



Primary School Expansion



A report from Overview & Scrutiny





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Preface

By Cllr Jon Hunt

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



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

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

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

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

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

This has been my last review as chair of the children and education committee. As well as thanking members, witnesses and schools for their contribution I would like to offer particular thanks to those staff who have worked with me on this and many other reviews in recent years - notably Jill Short and Iram Choudry in the scrutiny office.



Terms of Reference

1.1 Reasons for the Review

- 1.1.1 Birth rates across the City have increased dramatically over recent years. This has created a pressure for additional primary school places that will continue for some years. This is a particularly pressing issue for some central areas in the City. In order to meet its statutory duty to provide each child with a school place, following consultation, the City Council decided that a number of primary schools within the City should be expanded. Some concerns have been raised about the impact of creating these larger primary schools and as a result the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee was keen to explore both the pressures and challenges that arise from a rapid expansion of primary schools in the City and how these might best be addressed.
- 1.1.2 We felt that Scrutiny could add value by undertaking a focussed review to explore in detail not only the impact of the planned expansions on the existing physical space available within these schools but also the implications for workforce remodelling and for the senior leadership teams within the schools. In addition we also wanted to assess what support needs to be in place to help the children adjust to the “larger” school environment and how any concerns raised by parents and the wider community have been resolved.

1.2 Terms of Reference

- 1.2.1 It was agreed the review would consider the following questions in particular:
- How will the planned expansion effect the existing physical space within the school i.e. Playground, staff car parking etc?
 - Are there any implications for workforce remodelling (Additional teachers, non-teaching staff etc)?
 - Will there be any pastoral support in place to help the children adjust to the “larger” school environment?
 - How are parents needs being addressed?
 - Have there been any particular issues/concerns raised by parents and the wider community?
 - What issues does the expansion raise for the school’s senior leadership team?



1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 To undertake this review we decided firstly to write to all of the primary schools which are included in the current phase of the expansion programme across the City to establish their concerns. In addition we issued an invitation to all City Councillors to highlight any local matters that had been brought to their attention with regard to local school expansion proposals. A call for evidence was issued in the press to seek parents views and a series of 6 targeted visits were organised to a selection of the primary schools affected by the current expansion programme plus one that had previously been expanded so we could speak directly to school staff, governors and pupils to explore the topics in more detail. Finally the Committee held three evidence hearings to hear from a range of officers from within relevant City Council Strategic Directorates.



2 Background

2.1 Birth Rates in Birmingham

- 2.1.1 Between 2001 and 2008 there was a significant increase in the birth rate in Birmingham of over 3000 births, an increase of 21%. This increase in births is, in the main, concentrated in areas across a central corridor in Birmingham, in which the City is already experiencing high pressure for school places due to the level of newly arrived and the limited dispersion of immigrant populations into other areas. As this followed a period of reducing birth rate, it was possible to absorb the initial increase in existing schools. However it became evident that additional school accommodation would be required for those children reaching reception age from 2010 onwards.
- 2.1.2 Long term projections of births (currently up to 2019) provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggest that this trend in increasing birth rates will continue. Nationally, projections indicate that the number of births will reach levels not seen since the baby boom of the 1960's. By applying Birmingham's pupil projection model to the ONS projections of births, the indications are that in just 10 years time the City will have to accommodate over 16,800 Reception age children (See Appendix One for details). Allowing for a 5% surplus in line with Audit Commission recommendations, this will create a shortage of over 3,000 reception places.
- 2.1.3 Central areas of the City have the youngest age profile with many more people of child bearing age than in other areas. It is expected therefore that a significant proportion of the additional births will be to families living in these areas. Although pupil planning in the city works on longer term projections to forecast likely trends the timeline between actual birth data being available and pupils starting school is relatively short, approximately 30 months. This leaves little time for the Council to respond. Officers indicated it would be helpful if this data was available sooner.
- 2.1.4 The City Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places available to all school age children in the City and it has long endeavoured to provide primary pupil places at local schools which are within "pram pushing" distance from their home. This coupled with a lack of both a programme of funding for land purchase and suitable available sites in the areas of greatest demand in the City mean that it is not an option to build additional schools in the areas to solve the problem. The only other option available is therefore to expand some of the existing primary schools.

2.2 Funding the Expansion of Primary schools

- 2.2.1 The sudden change in the City's pattern of births from a period of decline to a rapid increase year on year has been replicated in most large urban areas of the country. Unfortunately, despite representations made by a number of local authorities including Birmingham, it took



some time for the Government to recognise action had to be taken to address the problem. However, in July 2009 the Government finally announced a £200m capital grant to assist Local Authorities experiencing exceptional growth in primary pupil numbers. The funding was targeted to support the authorities where there is the greatest exceptional need to provide additional permanent primary places by September 2011. Birmingham successfully bid for £24m from this pot. However the funding formula used by the Department was predicated on LA's contributing 50% of their school's formulaic allocation (single capital pot) to meet this need. The total cost of the programme is £47.2 over three years. This is funded as follows:

- £24m DFE grant;
- £2.7m Centrally Managed Building programme of works;
- £0.234m LCVAP (Local Authority Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme);
- £6.22m Primary Capital Programme ; and
- £14m from Corporate Resources.

2.2.2 Future revenue costs of additional staffing and day to day repair and maintenance arising as a result of the expansion will be funded from the school's budget via an increase in the formulaic Direct Schools Grant as a result of the increase in pupil numbers. Capital resources for major maintenance are provided to schools through the Government's devolved capital grant.

2.3 Numbers of Additional School Places Required

2.3.1 Officers from the Asset Management team in the Children Young People and Families Strategic Directorate developed a phased approach to meet the additional places needed from September 2010 through to September 2012. Phase 1 of the programme had to deliver 330 places, which due to time constraints, had to be provided in temporary accommodation. This Phase was delivered successfully in the summer of 2010 and all 330 places were filled in September 2010. Phase 2 is providing permanent accommodation at schools for September 2011 and will meet the needs for approximately 6000 additional places. Phase 3 will need to deliver 3500 places in order to meet the need from September 2012.

2.4 How Schools were Selected for Expansion

2.4.1 The criteria for identifying schools for potential expansion has been based upon: geographical location, popularity, site size and management capability. Whilst it is possible to identify the schools best positioned to be expanded, simply in terms of geographical location, other factors were also taken into account in the selection, such as which schools sites have the physical capacity to accommodate expansion, as well as whether the schools identified are popular with local parents. The Local Authority has a duty to meet parental preference and so it would make no sense to increase the capacity of a school which does not appear to be popular with parents.



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

2.5 How the Expansion Programme is Procured and Delivered

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

2.6 What is the impact of Size on Primary schools?

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



- 2.6.3 Expanding a primary school does not mean that pupils will be placed in larger classes as feared by some parents, as the School Standards Framework Act 1998 places a duty on Local Authorities to limit the size of infant classes for 5, 6 and 7 year olds taught by one teacher to 30 or fewer. This became a statutory responsibility for LA's and Schools at the start of 2001/2 school year. There is no upper limit for class sizes for children aged 8-11 however all of the primary expansion proposals in the City are predicated upon planning for all primary classes to be based upon a total of 30 pupils.
- 2.6.4 There is little agreement amongst international researchers and educators on what constitutes a small, medium and large primary school in the UK and very little research has been carried out on school size and effectiveness in the primary sector. Some has been conducted in the USA but it should be treated with caution as elementary schools there are described as small if they have less than 400 pupils.
- 2.6.5 An Ofsted Report published in March 2000 entitled "Small Schools: How well are they doing?" considered small schools to be those with less than 100 pupils and very small schools to have less than 50. The report concluded that the majority of small schools achieve standards which are higher than the national average at the age of 7 and 11. However these standards are less than those achieved by larger schools when socio- economic background is taken into account. Ofsted's report in 2009 on twenty outstanding Primary schools does not mention school size as a determinant of success and it looked at outstanding schools at all sizes and concluded that what makes a difference in these outstanding schools is excellent leadership, team work, quality of teaching, assessment, values, aspiration and inclusion.
- 2.6.6 A DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) article "Size matters" published in June 2009 argues against small primary schools of less than 210 pupils on the grounds of: ability to deliver a broad curriculum, opportunities for professional development, provision of enrichment activities and efficient use of resources.
- 2.6.7 Certainly if there is no clear agreement regarding the relationship between school size and performance there is a clear consensus of opinion that the critical factor in determining the success of a school is the quality of leadership. A report published by the National College for School leadership in 2007 cites the following factors as essential to successful, strategic and sustainable primary schools:
- Effective leadership is crucial. This is "leadership of many" at all levels, not just a single teacher. However the contribution of the Head teacher, particularly the quality of his or her strategic leadership is vital to primary schools being successful and sustainable;
 - These schools also provide a broad balanced, enriched and differentiated curriculum. They demonstrate that every child matters and consider children's interest and motivation, engage them in their learning and sustain positive attitudes; and



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

2.6.8 The benefits of larger schools are cited as :

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

2.6.9 Overall nationally, two form entry primary schools are considered large (total 420 places) In Birmingham they are the norm however, and there are successful schools which have three, four and even five forms of entry.

2.6.10 It should be noted that in fact the majority of primary schools which are being expanded will actually grow by one form entry each year (i.e. 30 pupils) so it will take seven years before the full impact of the total growth in pupil numbers is fully felt. This means that the growth is actually more organic in nature and the overall impact on the school can be planned for monitored and evaluated for over time.



3 Evidence

3.1 Feedback from Schools and City Councillors

- 3.1.1 The Committee wrote asking all the schools included within the primary expansion programme about their issues and concerns and received written submissions from eight schools. Members also undertook targeted visits to:
- Regents Park Community Primary School;
 - Starbank JI School ;
 - Somerville Primary School;
 - Nansen Primary School;
 - Audley Primary School; and
 - Greet Primary School.
- 3.1.2 This meant they were able to speak directly to Head teachers, staff school, governors and pupils about how they were addressing the challenges and developing new ways of working as well as any concerns they had relating to the planned expansion. It also enabled members to see for themselves the impact that the proposed physical changes to the buildings would have on the overall school site. One of the schools visited had expanded some time ago so this gave them the chance to learn from its experiences.
- 3.1.3 In addition feedback was also sought from parents and all City Councillors. A full list of those who submitted evidence to the Committee can be found at **Appendix 3**
- 3.1.4 In general the schools and local Councillors welcome the action to increase the number of places available at these popular schools locally however a number of challenges are identified. A summary our findings are set out below

Physical Challenges

- 3.1.5 Each school identified a range of physical challenges that arose from expanding classroom provision within an existing school site including:
- Loss of playground /outside space/ sport and PE facilities;
 - Loss of staff car parking;
 - Insufficient hall /dining hall/PE space to accommodate the increased number of pupils;
 - Insufficient staff room space; and
 - Insufficient storage.



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

Disruption

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

Staffing issues

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

Leadership Issues

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



The School within a School Model

At Greet the school operates successfully on a “**school within a school model**”. The school is divided in to phase groups which are supported by a phase leader and team of assistant phase leaders. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made up of nursery, reception and year 1 Key Stage 1- Year one, two and three Key Stage 2-Year four, five and six.

The EYFS is based on an open plan system of teaching, where the children have a dedicated bay (classroom) where they meet for more structured lessons with their designated teacher, but they also have the opportunity to socialise with the other children from the other bays for different activities during the course of the day.

A wide range of activities and toys were visible in the EYFS with dedicated role play corners, IT suites, and the Library.

The use of targeted teaching groups is key to the success of teaching within the school. Clear target setting is based on the analysis of pupils' attainment and progress and the rigorous checking of teaching and the curriculum.

The staff felt personalisation of the curriculum was the key to success for the children at the school.

With the current structures the staff we spoke to felt that they got to know the students better.

There are clear systems in place to ensure constant monitoring and performance of all pupils and staff to ensure that weaknesses can be picked up at an early stage and remedial work and support put in place to help the pupils.

Pastoral Support

- 3.1.15 Schools had taken action to ensure that pupils received both pastoral support and could clearly identify who was the senior member of staff for their area of the school. It was felt that in this way pupils would not feel lost in the larger school environment, some examples are set out below.

Somerville school

Dotted around the school buildings were “conversation stops”, these were allocated to different corridors within the building and would be “manned” by a member of staff at various times during the day and were seen as an opportunity for the pupils to sit and talk to members of staff about anything they wanted.

Before starting at the school, parents and children have the opportunity to come into the school on 4 separate occasions to get to know the staff and feel comfortable at the school.

The head teacher felt this was a real strength at the school. The staff had worked hard at building relationships with parents and they had developed a series of social events that parents all took part in including family eid parties, Attendance parties for parents and children and regular workshops/courses.

The head teacher tries to answer all parental concerns with 24 hours.

The school also operates a daily drop in session which parents can come along to, to raise any issues/concerns.



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Nansen School

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

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

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

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

Greet Primary Play ground Mentors

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

Regents Park

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

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

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

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

Anderton Park

The school is already three form entry and has a good pastoral system in place, with an Every Child Matters Manager, Pastoral Care Manager, Community Support Worker and support from Children's Centre Staff.



Increased Traffic / Congestion / Parking Problems

3.1.16 Some common issues in this category were:

- All of the schools identified the impact on both the school and the local community of the increased traffic, congestion and associated parking problems outside the school especially at the start and end of the school day that resulted from the expansion in school places;
- Some schools felt that the introduction of traffic management schemes would be useful in some cases. In addition it was recognised that the initiatives such as school travel plans needed to be given more emphasis;
- One example of schools taking initiatives to solve the problem was at Nansen School which is considering a “park and stride” scheme ; and
- One member raised the issue of the need for school crossing patrol staff.

Consultation and communications

3.1.17 One school felt that the consultation process within schools was too elaborate and led to the raising of unrealistic expectations about what the project could achieve.

3.1.18 It was felt in some cases that there had been insufficient consultation about the expansion programme with local residents.

3.1.19 In other cases it was felt that parental consultation had been limited and had only elicited a low level of response however other schools had developed ideas about how to keep parental involvement going throughout the process.

Project implementation

3.1.20 Some schools have not always been clear about what aspects of the works / equipment/ fixtures they would be required to pay for, and what would be funded through the capital programme (e.g. alarms/ ICT infrastructure).

3.1.21 Some schools indicated it would be useful to have one named contact with the authority to deal with on going queries once construction began on site.

3.1.22 One school indicated that coordination of the process had greatly improved since the Local Authority had put in place the team to coordinate the programme.

3.1.23 A number of schools felt the support and involvement they received from the architects assigned to their projects had been superb but one queried why a London based architect had been appointed rather than a local one.



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Pupil Place Planning

3.1.24 Concerns were raised about:

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

3.2 Feedback from Pupils

3.2.1 Members were keen to talk to pupils who were already in a relatively large school to get an idea on what aspects of their school they currently liked and if they were worried about it getting bigger. They met with a group of students from the School Council at Greet Primary. A selection of their comments are set out below:

3.2.2 What do you like about your school?

“I cried for the first few times at nursery but then I was Ok when I got to know my teachers and I made lots of new friends”.

“The teachers look after you and help you to get to know new people.”

“The teachers take the time to speak to all the children on the different tables before they start lessons”.

“I wasn’t very good with my spelling so I got extra lessons after school; I’m really good with spellings now”.

“In our classroom we’ve got six tables and we’ve got lots of teachers who can help children who need more help”.

“Playtimes –the teachers talk to you at playtime”.

“I really enjoy playtimes because I can make new friends”.



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

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

“We are excited about the school getting bigger because it means lots of new children can start at the school and they don’t have to wait to come to our school.”

3.3 Feedback from the Development Directorate

Planning Permission

- 3.3.1 We were keen to explore the role of the planning and transportation functions of the City Council in relation to school expansion programme and how issues such as increased congestion around schools were being acknowledged managed and mitigated as well as how actions adopted were enforced.
- 3.3.2 All proposals for primary school expansion have to secure planning approval. As part of this process a transport statement assesses the impact of increased traffic flows and the resultant congestion that may arise from the proposal, as well as measures to mitigate the problems. However we were advised that in planning terms, the fact that there will be an increase in congestion outside of the school for 10/15 minutes twice a day for 48 weeks per year is not necessarily of itself seen as a reason for refusal of planning permission. Planning law is based upon the principle of the “right to develop” unless there is a clear demonstration of harm. In addition planning regulations set out historic rules, guidance and precedent on the level of harm or impact on the free flow of traffic which must be demonstrated in order to justify refusal.
- 3.3.3 Although each planning application for each school expansion proposal is individually assessed on its own merits we were told it is helpful if officers from Children Young People and Families Directorate undertake early discussions with Planning and Transportation colleagues about the possible school sites that are likely to be selected so, that both the site specific issues, as well as wider strategic transportation issues and impacts can be explored.
- 3.3.4 Traffic congestion around schools is a significant issue for local residents living nearby and as a consequence it was directly raised with the Committee by members following the call for evidence for the review. Some members felt that the early engagement of local ward members in relation to school expansion matters could be improved. In addition it was felt that an increase in broader debate at Ward Committees was needed both on improving local engagement in consultation on the individual expansion proposals as well as encouraging cross portfolio (including education, planning, leisure and transportation) debate on broader issues such as the possible implementation of Home to School Transport Zones.



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School Travel Plans

- 3.3.5 The school travel team is responsible for the production, annual review and publication of the Sustainable Modes Travel Strategy (which includes a requirement to review school travel plans). This is required as a result of a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. School travel plans provide a tailored approach to tackling congestion and engaging people to use more sustainable travel modes – walking, cycling and public transport.
- 3.3.6 The team which supports the preparation of travel plans plus the safer routes to schools programme is currently staffed by a team of six. Until 31st March 2011, three of the posts were funded by Department of Education but this funding has now expired and will not be renewed.
- 3.3.7 Producing a school travel plan can lead to the securing of funding for highway measures through the Safer Routes to Schools programme. This is a separate annual budget (approx £0.5 m) used for funding capital measures outside the school including street lighting, changes to crossings, other actions to reduce speed and Traffic regulation orders. Officers in the team draw together all of the eligible needs for measures outside the school premises that have been identified in the plans these are then ranked in order of need and assessed against the criteria for funding from the programme.
- 3.3.8 The plans are developed following consultation with governors, parents, teachers and pupils. The final plan consists of a profile of the school and its travel issues, results of consultation and targets such as for achieving a future change in the mode of travel to the school used by parents and pupils.
- 3.3.9 The majority of schools (98.6 %) in the City now have school travel plans in place, but primary schools undergoing expansion need to review and update them in order support their planning application or to comply with planning permission conditions. This enables the plans to be used to identify measures to mitigate the effects of an increased number of children and parents, particularly increased congestion around the school as a result of the expansion.
- 3.3.10 Translating a school travel plan into action involves tailoring a combination of measures to the situation that applies to that particular school. Some initiatives aimed at increasing walking to school, include the introduction of traffic calming measures, including 20mph zones around a school or the introduction of walking buses and park and stride schemes. Walking buses are organised and run by volunteers and involve children being collected along a prearranged route at an agreed time. Park and stride is a variation on this whereby there are designated places for parents to park, from which there is a walking route to the school. Initiatives to promote cycling include provision of secure cycle storage, and cycle training and proficiency to prepare cyclists for busy roads on their route to school.
- 3.3.11 Another option which can be considered is staggering school hours as staggering the start and finish time of schools can alleviate pressures on local transport and ease congestion on nearby roads.



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

3.4 Consultation Processes

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

Statutory consultation process required for school expansion

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

Planning Application consultation process

- 3.4.4 Planning applications are sought to be determined within an 8 week period (according to government guidelines)
- 3.4.5 It is recommended that pre - application discussions are held to provide informal views on the development.
- 3.4.6 Formal consultation with local residents, members and statutory consultees when the planning application is registered. Comments are recorded and considered as part of the decision making process on the application.
- 3.4.7 Pre application discussion takes place with Education and Transportation consultants on the scope of the proposed expansion. At this stage the extent a Transport statement / assessment is needed to qualify the potential impacts on school expansion is agreed. This reviews the existing



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



4 Summary of Key Findings

- 4.1.1 We undertook this review to identify the pressures, challenges and concerns that arise from the rapid expansion of selected primary schools in the City and how these are being addressed.
- 4.1.2 Our review found that there were a wide range of challenges to be faced and these are set out below.
- 4.1.3 **Schools** - Each school identified a range of physical challenges that arose from expanding classroom provision within an existing school site including:
- Loss of playground /outside space/ sport and PE facilities;
 - Loss of staff car parking;
 - Insufficient hall /dining hall/PE space to accommodate the increased number of pupils;
 - Insufficient staff room space and toilets; and
 - Insufficient storage.
- 4.1.4 We understand that the schools being expanded will still meet the required national space standards and although there are pressures that arise from increasing the number of pupils at the school there is no funding for the purchase of additional land to enlarge the sites. We also heard of a range of initiatives being adopted to ensure that use of the available facilities can be maximised including introducing and managing staggered lunch times, breaks and PE lessons. However we did feel that it may be possible to seek to explore more creative solutions in cases where outdoor green space or playing fields are currently lacking. One possibility that might be worth exploring is seeing if there is a way schools could gain access to green space located nearby. This might require coordinated action to be taken locally across a range of City Council Directorates.
- 4.1.5 Schools also raised specific issues related to the demands made on them in terms of managing the overall project and ensuring that the build project when on site caused minimal disruption to the normal school activities.
- 4.1.6 **Parental concerns** – these include fears that expansion will change the existing school (small school) ethos, which is highly valued by parents, where senior staff know all the children by name and are available to parents to discuss any concerns. They also were concerned that their children would feel lost and vulnerable in a larger school environment and may also be placed in larger than average sized classes. Some parents raised concerns about the consultation process finding it to be confusing and inaccessible and they were not satisfied that their concerns had been adequately considered and addressed.
- 4.1.7 **Residents concerns** – these include a fear of increased congestion and parking problems as well other planning matters such as concerns about various physical impacts of the extended buildings. We heard of the work in this area that is undertaken with schools by the school travel



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team and felt that it would be helpful if the team was involved earlier in the process when schools were being expanded so that existing travel plans were reviewed sooner rather than later and early actions to address local concerns about increased congestion were identified and where possible, addressed through the adoption of mitigating actions.

- 4.1.8 We heard about some innovations and initiatives that are being developed and adapted in the primary schools to address the range of challenges which they face as expanding schools. We were particularly impressed with the **“schools within a school” model** which has been adopted by a number of schools. This enables the ethos of a small school to be maintained within the overall establishment as the school gets larger. We also heard about some interesting examples of approaches being taken to ensure all pupils receive the individual nurturing and one to one support they need to enable them to be confident and able to thrive in the new larger school environment.
- 4.1.9 We did feel that there were some improvements that could be made around the implementation of the process of consultation. Currently there are two formal statutory consultation processes which must be adhered to. The first relates to consultation around getting agreement to the principle of the expansion of the school, the second relates to seeking planning permission for the project. These seem to come across to many local parents, local residents and in some cases also schools as confusing and disjointed and not always very encouraging of involvement. This is not to dismiss the very real efforts that have been made in the short timescales available to consult with local stakeholders that have been made by both schools and officers associated with the programme to date. However it does seem that more could be done to clarify the process set out including its key stages in a coherent way and seek earlier (informal) involvement of local residents and parents perhaps by increasing the early provision of information to residents, ward committees and parents to allay some of the fears they may have about the project.
- 4.1.10 Going forward there will be increasing pressure for additional school places within the secondary school sector in the City as increased number of primary pupils feed their way through the schools system. This will create significant issues for the City especially given the scrapping of the Building Schools for the Future Programme. During April 2011, the James Review report of Education Capital was published, the review envisages that in future local capital expenditure needs in schools will be established through investment plans agreed locally and approved centrally. These will be coordinated by local authorities. However the review envisages that these investment plans will balance the needs of all schools (including academies and other non-maintained schools) not just local authority maintained schools. The review also proposes that for the procurement of large projects such as new schools a national central body should be put in place to procure and manage the projects delivering schools to a standard design. The government has yet to respond to the report.



5 Conclusions and Suggested Actions

5.1 Summary of Conclusions

- 5.1.1 There is no doubt that there is an urgent need for additional primary school places in the City so the choice is either to build additional schools or expand some of existing ones. There are insufficient suitable sites available in the areas of greatest demand for additional places to create new schools and no funding available from government to acquire land for this purpose so the only other option is that existing schools are expanded.
- 5.1.2 We did not find any conclusive evidence from looking at research on the topic that the size of a school is a determining factor in success and indeed most research points to the quality of school leadership as being the most important factor. However we acknowledge that leading large primary schools is qualitatively different from leading small ones.
- 5.1.3 The criteria for identifying schools for potential expansion has been based upon, geographical location, popularity, site size and management capability. This seems about the right balance of priorities.
- 5.1.4 Careful thought needs to be given to ensuring that parents as well as local residents living around the school and local members are fully engaged and informed about the plans both as early as possible and on an ongoing basis as they progress. There will ultimately be some conflicts of interest that arise, such as those caused by the increased congestion experienced by local residents near the school as a larger number of parents seek to drop off and pick up their children each day. Creative solutions to mitigate some of these impacts need to be found. This requires earlier involvement in the process of the school travel plan team and ongoing effort being made within schools to promote initiatives. In reality the full impact of the expansion of the schools will not be felt immediately, as in most cases schools are growing by one form or 30 extra pupils per year. Therefore it is essential that the travel plans for the expanded schools are reviewed regularly, preferably annually to assess their effectiveness and so that any new mitigating and/or enforcement actions are identified.
- 5.1.5 Parents' fears about their children feeling lost and left to fend for themselves in some large anonymous school must be allayed, as must the rumours that school expansion simply means that more and more children will be shoehorned into ever growing classes.
- 5.1.6 There is a need to ensure that the appropriate level of pastoral support is developed to ensure support is in place to help young pupils to deal with being part of a larger school and there are currently many examples of good practice being developed within schools that can be shared.
- 5.1.7 Schools which are expanding not only have to adjust the way they use the physical space and facilities that they have available on the existing school site, they also have to address a range of challenges to their existing staffing and leadership structures to adjust to the larger school



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

- 5.1.8 One real challenge that remains for a number of schools relates to a loss of outside space as a result of the build work, particularly to enable the playing of team sports or for nature studies. In some schools, although they still met the required overall standard for playground space, it had been broken up into smaller pockets, around the new build development and as a result was less flexible. In addition we heard that a number of schools lost valued nature areas and had little outside space available for group games. Consideration needs to be given to new ways to secure access to both green space for nature studies and access to playing pitches locally for schools. We are aware of proposals that are currently being explored around developing a network of Community Sports Hubs in the City and we heard of work on a Playing Pitch Strategy. Early discussions at the design phase of the schemes with colleagues in Leisure, Sport and Culture and other relevant Directorates may enable thought to be given to the sharing of green local facilities near the school.
- 5.1.9 As the programme of primary school expansion continues into its third phase, it is essential that lessons learned from the process of both implementing the programme and managing the changes associated with being larger schools so far are embedded into the process going forward. The leadership teams of the expanded schools should be encouraged to continue to network and share experiences and good practice with each other and the new schools coming into the programme in the future. We recognise the Directorate is changing and that services previously available to schools via the authority will not automatically be offered to schools under a new operating model - so we need to encourage the formation of a self sustaining network, and suggest that it is linked into the existing primary schools forum.
- 5.1.10 The City Council will face further challenges with regard to planning school places in the future as the increased pupil population reaches the secondary phase of schooling.



5.2 Suggested Actions

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



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



Appendix One Pupil Number Projections

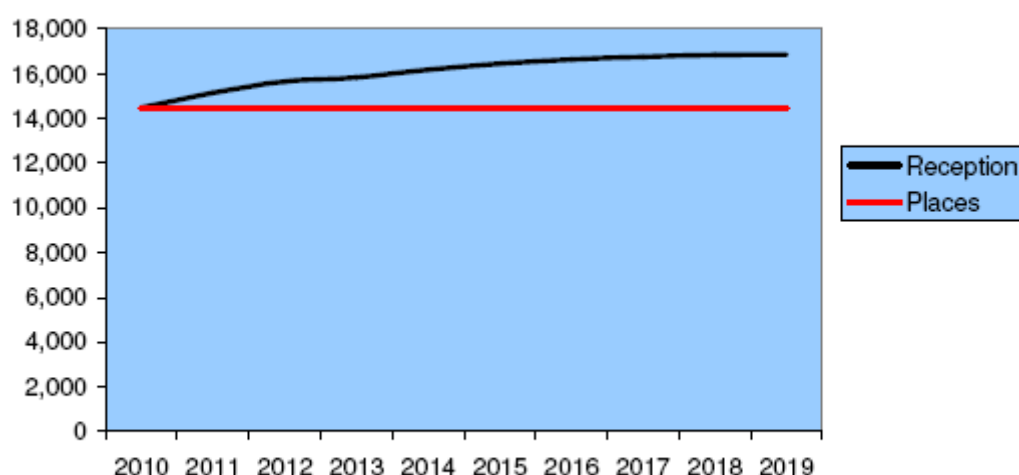
Pupil Number Projections

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

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

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

Graph 1. Projected Reception intakes against current capacity





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

Ward	Current PAN	2012	2016	2019
Acocks Green	440	2%	9%	16%
Aston	570	5%	11%	16%
Bartley Green	270	0%	11%	11%
Billesley	255	6%	6%	6%
Bordesley Green	600	20%	45%	55%
Bournville	240	13%	13%	13%
Brandwood	330	27%	55%	45%
Edgbaston	60	50%	50%	50%
Erdington	300	10%	0%	0%
Hall Green	300	40%	50%	50%
Handsworth Wood	330	18%	18%	18%
Harborne	225	33%	33%	33%
Hodge Hill	437	30%	44%	51%
Kings Norton	300	10%	10%	10%
Kingstanding	330	9%	9%	9%
Ladywood	270	11%	0%	0%
Longbridge	330	0%	0%	0%
Lozells and East Handsworth	645	2%	12%	12%
Moseley and Kings Heath	435	10%	10%	17%
Nechells	540	6%	17%	22%
Northfield	300	10%	0%	0%
Oscott	405	4%	0%	0%
Perry Barr	270	11%	11%	11%
Quinton	270	11%	0%	0%
Selly Oak	210	14%	14%	14%
Shard End	329	9%	19%	19%
Sheldon	255	18%	29%	29%
Soho	435	3%	3%	10%
South Yardley	450	27%	33%	40%
Sparkbrook	650	2%	11%	20%
Springfield	510	29%	47%	59%
Stechford and Yardley North	330	27%	36%	36%
Stockland Green	210	29%	14%	14%
Sutton Four Oaks	270	0%	0%	0%
Sutton New Hall	300	10%	20%	20%
Sutton Trinity	315	14%	33%	24%
Sutton Vesey	270	22%	22%	11%
Tyburn	330	0%	9%	9%
Washwood Heath	740	18%	34%	42%
Weoley	420	0%	0%	0%
Total	14,476	13%	19%	21%

***PAN: Planned Admission Numbers**



Appendix Two: School Expansion Programme

Phase 1 Temporary accommodation provided for September 2010 intake

School Name	Ward	Places
Chad Vale Primary	Edgbaston	30
Colmore Infant	Brandwood	30
Greet Primary I	Springfield	30
Hall Green Infant	Hall Green	30
Oval Primary (The)	Stechford and Yardley North	30
Park Field	Washwood Heath	30
Park Hill Primary	Moseley and Kings Heath	30
Starbank Primary	Bordesley Green	90
Ward End Primary	Hodge Hill	30



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Phase 2 Permanent Places Proposal for September 2011

School Name	Ward	Total Additional Places over a seven year period	Current Admission No	Proposed Admission Number per year	Current Total School numbers	Proposed Total Capacity
Al-Furqan Primary	Springfield	210	60 (2FE)	90 (3FE)	420	630
Anderton Park Primary	Moseley and Kings Heath	210	90 (3FE)	120 (4FE)	630	840
Audley Primary	Stechford and Yardley North	210	90 (3FE)	120 (4FE)	630	840
Chad Vale Primary	Edgbaston	210	30 (1FE)	60 (2FE)	210	420
Clifton Primary	Sparkbrook	210	90 (3FE)	120 (4FE)	630	840
Colmore Infant	Brandwood	210	90 (3 FE)	120 (4FE)	270	360
Greet	Springfield	210	90 (3 FE)	120 (4FE)	630	840
Hall Green Infant	Hall Green	210	90 (3 FE)	120 (4FE)	270	360
Hodge Hill Primary	Hodge Hill	301	77	120 (4FE)	540	841
Moor Green	Moseley and Kings Heath	210	30 (1FE)	60 (2FE)	210	420
Nansen Primary	Washwood Heath	630	90 (3FE)	180 (6FE)	623	1260
Oval Primary (The)	Stechford and Yardley North	210	60 (2FE)	90 (3FE)	420	630
Paget Primary	Tyburn	210	30 (1FE)	60 (2FE)	210	420
Park Hill Primary	Moseley and Kings Heath	210	60 (2FE)	90 (3FE)	420	630
Regents Park Community Primary	Nechells	210	60 (2FE)	90 (3FE)	420	630
Robin Hood Primary	Hall Green	210	60 (2FE)	90 (3FE)	420	630
St Dunstan's Catholic Primary	Brandwood	105	45	60 (2FE)	315	420
St Mary's Catholic Primary	Harborne	210	30(1 FE)	60 (2FE)	210	420
St Wilfred's Catholic Primary	Hodge Hill	210	30 (1 FE)	60 (2FE)	208	420
Stechford Primary	Stechford and Yardley North	210	30 (1FE)	60 (2FE)	210	420
Summerfield Primary	Soho	105	45	60 (2FE)	315	420



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

Information from Cabinet report Nov 9th 2010 and Cabinet report 29th Nov 210.

FE: Forms of Entry i.e. classes per year.



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Appendix Three: Contributors to the Review

Officer Contribution

Sue Twells Children Young People and families Directorate
Chris Gilbert Young People and families Directorate
Tim Hickey Development Directorate
Helen Jenkins Development Directorate
Louise Robinson Development Directorate
Warren Bellamy Development Directorate

Schools Visited

Tina Ireland Head teacher, Regents Park Community
Primary School
Gerry Hudson Starbank JI School
Saeeda Bano Nansen Primary School

Gill Loxton Somerville Primary School

Neil Baker Audley Primary School

Pat Smart Greet Primary School

Written Submissions (Schools)

Anderton Park School and Childrens Centre
Chad Vale Primary School
Hall Green Infant School
Hodge Hill Primary School
Moor Green Primary School
St Wilfrids Catholic Primary School
Ward End Primary School
Yardley Primary School

Members:

Cllr John Alden
Cllr Deirdre Alden
Cllr Barbara Jackson
Cllr Mohammed Aikhlaq

Other

Chair of Governors Hodge Hill School
Parents

Committee Membership

Cllrs Jon Hunt, Matt Bennett, Mohammed Aikhlaq,
David Barrie, James Bird, Catharine Grundy, Saukat Ali
Khan, Hendrina Quinnen and Rob Sealey
Church Representatives: Father Edwin Cownley and
Jackie Hughes
Parent Governor Representatives: Shahid Mir and Sonia
Campbell
Youth Reps: Manraj Mander, Kayleigh Wijesinghe



Appendix Four: Consultation Process

Consultations on Enlargement by Expansion Proposals	
1 Stages of School Organisation Consultation	Timescale
i) Pre Statutory Consultation	As appropriate – normally approximately 4 weeks. (Not prescribed)
ii) Publication of Public Notice (Statutory Consultation)	1 day – within 12 months from the end of the pre statutory consultation
Representation Period	4 weeks from date of publication of notice.
Cabinet decision	Within 2 months of the end of the representation period.
Determination of Proposal if Cabinet approved	1 week after Cabinet decision
Referral to Adjudicator if Cabinet fail to reach a decision	Within 1 week from the end of the 2 months period following the end of the representation period.
2 Design development	Timescale
Feasibility	8 weeks – consultation with Head Teacher and Governing Body
Design Development	9 months – on going consultation and design development with school (principally Head Teacher and Governing Body). Consultation with parents managed via Head Teacher with LA support. Appropriate Cabinet approvals at Project Initiation, Full Business Case & Contract Award stages.
3 Planning Consultation	Timescale
Informal	Immediately after feasibility completed (Designer meeting Planner)
Formal	Full planning application once scheme design agreed. Agreed within 8 weeks (less than 1000m ²) or 13 weeks (more than 1000m ²). Consultation (Highways, local residents, other groups etc) managed by Planner.