

Education Portfolio Holder Update

November 5th 2012.

1. Discussions continue with the Department, and David Laws regarding the LACSEG settlement, some nine other Councils including Hillingdon and Bexley which are like Bromley low costs educators and with high Academy conversion levels are supportive of the Bromley position. A meeting of a delegation from the councils group has been requested with David Laws, seeking at least some tapered relief to the potential loss, (as schools have).
2. A meeting will be held shortly with Lord Hill to discuss the role of Free Schools and sponsored academies in the Borough, with a view to addressing the shortfall in Primary places and upcoming shortfall in Secondary places. The use of existing premises is being investigated for such expansions.
3. The examination of potential costs saving within Statutory areas of the Portfolio remit is continuing with a view to a more Commissioned operation in these areas.
4. An examination of the current performance of many LBB primary schools suggests that they are no longer able to show levels of performance and attainment to place LBB high in the peer group of similar authorities. Efforts will be made to understand why this is happening, and to make this information public. Initial assessment suggests schools in Southwark and Tower Hamlets are now out performing numbers of our Primarys. Potentially failing schools will be identified and answers sought as to why underperformance is occurring. Efforts will be made to 'beef up' governing bodies in these schools. Members will note that three Primary schools have recently failed Ofsted inspections; this is not an acceptable pattern.
5. A major review of the Education Portfolio Plan put in place in May will be undertaken to define specific targets and timescales as well as ensure the Plan reflects the current activities of the Portfolio. With the arrival of the new Director in post this rigorous re-examination can be more realistically undertaken.
6. Discussions continue with the Diocese of Rochester regarding the CE primary schools and the Bishop Justus secondary school with regard to a progressive conversion to Academy status using a hub and spoke Trust model. Current timetable will take three Primarys to Academy status by April 2013 with the remaining CE Primarys converting over the 18 months following.
7. Discussion continues with regards to the expansion of Selective education in the Borough. Newstead Woods has increased its PAN by 30 and St Olaves should increase by 15. Neither school is interested at this time in expansion using a satellite site.
8. Discussions continue with the Arch Diocese of Southwark regarding RC education in the Borough. Secondary provision is being suggested on the Holy Innocents site and a site at Avalon Road Orpington is also a possibility. The Archdiocese is still seeking to sell the All Saints site for residential purposes. St Marys Primary will join St James as an Academy in April. The Archdiocese Education Board is currently actively supporting Academy conversion on a major scale in Kent and cannot also support Bromley schools conversions en mass, individual schools are being supported to convert.
9. The closure of the EDC is going ahead with some functions transferring to the Civic Centre while others will operate from Bromley College in future. A number of redundancies will result. The EDC will be mothballed in April prior to expansion of Princes Plain Primary.