

## **REVIEW OF SMALL SCHOOLS – BRILLEY PRIMARY, ST. MARY'S OF HOPE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL (HOPE- UNDER-DINMORE), KINGS CAPLE PRIMARY, LONGTOWN PRIMARY AND DILWYN PRIMARY**

**Report By: HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES**

### **Wards Affected**

Backbury, Castle, Golden Valley South, Golden Cross with Weobley and Old Gore

### **Purpose**

1. To provide information about pupil numbers in 5 very small schools at the start of the autumn term and ask for the Committee's views about whether or not the position of any of the five schools, whose pupil numbers are below the levels specified for review in Herefordshire's School Organisation Plan, should be examined further.

### **Financial Implications**

2. There are no financial implications at this stage.

### **Report**

#### **The Review Policy in the School Organisation Plan**

3. The policy concerning the review of primary schools is contained in Section 2D of the School Organisation Plan, (paragraph 2.27), i.e.

*"2.27 The Council would normally review schools in the following circumstances.*

#### **Primary Schools**

- (a) *a school with fewer than 36 pupils in the September of a school year, or a school whose numbers are expected to fall below that level within the following 5 years, would be reviewed by the Council, in consultation with the relevant Diocesan Education Authority where a Church school is concerned;*
- (b) *schools with 36-45 pupils, which would be monitored by the Director of Education, with the relevant Diocesan Director of Education where a Church school is concerned, to assess whether or not numbers are likely to drop below 35 pupils within 5 years, and to determine whether or not there are other grounds for concern about the future of the school;*
- (c) *where a pyramid of primary schools has unused capacity at a level that could accommodate the closure of the smallest school, with up to 15% unused capacity still remaining if closure were to occur;*

- (d) *where a school is identified by Ofsted either as having serious weaknesses or in need of special measures;*"

### Schools falling within the review categories in the Autumn Term 2002

#### Review Categories (a) and (b)

4. Under categories (a) and (b) above, there are 5 Primary schools with fewer than 45 pupils on roll at the time of the official autumn term count. The size of each year group, and the number of children under the age of 5 known to be living in the catchment area of each school, are given in the table below.

School	CHILDREN IN CATCHMENT AREA AGED				CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AGED							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total In School
Brilley	4	5	3	3	4	5	5	3	12	1	9	39
St. Mary's of Hope CE Primary	3	3	2	6	3	1	3	3	1	3	2	16
Kings Caple	6	10	8	11	5	6	6	5	3	7	3	35
Longtown	10	3	6	14	5	8	7	6	3	7	4	40
Dilwyn	6	4	3	6	1	5	7	8	5	5	7	38

#### Brilley, Kings Caple and Longtown

5. Brilley, Kings Caple and Longtown Primary Schools were in much the same situation in September 2000 as they are now. On the earlier occasion it was felt that a review was not required. Each of the 3 schools, occupies buildings that are satisfactory or better. Each school has a good location, and is well placed in its catchment area from which it recruits a high proportion of the available pupils. In all 3 schools, pupil numbers have increased by 2 or 3, and there is no reason to change the previous approach.

#### Dilwyn

6. Dilwyn pupil numbers have fallen from 47 to 38. Given that this is the first time for 7 years that its numbers have dropped below 45 - in 1992 there were only 22 pupils – and taking account of the recent Ofsted report and the recent investment to bring the school's accommodation up to standard, no further action is proposed here beyond discussion with the school.

#### St Mary's Primary School at Hope Under Dinmore

7. St Mary's remains the smallest school in the County. A previous proposal to close the school was rejected by the National Adjudicator in June 2002. In January 2002, the number of pupils at St Mary's was 23, and the policy within the SOP applied i.e. "If, following (such) review, a school is judged to be currently viable, then no further review of that school would be undertaken for at least 5 years, unless pupil numbers were to fall by a further 25% below the level considered during that review."
8. At the time of the Autumn Term count, the number of pupils had dropped to sixteen compared with the 23 pupils on roll at the time of the statutory closure notice was published in January 2002, during the final stages of the previous review. This is a reduction of more than 25%, largely as a result of 6 children leaving to enter high school and only 3 joining reception. There was also a net loss in Yrs 3,4 and 5.

9. Since the official autumn term count, the school report enrolment of two further children from one family into years 3 and 4 respectively. At the time this report was finalised, the enrolled number at the school stood at eighteen.
10. With the assistance of a £35,000 grant from the DfES, the Happy Days Nursery group, which is located at the school, has been registered to take up to 8 children aged 3 or 4. In total, the pre-school group currently has only 1 three year old and 3 four year olds attending. The 3 four year olds are also enrolled in the school reception class, which they are attending on a half-time basis until the summer; all 3 are included in the figure of 18 shown in the previous paragraph.
11. The standard of teaching and learning does not cause any concern. The school is due an Ofsted inspection in the current academic year.
12. The latest evidence indicates strongly that St Mary's will continue to struggle to achieve and sustain numbers above 20, though there are likely to be minor variations up and down as families leave or come into the Cherrybrook estate which provides most of the children at the school. Currently, the school has one child enrolled from an out area address, but has attracted only 17 of the 36 children of school age known to be living in the St Mary's catchment area.
13. The school clearly does not have the whole-hearted support of its community, notwithstanding the fact that neither free home to school transport nor good public transport is available to other schools. Most of the local children who do not attend St Mary's are enrolled at Bodenham, St Michael's Primary School, but there are also a few children at Wellington, Stoke Prior, the two Leominster schools, and a school in Hereford city.

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT the Committee's views are sought about whether or not any further review or other action relating to St Mary's needs to be considered at this time.**

## BACKGROUND PAPERS