal to make changes to a school.</p> <p>Government Guidance states that consultation should provide sufficient information and allow enough time for people to understand and form a view of the proposed changes. It should also provide an opportunity for people to comment. Although there is no time limit specified in law for consultation, a consultation exercise should allow sufficient time for people to consider the proposals and respond. It is also vital that adequate time is set aside to consider the responses to the consultation.</p> <p>Following the consultation meeting, the LEA has met with the headteacher and staff to alleviate any concerns in as much as this is possible.</p> |

| Concern | LEA Response |
|--|--|
| Staff feel that they cannot give parents guidance about their children's future education. | The LEA has agreed to meet with parents again after the Key Decision has been made to discuss their children's future education. |
| The parents have already made a choice to send their children to Denton Central and now this choice has been taken away from them. | Should a decision be made to close the school in 2006, there would in effect be 38 children remaining in the school (Current number of pupils minus years 5 and 6). Parents of these children will be given appropriate guidance as to the availability of alternative school places. |
| The school admits and attracts pupils with a diversity of special educational needs and it has skilled and experienced staff who cater for their individual needs. We believe that we have an excellent record in educating children with Special Educational Needs and if Denton Central closes then this resource will be lost as the expertise is spread across Tameside. | The ASD Resource Base staff would move as a unit with the children. The skills and experience of other staff, given that the LEA operates within a framework of no redundancies, would not be lost. |
| The LEA has totally discounted the emotional and social issues raised when a school closes treating the children as numbers, not as individuals. | The LEA acknowledges that each school has its own particular contribution to make to pupils and part to play in the community it serves. The LEA would work closely with the governors and staff of the school to ameliorate any such issues. |
| We would like the LEA to guarantee that the school will stay open until July 2006. The parents want the school to stay open until then. | As of 19 January 2005, 41 of the 132 pupils attending Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base in September 2004 have transferred to other Denton schools at parental request. The headteacher and LEA are in contact to discuss possible implications of the reduction in pupil numbers. Should numbers of pupils continue to drop significantly, it may not be in the best interests of pupils or staff for the school to remain open until July 2006. By July 2005 the year 6 class of 29 pupils will have transferred to secondary school, leaving a potential school population of 59 for the 2005 – 06 academic year. |
| We would like the LEA to guarantee that all the staff will remain in post at Denton Central until July 2006. | Should numbers of pupils at the school drop significantly, it may be inappropriate for staff to remain in school, especially where suitable alternatives are available. |

4.1.8 Alternative Suggestions

The governing body of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base put forward an alternative proposal for reducing surplus capacity in Denton Schools.

The proposal is to adjust the Published Admission Numbers of 4 of the primary schools with Denton Central retaining its current admission number of 25.

Reduction of net capacity at Linden Road to 210 (1 form entry)
Reduction of net capacity at Corrie to 315 (1.5 form entry)
Reduction of net capacity at Greswell to 315 (1.5 form entry)
Reduction of net capacity at Russell Scott to 315 (1.5 form entry)

Total number of places removed 426

4.1.9 Council Response to the Alternative Option proposed by Central

The consultation process was undertaken in line with DfES guidance given in the document "Guidance on School Organisation Statutory Proposals" (Ref: DfES/0395/2003) which sets out the arrangements that apply from 1 June 2003, for making changes to maintained schools. The guidance states that '*proposers must be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the views expressed during consultation in reaching a decision on the publication of the proposals. Where, in the course of consultation, a new option emerges which the proposers wish to consider, proposers should consult afresh on this option before proceeding to publish proposals*'.

The alternative option put forward by Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base is considered below.

It is possible to adjust the Published Admission Numbers of existing schools in different computations to address surplus capacity.

A 1-form entry school (Published Admission Number of 30) is the smallest size considered to be viable in terms of both curriculum and finance. In an urban environment, it is inappropriate to maintain a school that is less viable than a 1-form entry school. Central has a published Admission Number of 25, which is less than a 1-form entry school.

The demography of children attending Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base is such that all children live within walking distance of an alternative school.

The option put forward by Central governors addresses surplus capacity in Denton as a whole, but does not address the issue of the rapidly declining numbers at Central nor the long term financial viability of an urban school with a net capacity that provides for less than one form of entry, and is currently attracting very small numbers.

The Option is not considered a viable one on which to consult afresh.

4.2 Response from Corrie Primary School

Of the 119 written responses received by the Council, 85 were associated with Corrie Primary School (84 individually signed copies of the same letter from parents and staff and a response from Corrie Primary School governors).

All responses are in favour of Option A.

4.2.1 Summary

The governors, parents and staff of Corrie Primary School support Option A as the best option for Corrie Primary School and all the other primary schools in Denton.

The parents/staff commented that Option A would leave room for growth in nursery numbers should the birth rate rise.

Governors feel that the position of Corrie Primary School between 2 housing estates provides it with a viable future as a 2-form entry school.

4.2.2 Comments

Comments were received about the geographical location of the school; extra curricular activities and links with the community; nursery provision and condition of the school building.

4.2.3 General comments

- Option A is the best option for Corrie and all other primary schools in Denton.
- Corrie is the Denton neighbourhood school for children with disabilities.
- A 2-form entry school at Corrie would be an efficient use of resources.

4.2.4 Community Links

- A private provider on site provides wrap around care and is part of the satellite extended school children's centre plan.
- The school provides a venue for adult learning classes, including Positive Parenting classes.

4.2.5 Nursery Provision.

- Option A allows for expansion of nursery provision should the birth rate rise.
- September 2004, all nursery children moved en mass into Reception. The school perceives this as indicating an increase in parental choice for Corrie Primary School.

4.2.6 Condition of school buildings

- The 1998 Ofsted report acknowledged that the school building was in poor condition and much was past its 'life'. Exterior refurbishment has been undertaken over recent years for reasons of health and safety. A more efficient use of resources would be to rebuild on the same site as one building in place of the existing 3 buildings.

4.3 Response from Greswell Primary School

Of the 119 written responses received by the Council, 14 were associated with Greswell Primary School. Of these, 2 were letters from individual parents and one from the governing body. Eleven members of staff sent in individually signed copies of the same letter.

The Council received a petition against any reduction in admission numbers at the school signed by 53 parents.

All responses are in favour of Option A.

4.3.1 Summary

The governors, parents and staff of Greswell Primary School are strongly opposed to a 1.5 form entry school. They are of the opinion that options B, C and D, which involve some schools being reduced to 1.5 form entry would have a significant and adverse effect on morale in the schools affected.

The governing body, staff and parents are strongly in favour of Option A as being the most satisfactory option.

Staff commented that Denton is a growth area consequently provision should be reviewed after 4 years to take into account more up to date birth rate predictions.

4.3.2 Comments

Comments have been received about the high quality of education and location of the school.

4.3.3 General comments

- Option A provides for a worthwhile degree of flexibility, given that the prediction of future demand for school places cannot be an exact science.
- Greswell only has a small number of surplus places

4.3.4 Quality of education

- Greswell is in the top 5% of schools nationally
- Teaching was described as excellent in the 2004 OFSTED report, characterised by 'excellent relationships between staff and pupils'

4.3.5 Location

- Denton is a growth area with healthy prospects

4.3.6 Concerns

- Impact of the proposed closure of Denton Central on educational standards in other Denton schools.
- Time scale of the consultation process is too short.
- Fate of the Denton Central site.
- Impact of Denton Central pupils on class size in the remaining Denton schools.
- Effect of 1.5 form entry on staff morale.

4.3.7 LEA response to Issues Raised in the Greswell Response

| Concern | LEA Response |
|--|--|
| <p>Impact of the proposed closure of Denton Central on educational standards in other Denton schools (increased class sizes, admitting more special needs children into main stream)</p> | <p>Greswell Primary School has very few surplus places and would therefore be unable to accommodate many children from Central Primary School, should the school close. The school Standards and Framework Act, 1998, introduced a limit of 30 on infant class sizes, thus no 5, 6 or 7 year old in an infant class can be taught in a class of more than 30 pupils taught by a single qualified teacher.</p> <p>The ASD Resource Base would move as a unit with the children. The children in the Resource Base would be integrated into mainstream classes in that school. These children would have additional support in the classroom. There is no reason to assume that there would be an increase in the number of children with special education needs.</p> |
| <p>The timing of the consultation process seems to be a deliberate ploy that people would not have enough time to get together to raise their objections.</p> | <p>There are 5 statutory stages for a statutory proposal, of which consultation is the first. The consultation stage commenced on Monday 1 November with a briefing session for all staff and governors. The initial meeting with parents at Greswell Primary School was held on 9 November 2004. The LEA considered that a 10-week consultation period, ending 14 January 2005, would allow adequate time for those being consulted to form a considered view on the proposals whilst at the same time not prolonging the process unnecessarily.</p> |
| <p>Fate of the Denton Central site.</p> | <p>No decision has been made regarding the future of the Denton Central site, should the proposed closure be agreed.</p> |
| <p>Probable increase in class size.</p> | <p>The School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, introduced a limit of 30 on infant class sizes. No 5, 6 or 7 year old in an infant class at a maintained school can be taught in a class of more than 30 pupils while an ordinary teaching session is conducted by a single qualified teacher.</p> |
| <p>Effect of 1.5 entry school on staff morale.</p> | <p>Mixed aged teaching is not ideal. There are, however, many schools in Tameside that manage mixed aged teaching successfully and achieve good results.</p> |

4.4 Response from Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base

Of the 119 written responses received by the Council, 2 were associated with Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base (1 letter from governors and an e-mail from staff).

4.4.1 Summary

The governors and staff of Linden Road Primary School are in favour of Option A. No additional comments were received.

4.5 Response from Russell Scott Primary School

Of the 119 responses received by the Council 5 were associated with Russell Scott Primary School (1 letter from a parent, 3 letters from individual staff and a combined response from the governing body and staff).

4.5.1 Summary

All responses supported Option A.

Parents' staff and governors feel strongly that the admission number for Russell Scott should remain unchanged.

Staff of Russell Scott acknowledge that the demand for primary school places is falling. However, they believe that the school's community emphasis, recent financial investment to provide excellent facilities combined with the new Foundation Stage provision would enable the school to fulfil its potential to maintain a reception intake of 52.

Staff commented that pupils who attend Russell Scott come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and family backgrounds but a significant proportion live turbulent and changing lives. They feel that mixed age classes would result in further instability for those children with unstable home lives and would severely damage the continuity of progression and standard of educational provision at Russell Scott Primary School.

The governing body support adoption of Option A or B, preferably Option A, as in their opinion it will 'afford the school community of North Denton with the capacity it requires whilst taking into account the Review's objective of providing places where there is demand'.

4.5.2 Comments

Comments were received about the ethos of the school; the high quality of education; geographical location; nursery provision and extra curricular activities.

General Comments

- Major new build and refurbishment programme recently undertaken and plans to remodel the rest of the school.
- 50+ admission forms for September 2005 returned to the school.

4.5.3 School Ethos

- Russell Scott has a caring, supportive and friendly ethos.
- Inclusion is a key strength of the school.
- The school prepares children for the greater challenges in life by improving their confidence and widening their life experience.
- Many initiatives are organised aimed at broadening pupils' horizons.
- The school ethos is underpinned by care and support for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of all pupils.

4.5.4 Achievement

- Parents commented that Russell Scott is a successful school, with a reputation for raising standards.
- Overall quality of education provision would best be served by single age classes
- The school was placed in 'serious weakness' in 1999. In 2001 it was awarded Beacon School status, the most significant turnaround by any school in the UK.
- Key Stage 2 Literacy results have improved from 38% to 80%. The 2004 Key Stage 2 results are the best the school has ever achieved (literacy 80%, Mathematics 88% and Science 96%) are the highest.
- Chief Inspector of Schools described the school as 'inspirational'
- Russell Scott has been selected as a site for a MLD Resource Base.

4.5.5 Location

- Russell Scott is located in an area of recognised social deprivation where school is the most constant, secure factor in many of the children's lives.
- 2 major retail sites have been built within walking distance of the school within the last 6 months.
- Residential new build is planned for 3 areas within walking distance of the school.
- An extensive area of Denton is due for redevelopment in the next 12 months.
- A major supermarket chain has sought planning permission for a site opposite the new retail park, Crown Point North.
- Russell Scott is the closest community school to Denton Central.

4.5.6 Extra Curricular Activities

- Well -established breakfast and after school clubs provide working parents with wrap around care on one site.
- Extended care is being extended to include holiday clubs.

4.5.7 Nursery Provision

- Nursery has only been open for 3 months but is now full and has a waiting list.
- Full time wrap around care in association with TOPPS will be provided shortly.
- Staff feel that the new Foundation Stage will increase the school's intake.

4.5.8 Concerns Raised

- Mixed age teaching is a threat to standards.
- 1.5 organisation would be detrimental to the school's SATs results.
- 1.5 form entry would cause extra work and stress for staff.

- Class consistency is vital for the stability, development and emotional well-being of children.
- Is there extra budget to facilitate extra planning time needed for effective mixed age teaching?
- A situation where children change classes and peer groups on an annual basis is not conducive to effective learning.
- The children attending Russell Scott Primary School need school consistency and stability in their school life as some find it difficult to cope with change.
- Pupil's progress in emotional and social development would be greatly hampered through a year on year change of class grouping.
- Children would have to change friendship groups on a regular basis.
- Teaching in vertical groups would mean that the current curriculum designed to ensure that children with difficult home circumstances can enjoy varied and rich experiences would have to change.

4.5.9 LEA response to Issues Raised in the Russell Scott Response

| Concern | LEA Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Mixed age teaching is far from ideal and poses a threat to standards.</p> <p>A situation where children change classes and peer groups on an annual basis is not conducive to effective learning.</p> <p>Removing surplus places was meant to free up money so that the amount spent per child for books etc is secure and raise standards, but mixed age teaching will have an adverse effect on standards.</p> | <p>Mixed aged teaching is not ideal. There are, however, many schools in Tameside that manage mixed aged teaching successfully and achieve good results.</p> <p>Given the projected fall in numbers, the proposals aim to ensure forward planning, rather than schools needing to manage falling numbers in an ad hoc way.</p> |
| <p>Current curriculum design ensures those children with difficult home circumstances can enjoy their full entitlement and have varied and rich experiences. This curriculum would have to change if staff were asked to teach in vertical groupings.</p> <p>Is there extra budget to facilitate this?</p> <p>1.5 form entry would cause extra work and stress for staff.</p> | <p>Teaching staff evaluate and redesign the curriculum on an ongoing basis to ensure good practice and improve standards. Remodelling of the work force should provide teaching staff with additional non-contact time by removing the necessity for them to carry out administrative tasks. Good practice in teaching vertical groups could be cascaded from schools in and outside Tameside that manage mixed age classes successfully. LEA advisers are also skilled in advising schools on different methods of curriculum delivery.</p> <p>It is up to individual schools how they manage their budget. It is not envisaged that there would be any additional money available specifically for curriculum design.</p> |

| Concern | LEA Response |
|--|--|
| <p>Class consistency is vital for the stability, development and emotional well-being of children with otherwise uncertain lives.</p> <p>Pupil's progress in emotional and social development would be greatly hampered through a year on year change of class grouping.</p> | <p>It is envisaged that schools will need to manage falling rolls in any event. The proposals are aimed at forward planning for this eventuality.</p> |
| <p>Children would have to change friendship groups on a regular basis.</p> | <p>It would be up to the school to decide how classes are designed. Schools currently teaching mixed age classes have managed to address many of the concerns voiced by staff and would share expertise and good practice.</p> |

4.6 Response from St Anne's Primary School

The Council received an e-mail response on behalf of staff at St Anne's Primary School.

The staff of St Anne's are in favour of Option A.

4.7 Response from West End Primary School

The staff and governors of West End Primary School support Option A as being the most manageable and affecting fewest schools. They further commented that the schools involved are not required to introduce split year groups which place heavy demands on teachers.

The staff and governors have expressed concerned, however, about the reduction in Nursery places from 33 to 26. It is felt that although the demand generally for part-time nursery provision has declined over recent years, the school hopes to address this in the future by providing full day sessional care for some pupils. Staff and governors hope that at a later date it would be possible to review the Nursery allocation.

4.8 Union Response

Responses were received from the NUT and the TCC.

The prime concerns of both the TCC and NUT are that there should be no mixed - age classes. The TCC commented that the inclusion of mixed-age classes is not an acceptable option for consideration.

Both NUT and TCC request that post-review arrangements must ensure that all schools are of a viable size to sustain future existence and possible increase in pupil numbers.

The TCC welcomed the Council's continuing support for all staff in schools and expressed pleasure that there will be no compulsory redundancy in those schools facing closure and/or staff reductions.

4.9 Denton Ward Councillor's Response

Ward Councillors expressed concern about mixed age teaching and supported Option A.

4.10 MP's Response

The MP for Denton and Audenshaw expressed extreme concern that some of the options proposed would result in mixed year groups. He supported Option A as achieving the Council's objective of reducing the number of surplus places in Denton.

4.11 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

| Respondent | Preferred Option |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base | Oppose closure of Denton Central |
| Corrie Primary School | A |
| Greswell Primary School | A |
| Linden Road Primary School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base | A |
| Russell Scott Primary School | A or B (preferably A) |
| West End Denton | A |
| Unions | A |
| Ward Councillors | A |
| MP | A |

5 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The closure of Denton central is included in each option. An analysis of estimated costs of closing Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base is as follows:

The cost per pupil in small schools is much higher than in larger schools because of the 'fixed' element of every school's budget, which comprises the headteacher's salary (with on costs) and the lump sum allocation for premises.

For Denton Central, the total Section 52 formula budget in 2004-2005 was £374k. Of this £54k was for premises and "fixed overhead allocation" (effectively the cost of employing a head teacher with on cost base on school size) of £62k, giving a total fixed element for Denton Central of £116,000. All other grant funded resources- standards fund, Chancellor's Grant, Threshold etc., have been disregarded. Closure of Denton Central would result in a long term saving of approximately £116,000 per annum.

Closure of surplus schools enables the recycling of recurrent funding to schools that remain. Current estimates relating to the closure of Denton Central indicate an annual saving of £116,000 available to distribute amongst other schools. This should enable significant improvements in standards.

Each primary pupil attracts funding of £1,590. By July 2006, it is estimated that there would be 39 pupils remaining at Denton Central. The funding associated with these pupils for 2006-07 would be available to the schools these pupils transferred to.

The value of the Denton Central site cannot be included in the financial considerations, as no decision has been made about future of the building/site.

5.1 Cost effectiveness of reduction in pupil places

The options relating to Corrie, Linden Road, Greswell and Russell Scott primary schools include a reduction in the potential intake. The fixed costs for a school in respect of premises and fixed overhead allocation remain the same, and therefore there would be a rise in the running costs per pupil.

5.2 Financial considerations in relation to Nursery Provision

The funding of nursery places is based on a block grant according to the size of the nursery. Funding freed by a reduction in nursery places will be recycled into nursery provision across the borough.

6. STANDARDS

When a school closes, the funds released year-on-year can be redistributed for resources such as ICT, books, material and staff at the remaining primary schools. Money spent on improving the quality of learning should impact on standards, so the redistribution of funds away from the high running costs of running a small school with high surplus capacity to more resources in the remaining schools should lead to improved standards across Denton.

Indirectly, the focusing of resources on a smaller number of schools is likely to promote higher standards.

7. FORWARD PLANNING (Subject to the outcome of the Key Decision)

The Council cannot take any formal steps until the statutory decision making process is complete, however the LEA is working towards ensuring a clear strategy is in place should a decision be made to close Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base.

The LEA has agreed to meet with parents again after the Key Decision has been made to discuss their children's future education should a decision be made to close Denton Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base. When consulted, parents stated a preference for placing their children at a school of their choice, in many cases one near to the home address, in preference to the children moving 'en bloc' to another school. Places would be needed for approximately 39 pupils across years 2, 3 and 4 from September 2006.

There is capacity within the remaining schools to accommodate this number of pupils.

Parents will be helped to move their children in a planned and managed way.

8. MONITORING

Pupil numbers attending schools change significantly over time as families grow up or move out of the area. New housing developments can result in young families moving into an area. Respondents to the consultation have commented that extensive areas of Denton are due for redevelopment.

School numbers will be kept under review to ensure that all schools remain a viable size to sustain future existence.

9. SUMMARY

The provision of primary school places in Denton has been subject to review as part of the Council's ongoing review of primary school provision across Tameside.

The Council's aims in carrying out the review of school provision is four fold, namely to:

1. Remove surplus places by considering the balance between the supply and the projected demand of school places.
2. Provide a quality environment to meet the educational needs of pupils.
3. Maximise the efficient and effective use of resources.
4. Improve the condition of school buildings

The review, published in October 2004, outlined four options for future provision, which the Council believes will reduce surplus capacity and meet the needs of a modern curriculum.

Consultation took place during November and December 2004 and January 2005

The final report is the result of the consultation process. It summarizes the comments and concerns voiced by parents, governors and staff at the schools, together with the views of other interested parties.

All options include closure of Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base. Options for other schools relate to a reduction in pupil places

The Council recognises that schools are more than 'bricks and mortar', and that each school has its own unique ethos and part to play in the community it serves. However, the review has to objectively consider the number of places needed and meet the needs of the children both to day and in the future.

The comments received show:

- Strong support for Option A.
- Opposition to 1.5 form entry schools and the inclusion of mixed -age classes

The response from Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base opposes closure of the school.

Whilst the Council recognises the concerns of the governors, staff and parents of Central Primary School, given the low numbers of pupils at the school (92 as of 20/1/05) and its high surplus capacity, closure is considered to be the only viable way forward.

With regard to Linden Road, the governors, staff and parents support its reduction from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry school (Option A)

With regard to Corrie Primary School, the governors, staff and parents support a reduction in its net capacity from 469 to 420 (Option A).

The Council recommends the adoption of Option A.

School numbers will be kept under review to ensure that all schools remain a viable size to sustain future existence.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS.

It is recommended that the proposals set out in Option A are adopted as follows:-

1. Statutory notices are published to cease to maintain Central Primary School and ASD Resource Base with effect from 31st August 2006.
2. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the admission number at Linden Road Primary School from 60 to 30 from September 2006; and that an options appraisal is undertaken to ascertain the best way to remodel the school.
3. The net capacity of Corrie Primary School is reduced from 469 to 420 (67 to 60 indicated admission number) and that an options appraisal is undertaken to ascertain the best way to remodel the school.
4. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Corrie Primary School from 78 (39fte) to 52 (26fte) places from September 2006.
5. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Greswell Primary School from 60 (30fte) to 52 (26fte) with effect from 1st September 2006.
6. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Denton West End Primary School from 66 (33fte) to 52 (26fte) places from September 2006.
7. Statutory proposals are published to reduce the number of nursery places at Dane Bank Primary School from 40 (20fte) to 26 (13fte) places from September 2006.
8. An options appraisal is undertaken as to the best way to improve the condition, suitability and access of the remaining Denton community primary school buildings.

11. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DENTON REVIEW: CONSULTATION PAPER

APPENDIX 2: SCHEDULE OF CONSULTATION MEETING DATES

APPENDIX 3: MAP OF AREA