

DATE: 20 July 2010

Sneyd School

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor R. Andrew – Children's Services

Purpose

To respond to the request of the Panel at its meeting on 15 June 2010 for a report on the context of the closure of Sneyd and secondly to update Members on the process of closing the school.

Viability

The Local Authority has the responsibility to both plan school places and to ensure that Walsall maintained schools remain educationally and financially viable.

The planning of school places requires that there are sufficient school places for pupils requiring them and to meet, as far as possible, parental preferences. The other part of this responsibility is to minimise the number of expensive surplus school places in the Borough.

For schools to be educationally viable they should provide high quality education to all pupils giving them opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Financial viability of a school depends on both pupil numbers and good financial management.

Numbers on roll

Pupil numbers at Sneyd were relatively steady between 2001 and 2005 and peaked at 1395 in 2005. Between 2005 and January 2008 numbers fell by 27% to 1016.

In this period the number and percentage of pupils transferring from local primary schools declined as parents used their right to give other local secondary schools as their preference.

Falling rolls create challenging situations for schools to manage and the scale of the reduction in numbers at Sneyd caused concern about the school's educational and financial viability.

Standards

Sneyd was in Special Measures between January 2005 and November 2006, was given Notice to Improve in November 2008 and placed in Special Measures on February 2010. At this time, HMI said... “the school requires Special Measures because it is failing an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement”.

The results at the school in 2007, 2008 and 2009 were disappointing (against national, regional, local and the school’s own benchmarks) despite considerable support provided by the Black Country Challenge and Walsall Children’s Services. Students in almost all categories made well below expected progress between KS2 and KS4.

The Office of the Schools Commission in discussion with the DCS and WCS – Serco expressed concern about the school because of both standards and numbers.

Decision

After full consideration of a number of reports, the reports of Scrutiny and the results of Scrutiny working party on the future of the school, Cabinet at its meeting on 13 January 2010 Cabinet resolved to progress with the closure of Sneyd.

Closure

The closure of the school is being managed by the Interim Executive Board (IEB) at the school and a group of officers who are responsible for the various parts of the closure and who are coordinated by an Assistant Managing Director.

Regular reports on the processes are made to the DCS, the IEB and Scrutiny.

Pupils

Numbers

The table below show the number of pupils on roll by year group at Sneyd between October 2008 and June 2010.

Date	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total Y7-11	Y12	Y13	Y14	Total Post-16	Grand Total
Oct-2008	113	128	149	185	225	800	61	37	1	99	899
Jan-2009	110	127	148	183	226	794	59	37	1	97	891
May-2009	108	123	149	184	231	795	54	34	1	89	884
01-Oct 2009	70	99	93	144	186	592	40	21	3	64	656
21-Jan 2010	67	95	65	138	184	549	41	21	3	65	614
01-Mar 2010	64	93	64	138	184	543	41	21	3	65	608
21-Apr 2010	63	91	54	137	185	530	38	18	0	56	586
05-May 2010	62	91	54	137	185	529	35	18	0	53	582
08-Jun 2010	62	90	52	137	185	526	35	18	0	53	579
16-Jun 2010	62	81	32	137	185	497	35	17	0	53	549
29- Jun 2010	60	79	28	135	185	487	33	17	0	50	537

The table below shows the movement of pupils from year groups during the previous and current academic years. The negative numbers show a net increase in pupil numbers.

Academic Year	Date	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total Y7-11	Y12	Y13	Y14	Total Post-16	Grand Total
2008/09	Jan-2009	3	1	1	2	-1	794	2	0	0	97	891
	May-2009	2	4	-1	-1	-5	795	5	3	0	89	884
2009/10	Oct-2009	38	24	56	40	45	592	14	13	-2	64	656
	Jan-2010	3	4	28	6	2	549	-1	0	0	65	614
	Mar-2010	3	2	1	0	0	543	0	0	0	65	608
	Apr-2010	1	2	10	1	-1	530	3	3	3	56	586
	May-2010	1	0	0	0	0	529	3	0	0	53	582
	08-Jun 2010	0	1	2	0	0	526	0	0	0	53	579
	16-Jun 2010	0	9	20	0	0	497	0	1	0	53	549

The table below shows the predicted numbers on roll at Sneyd for September 2010.

Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total Y7-11	Y12	Y13	Y14	Total Post-16	Grand Total
-	55	72	-	136	263	-	18	-	18	281

The table below shows the destination of current transfers of the Year 9 pupils.

Destination	Moving	Started
Aldridge		
Alumwell	4	4
Barr Beacon		
Blue Coat	2	1
Brownhills	19	14
Frank F Harrison		
Joseph Leckie	1	1
Pool Hayes	4	4
Queen Mary's Grammar		
Queen Mary's High		
Shire Oak		
Sneyd		
St Francis of Assisi		
St Thomas More		
Streetly		
Willenhall	2	2
Academies		
Grace Academy Darlaston	2	
Shelfield Academy	4	3
Walsall Academy		
Non Walsall Schools		
Cheslyn Hay	2	1
Deansfield	1	
Great Wyrley	15	
Wednesfield High	5	3
Total	60	35

Pupil Issues

Transfer arrangements are still being finalised for 2 Year 9 children. One, a non-attender who is not a resident in Walsall and has not engaged with the transfer process; EWOs are working with the family. A Year 9 child educated with Year 10 pupils has now decided to transfer to another school. Transfer arrangements are being reviewed for 2 children, one a non-attender; EWOs are involved and one who is appealing for a place at a more local school.

Sneyd staff, Prospects and Walsall Children's Services – Serco are working to identify appropriate destinations for the Year 11 pupils.

Pupil experiences

The communications team has met with young people who have transferred from Sneyd to discuss their experiences. These young people have been invited to the Scrutiny meeting.

Cabinet/ Scrutiny

Reports have been made to the meetings listed below.

Cabinet

22 October 2008, 22 April 2009, 15 July 2009, 13 August, 21 October 2009 and 13 January 2010.

Scrutiny

30 October 2008, 20 November 2008, 18 December 2008, 18 March 2009 and 24 July 2009, 12 March 2010 and 15 June 2010.

Staff

Work to manage the reduction in the number of staff continues with a mix of staff who have volunteered for redundancy, the end of a fixed term contract and some potential, compulsory redundancies. A number of staff from the school have been successful in finding a post at other schools.

Finance

The Schools Finance Team continue to work closely with Sneyd regarding the management of the contracting budget. The reduction in finance is being mirrored by a reduction in staffing via natural turnover, plus termly staff dismissal processes.

Currently, the finance is under control for the 2010-11 academic year, but the position will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Management and Governance

The interim Headteacher's contract finishes on August 31, 2010. Governance for the school is through a DfE approved Interim Executive Board (IEB). The IEB has entered into a partnership arrangement with the Governing Body of Barr Beacon Language College. A 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been drawn up which means that from 01 September 2010 to closure, a Deputy Head teacher from Barr Beacon Language College will take on the day to day management and leadership of Sneyd Community School as a full-time Associate Headteacher. The Associate Headteacher will be located at Sneyd Community School.

The Headteacher of Barr Beacon Language College will act as Executive Headteacher. This partnership arrangement means that we will achieve a flexible arrangement to lead and manage the school which will allow the strengths from both schools and through partnership with other schools and Walsall College, to ensure good teaching and learning for the remaining student groups in the period to closure.

Attendance and Discipline

The EWO has weekly attendance meetings with school staff to review Persistent Absence (PA) pupils and those at risk of becoming a PA. These pupils will have an impact on overall absence at the school. Despite the reducing number of pupils on roll at the school overall

absence has maintained a steady reduction for the third year running. Although PA has reduced over a three year trend, the information collected from school by the EWO for this academic year has shown an increase. The information will be validated in August 2010 and can be confirmed at this stage. 4 cases have been referred to attendance panel and 2 referred for legal action.

Of the 30 Y9 pupils who are transferring from Sneyd Community School to other Walsall school, 15 have improved their attendance significantly. 12 others have maintained excellent attendance.

The Secondary school B&A partnerships were established during 2008 to help schools work together in respect of managing behaviour and exclusions. Since their establishment of the B&A partnership, Sneyd has been fully engaged with the process and have attended all meetings which are held monthly. They have presented 16 cases to the panel so far. Sneyd have received 3 students from other schools as part of their contribution to partnership working. Both fixed term and permanent exclusions have been reduced.

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