

**Schools Forum 3 October 2006**

**Report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services**

**Review of Forum Decisions Regarding Funding for School Closures**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To review Forum Decisions regarding funding for school closures.

**Background**

2. Schools Forum approved proposals to support primary schools proposed for closure in the following areas
  - A one-off grant to the closing school and the "partner school" as a contribution to the additional costs of managing the closure
  - Support for parents with regard to uniform cost for children transferring to alternative primary schools as a result of closure and as part of a managed move
  - Support for staff salary protection if required (the difference between existing salary and lower grade post).
3. The final accounts of schools are not available until the appropriate end of financial year procedures are completed. A final position on the financial impact of primary school review decisions with respect to the financial year 2006/7 will not be available until around June 2007. This report therefore should be regarded as an interim progress report only.
4. Progress

**Children**

Highfields, Holt Farm and Sycamore Green Primary Schools closed on 31 August 2006. Four schools received 124 children from Highfields, 8 schools received 120 children from Holt Farm and 9 schools received 108 children from Sycamore Green. In addition 96 children have transferred from Beauty Bank Primary school to 12 schools.

Information provided by these schools including direct quotations from children shows that the transition has been smooth and the large majority of children have settled in well to their new schools.

The receiving schools will receive £50 per child as a contribution to the cost of uniform incurred as a result of closure. The total cost across 4 primary schools will be approximately £23k.

### Staff

111 staff were employed at Highfields, Holt farm and Sycamore Green. The large majority of staff have obtained alternative posts in other Dudley schools, in central services or elsewhere. Staff appointed to Dudley posts have filled vacancies which has resulted in a total reduction in staffing across the Local Authority of around posts. The reduction in the total number of posts will continue as the remaining staff fill vacancies in Dudley or elsewhere. The remaining staff will continue to receive support. It is expected that the total cost reductions will be equivalent to the majority of the budgets for these three schools. This will be in the order of £1.7 million. In this financial year the cost reductions will be less the 5/12 school budget allocations, on-going premises costs, one off grants, uniform contributions and staff salary protection. Further cost reductions are anticipated should the proposal to close Beauty Bank be approved.

### One off grants

Highfields, Holt Farm, Sycamore Green, Christ Church C of E, Olive Hill and Wren's Nest Primary Schools each received one off grants of £40k totalling £240k.

The cost of uniform support, one off grant and any staff salary protection required (none to date) will be met from the combined school budgets. All of these items were included in the 2006/7 allocations.

A further report will be prepared for Schools Forum with regard to the financial position when the data is available.

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