

Meeting of the Decision Session – 19 November 2012
Cabinet Member for Education,
Children and Young People

Report by the Director of Adults, Children and Education

Proposed changes to the organisation of primary education in the catchment areas currently served by Osbaldwick Primary School and the Derwent Schools Federation

Background

1. This report summarises the different challenges facing Osbaldwick Primary School and the Derwent Schools Federation.
2. The report recommends that the local authority should now undertake a public consultation on a proposal to close the Derwent Schools Federation and to enlarge Osbaldwick Primary School. The larger Osbaldwick school would then operate on both of the existing Osbaldwick and Derwent sites, providing sufficient places to meet local demand for school places. Both governing bodies have expressed their support for a consultation on this proposal.
3. The report also notes that both governing bodies have agreed to appoint the current headteacher of Osbaldwick Primary School (Miss Lesley Barringer), as interim executive headteacher of both the Derwent Federation and the Osbaldwick Primary School, with effect from January 2013. This follows the retirement of the headteacher of the Derwent Federation (Mrs Carole Torode), who has given excellent service to the city for the last 22 years.

Analysis

4. Annex 1 provides detail of comparative educational attainment and performance in local schools in recent years.

Annex 2 shows the level of surplus spaces and future projections for schools in the local area.

Annex 3 provides a map of the local catchment areas.

Osboldwick Primary School

5. The school operates from within a single building of variable condition, which is designed to accommodate a single form of entry, and up to 210 children on roll. There are seven classrooms, a hall and a dedicated ICT suite. The library is housed in an open plan area which also provides access to three classrooms and the ICT suite. A double temporary classroom unit to the rear of the main building houses a local playgroup, who rent the space from the school.
6. The popularity of the school with parents in the catchment area suggests that future demand for Reception places at the school will rise as the local population grows. Given that the school is already at capacity, this will mean that in future years there will be some children living in the school's catchment area who may fail to gain a place as demand increases.
7. The school was described by Ofsted as "a good school with outstanding outcomes" at the last inspection. The average cost per pupil was around £4,000 per annum in 2011/12. The school provides a range of pre-school, after-school and early years provision. The school is recognised by Ofsted, DfE and the LA for the quality of its leadership. It has a proven leadership capacity and ability to support other schools, without putting at risk its own performance.
8. The main challenge facing the school is therefore the condition and suitability of the buildings, overcrowding and an inability to meet rising demand for school places in future.
9. Osboldwick Primary School lies very close to the Derwent Federation site (about 0.2 miles).

Derwent Federation

10. Although technically distinct infant and junior schools, the Derwent Federation essentially operates as an all-through primary school, with shared use of a single hall, library and IT areas. The school has excellent facilities and the buildings are in good condition overall. An external building currently houses a local police service outreach team. The school has extensive grounds that include a floodlit Multi Use Games Area and changing rooms.

Three classroom-sized spaces within the school are currently occupied by a maintained nursery and integrated children's centre satellite facilities. Taking the above into account, there are seven classroom areas remaining for traditional use by the school. The school can therefore presently accommodate a single form of entry, or 210 pupils on roll at any one time. However, demand for places at the school is currently far below this figure, and at the October 2012 census point there were 107 children on roll at the federation in Reception through to Year 6. The school is currently operating with 53% surplus space, making the unit cost very high (around £8,000 per pupil per annum).

11. Demand for places at the school will increase slowly over time in line with rising local pupil population, largely resulting from the ongoing development of the neighbouring Derwenthorpe housing site.
12. Both schools in the Derwent Federation were judged to be "satisfactory" by Ofsted in May 2010. Importantly, the school is now facing various significant challenges:
 - a. The school is heavily under-subscribed. The majority of parents who live in the schools' catchment area select other schools as their first preference.
 - b. The school is unable to provide good value for money, given the level of spare places. Recognising the challenges facing the school in recent years, the LA has not sought to rationalise the budget available to the federation, despite the fact that the two schools are now, in practice, operating as one school. Given increasing funding pressures across the city and the cost of provision at Derwent, the funding position cannot be sustained.
 - c. The headteacher will retire at the end of the year and, given recent experience of recruiting primary headteachers in the city, it will be difficult to attract a field of exceptional candidates.

Demand for school places in the local area

13. The current (October 2012) level of surplus space at Derwent Infant and Junior schools (when taken together) is the highest at any school in the city (53%). Tang Hall Primary School, which is the neighbouring catchment school to the north, also has a high level of surplus places (34%).

14. It is difficult to predict with accuracy what the demand for school places will be at individual schools across the city in the medium to longer term. Demand is influenced by the birth rate and by local housing development, and is also subject to local reputation, sometimes influenced by Ofsted judgements, league table performance and community perceptions of individual institutions.
15. Across the city, the birth rate has risen and is expected to continue to do so for some years. As this translates into larger primary cohorts, surplus spaces will gradually fill up. The proposed Derwenthorpe development is also expected to produce up to 130 additional primary pupils. Conversely, the university expansion and the change in tenure of housing in Tang Hall, Badger Hill and the Hull Road area has led to some reduction in the overall demand for primary places as the supply of family housing has reduced and the proportion of student housing has increased. In Badger Hill, for example, this appears to have had an impact as admissions from the local catchment area have reduced, although the school is continuing to attract pupils from a wider area including the catchment areas of Osbaldwick and Derwent. The local voluntary aided faith schools remain popular and both St Lawrence's and St Aelred's attract pupils from the Derwent catchment area. In other areas of the city there is increasing demand for primary school places, reflecting a rising birth rate in recent years, and changing demographic patterns across the city.
16. Given the existing space within other local schools, and assuming that existing patterns of parental preference continues, reception numbers at Derwent are not predicted to begin rising significantly until 2016/17. Surplus space and very small cohorts will therefore continue to be an issue within the school for the foreseeable future.

Admissions arrangements for 2013 and beyond

17. An enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School, based on two forms of entry, will provide up to 60 places per year group. This will allow the school to meet the expected local demand for primary places in the foreseeable future.
18. The current arrangements for entry to schools in September in 2013 will continue for this admission round. Parents who have applied for a place at either Derwent or Osbaldwick schools for September 2013 will be advised of the outcome of their application

from 16 April, in accordance with the national admission scheme. The LA schools support service will be available during the consultation process to advise parents further and to answer any particular queries or concerns about admission arrangements and the options available to them.

19. It is expected that all parents who live in the catchment areas of either Derwent or Osbaldwick schools, and who apply for a place at either school for September 2013, will be offered a place at the enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School if the proposed closure of the Derwent Federation proceeds.
20. It would be prudent to consider adjusting the catchment areas that would serve Tang Hall and Osbaldwick schools in future years, if this proposal proceeds. Some of the streets north of Tang Hall Beck and west of Tang Hall Lane, which serve as a natural boundary, are currently in the “Derwent North” catchment area. It is suggested that a public consultation on the future of the schools should also consider a proposal to transfer these streets into the existing and adjacent Tang Hall catchment area. These roads/streets are shown on the map in Annex 3.
21. This adjustment will allow a better distribution of the estimated numbers of children between the various schools in future years, particularly as Derwenthorpe proceeds to completion. Over the next few years this change would have no material impact on the outcome of parental preferences for places at the enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School, or at Tang Hall Primary School, given the level of surplus spaces currently in the system.

The local authority’s role

22. The LA is required to ensure that there is a supply of school places that matches demand and parental preference as far as possible. The LA is required to reduce excessive surplus spaces in schools to ensure that limited resources are used effectively.
23. The LA is also required to monitor educational standards and attainment, and to take appropriate action to secure improvements where required. In recent years the LA has worked closely with the Derwent Federation and the governing body through the school support group. The LA supported the federation of Junior and Infant Schools (reducing management costs), enabled the sale of surplus and unused playing fields and reinvesting the

proceeds in the new MUGA facility, completing works to improve the schools' accommodation and decommissioning some teaching space in order to reduce the level of surplus spaces, and supported the development of the satellite children's centre.

24. The fact that Derwent and Osbaldwick schools are extremely close geographically makes it desirable to consider potential options that address issues at both schools simultaneously, benefitting the wider community of children. It is important that the schools and the local authority work together to find the best way to match education facilities to local needs and demand, whilst at the same time providing the best possible education with the resources that are available.

Options

25. Given the various challenges facing both schools, officers have considered various potential options:
- **Option 1:** The closure of Derwent Schools and the transfer of pupils to other schools in the local area.
 - **Option 2:** An amalgamation of both Osbaldwick School and Derwent Schools. This would require the closure of both schools and the creation of an entirely new school. Under government policy, this would require the LA to run a competition to recruit a new school provider or to seek the Secretary of State's approval for an exemption from the competition requirements.
 - **Option 3:** The closure of Derwent Schools and the enlargement of the existing Osbaldwick School to create a 2 form of entry school using both of the existing sites.
 - **Option 4:** The hard federation of Osbaldwick School and Derwent Schools on existing sites (this would retain three schools, each subject to separate Ofsted inspections).
 - **Option 5:** Seek an academy sponsor for the Derwent Schools in order for them to convert to academy status.
26. In summary, and given the local circumstances, officers consider that Option 3 offers a way forward that best addresses the different challenges facing the schools.

27. The other four options have been discounted for the following reasons:
- Option 1 fails to make use of excellent local facilities and removes primary places that will be needed in future years.
 - Option 2 would require the closure of an oversubscribed and popular school, judged by Ofsted to be good.
 - Option 4 does not address the issues faced by Osbaldwick School or fully address concerns regarding surplus places or value for money.
 - Option 5 assumes the establishment of a sponsored academy and accompanying changes in leadership and governance – it does not address issues of surplus places or value for money.
28. Officers therefore consider that Option 3 provides the best opportunity to improve the educational offer for children in the area served by Osbaldwick and Derwent schools. This option secures strong and effective school leadership, maintains local primary provision on both existing school sites, removes excessive surplus places, maximises the efficient use of capital assets and provides better value for money than existing arrangements or alternatives.

Consultation

29. The governing bodies of both schools have considered these issues and have requested the local authority to undertake a public consultation regarding the proposal to close the Derwent Schools and to enlarge Osbaldwick Primary School (Option 3 above).
30. The timeline for the proposed public consultation, and the associated decision making process, is set out below:

19 November 2012	Cabinet member requested to approve public consultation.
November	Working Group formed from both governing bodies, supported by LA officers, to consider and agree draft proposals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governance arrangements • redeployment process for staff of Derwent Schools • funding arrangements

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school key stage organisation • early years and nursery provision • admission arrangements • finalising and agreeing consultation document
1 December – 15 February 2013	Public consultation: publication of a document explaining the proposal: opportunities for all parents; local communities; staff; other schools and stakeholders to discuss and respond to the proposals. Information and questionnaire provided online and available in paper format.
28 February	Cabinet Member considers responses from the public consultation and decides whether to proceed with publication of statutory notices and further six-week representation period.
4 March	If agreed by Cabinet Member – publication of statutory notice proposing closure.
4 March – 22 April	Further six-week public representation period.
7 May	Cabinet considers further responses and makes final decision.
7 May onwards	If proposal agreed – arrangements confirmed and preparation for opening of enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School in September 2013 completed.

Implications

Legal

31. The local authority must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when undertaking consultation and making decisions regarding school closure proposals. ‘Closing a Mainstream School: A guide for Local Authorities’ (“the Guidance”).

Financial

32. Schools with significant levels of surplus space require higher levels of investment in order to continue providing children with high quality education. As all schools are funded out of the same authority ‘pot’, continuing to disproportionately invest in schools

with high surplus space means that there is less money for other schools across the authority.

33. The high levels of surplus places contribute to what is a comparatively high level of revenue expenditure by the Derwent Federation, although it is important to note that the school has a higher proportion of 'Additional Educational Needs' (AEN) pupils than other schools, and higher levels of deprivation, which contributes to the high expenditure figures.
34. If the Derwent Federation closes, and Osbaldwick Primary School increases in size, a new budget will be established. This will be calculated using the local funding formula, reflecting changes in the funding formula recently agreed by the York Education Partnership. Additional funding will also be set aside to meet the costs of closure and transition to the new arrangements.
35. The LA will work with the governors' working group to determine the new budget for the school. The financial implications, and overall approach, will be considered by the York Education Partnership and will be reported back to the Cabinet Member with the outcome of the consultation. It is anticipated that the total budget available to the school will be less than the combined budgets of the existing schools, given the greater opportunity for economies of scale. Other schools will therefore benefit from the proposed closure as the savings generated will be redistributed.

Human Resources (HR)

36. There are significant staffing implications associated with a school closure. The staff at Derwent Schools (as the closing school) will be at risk of redundancy in the event that closure is agreed. The LA will work with the governing bodies of both schools and the trades unions and professional associations in order to secure alternative employment for as many staff as is possible. The governing body of Osbaldwick Primary School have confirmed that a ring-fence will be applied to all of the staff at Derwent Federation, in order to provide staff who meet relevant criteria with the opportunity to be redeployed to new positions established within the enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School.
37. Following the retirement of the headteacher of the Derwent Federation, the governing bodies of both Osbaldwick and Derwent schools have agreed with the local authority to appoint Miss

Barringer, the current headteacher of Osbaldwick Primary School, as interim executive headteacher of both the Derwent Federation and the Osbaldwick Primary School, with effect from January 2013 until the end of summer term 2013. Miss Barringer is a highly experienced headteacher, and is a Local Leader of Education.

38. This interim position will be reviewed once the outcome of the consultation process on the future of the schools is known.

Equalities

39. The catchment area of the Derwent Federation includes some of the most disadvantaged areas of the city. The school has a higher proportion of 'Additional Educational Needs' (AEN) pupils than other schools. Currently the school has 3 pupils with a statement, 28 pupils recorded as school action and 1 as school action plus. The federation has 45 (42%) of pupils entitled to free school meals.
40. Osbaldwick Primary School currently has 2 pupils with a statement, 22 pupils recorded as school action and 4 as school action plus. The school has 34 (17%) of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Property

41. The proposal intends that an enlarged Osbaldwick Primary School will make use of both of the sites, buildings and land currently used by both Derwent Federation and Osbaldwick Primary School. The consultation paper will set out potential options and proposals for the organisation of year groups, early years and the provision of various other services across the two sites.

Council Plan

42. The provision of primary education is a key responsibility of the council, which is recognised as a high performing authority in this regard. High quality education enables children and young people to contribute positively to the life and development of the city, supporting the council's priorities.

Other

43. There are no specific, crime and disorder, information technology, or risk management implications arising at this stage.

Conclusions

44. The local authority has a responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places, with an appropriate balance between supply and demand, so that resources are used effectively.
45. The proposals set out here seek to ensure that all local children, living in the area currently served by Osbaldwick and Derwent schools, can be offered the best possible primary education opportunities. The proposal secures strong and effective school leadership and governance, maintains local provision on both existing school sites, removes excessive surplus places, maximises the efficient use of capital assets and provides better value for money than existing arrangements.

Recommendations

46. That the Cabinet Member:
- a) approves a public consultation on the proposals set out in this report, including the closure of the Derwent Schools Federation and the enlargement of Osbaldwick Primary School in September 2013.
 - b) receives a further report by March 2013 setting out in detail the outcomes of the public consultation.

Contact Details

Author:	Chief Officer responsible for the report:		
Kevin Hall Assistant Director Adults, Children and Education 01904 554207	Pete Dwyer Director of Adults, Children and Education 01904 554200		
	Report Approved		Date
Specialist Implications Officer(s) HR – Jo Sheen, Assistant HR Business Partner (ext 4250) Finance – Richard Hartle, Head of Finance (ext 4225)			
Wards Affected: Osbaldwick, Hull Road, Heworth			All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None.

Annexes

Annex 1: Key Stage 2 results

Annex 2: Projected numbers for primary schools in the area

Annex 3: Existing and suggested catchment area boundaries