

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report To: Executive – 24 June 2009

Subject: Outcome of statutory consultation on a proposal to increase the admission number at Irk Valley Community Primary School (currently known as St Thomas Community Primary School)

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Summary

To advise the Executive of the responses received during statutory consultation on the proposal to increase the admission number at Irk Valley Community Primary School (currently known as St Thomas Community Primary School) from 30 to 60, from 1 September 2009.

Recommendations

The Executive is asked to agree that the Director of Children's Services should proceed to the next stage of the statutory process to increase the admission number at Irk Valley Community Primary School from 30 to 60 from 1 September 2009.

Wards Affected: Crumpsall, Cheetham.

Community Strategy Spine	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
Performance of the economy of the region and sub region	Irk Valley Community Primary is currently in the process of being rebuilt at a cost in excess of £6 million. Delivery is through the City Council's Framework, which is providing employment for Manchester residents and contributing to the local economy.
Reaching full potential in education and employment	The proposed increase will help to ensure that all children living locally will be able to access a primary school place.
Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect	Ensuring that every child can access a place is a key aspect in ensuring equality of opportunity, which in turn can impact on individual self esteem
Neighbourhoods of Choice	The availability of school places is a key factor in establishing neighbourhoods of choice.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Irk Valley Community Primary School will receive additional funding in its delegated revenue budget, to reflect the actual number of extra pupils admitted, not the number of extra places.

Financial Consequences – Capital

Irk Valley Community Primary School is in the process of being rebuilt, with sufficient additional accommodation to allow for a higher admission capacity. The necessary funding is in the City Council's capital budget and the school building will be ready in September 2009.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

- Changes to the admission capacities at primary schools. Report to Executive – 27 March 2007
- Primary Capital Investment Strategy – Award of Pathfinder Status to Manchester Local Authority. Report to Executive 20 December 2006.
- Review of Primary Schools including nursery provision and capital investment priorities. Report to Executive 13 September 2006

INTRODUCTION – ST THOMAS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. St Thomas Community primary is located in Crumpsall. It currently provides 210 school places and has an Admission Number of 30. It also provides 30 full time equivalent nursery places. In 2006 the Executive endorsed a proposal to rebuild the school on a new site on Waterloo Street, Crumpsall, with effect from September 2009. This will give the school state of the art premises and facilities, a larger site than at present and a better alignment with local housing developments.
2. Crumpsall and Cheetham are areas of the City where there is an increasing level of demand for primary school places. It was therefore agreed that the new St Thomas building would have sufficient accommodation to allow the school to increase the overall number of places to 315 (Admission Number 45) and the number of fte nursery places to 45, at an appropriate point in the future. The school's governing body were happy with this plan of action and took the opportunity to signal a new beginning, by changing the name of the school to Irk Valley Community Primary.

PRIMARY PLACES IN CHEETHAM/CRUMPSALL

3. In 2003 Cheetham and Crumpsall were identified as areas of the City where the demand for primary places was steadily increasing. In response, almost £5 million was invested in extending and remodelling the accommodation at both Cheetham CE and Cravenwood schools, to create an extra 210 school places and 30 nursery places. This proved to be a prudent course of action, with the extra places at Cheetham CE taken up almost immediately and those at Cravenwood taken up more gradually over the following years.
4. Ongoing monitoring of the demand for primary places in Cheetham and Crumpsall (particularly in the younger age groups) resulted in a decision being taken, to bring forward the expansion of St Thomas by 15 Reception places (and 15 nursery places) to coincide with completion of the new building in September 2009. The statutory process to make this prescribed alteration began on 3 November 2008, with an eight week period for statutory consultation.
5. During statutory consultation it was established that, more recently, the demand for places in nursery and Reception in Cheetham and Crumpsall is now rising sharply. In response, options to expand other local schools were considered, a pre-requisite being that the extra places are needed as soon as possible.
6. In the event it was agreed with the school's governing body, that St Thomas should be further expanded, to provide 30 extra places in Reception and an extra 30 fte nursery places, with immediate effect. The considerations in support of this proposal are as follows:

- i. use of temporary accommodation on the existing school site (until the new school is ready) allows an extra 30 Reception and nursery places to be offered immediately, at minimal cost;
- ii. as the new building is already in construction, it is relatively straightforward to extend the contract so that sufficient extra accommodation is provided to create an Admission Capacity of 420, with 60 fte nursery places;
- iii. the location of St Thomas is such that it would constitute a reasonable offer for most children coming to live in the Cheetham/ Crumpsall areas;
- iv. the cost of extending the St Thomas accommodation to provide an extra 105 school places and 15 extra nursery places will be in the region of £2.2million. This level of investment is more cost effective than building a new school at a minimum cost of £5+ million. Funding to cover the £2.2 million is available within the Children's Services Capital Budget.

STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE REVISED PROPOSAL

7. To bring about the further change in the St Thomas Admission Number (from 45 to 60) the original statutory consultation period (3 November to 15 December 2008) was extended significantly, until 1 May 2009. Written comments were invited from:
 - i. the governing body, staff and their trade union representatives and the parents/carers of the pupils at St Thomas;
 - ii. all other primary schools in the City;
 - iii. neighbouring LAs;
 - iv. the Manchester CE, Salford RC and Shrewsbury RC Diocesan Education Authorities;
 - v. all Manchester MPs.

OUTCOME OF ORIGINAL STATUTORY CONSULTATION

8. During the original statutory consultation period, written comments were received from:
 - i. the headteacher of a local primary school;
 - ii. the parent of a child attending St Thomas primary school.

9. The following paragraphs set out the comments made and provide the responses of the Director of Children's Services.

ISSUE 1

Nursery Places

10. A local primary school headteacher questioned why the proposed number of nursery places for St Thomas is expressed in multiples of 15 (60 places) and not multiples of 13.

Views of the Director of Children's Services

11. In Manchester, the number of nursery places has historically been expressed in multiples of 15 ie schools offer 30, 45, 60, 75 or 90 full time equivalent nursery places. This mirrors the method for expressing the number of Reception places. However, the Childcare Act 2006 placed a requirement on local authorities and schools, to have an adult:pupil ratio of 1:13 in nursery classes, with effect from 1 September 2008.
12. The headteachers of all primary schools in the City were consulted at the time, about their preferred approach to meeting this new requirement. Some chose to express the number of nursery places in multiples of 13, either by reducing or increasing the number of places offered. In many cases, however, headteachers preferred to retain a nursery admission number expressed in multiples of 15. This is acceptable, provided the school ensures compliance with the 1:13 staffing ratio requirement.
13. The headteacher at Irk Valley Primary has confirmed that the school is already 1:13 compliant and that he is happy to have a nursery admission number of 60.

ISSUE 2

Road Safety

14. The parent of a St Thomas pupil raised concerns about road safety, in particular the need for adequate road crossing facilities for children and short stay car parking facilities for parents/ carers.

Views of the Director of Children's Services

15. A detailed travel plan is developed early in any new building scheme, looking at the safety of local residents and pupils. Such a plan has been developed for the new Irk Valley Primary School, including car park facilities and a turn around system to ease traffic congestion. Discussions are on going with the Highways Department to look at developing further road safety measures. In

the past this has included establishing new pedestrian crossings and employing crossing wardens.

OUTCOME OF EXTENDED CONSULTATION

- 16 No comments were received during this period from any stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17 The comments received during the initial consultation period do not call into question the validity of the proposed increase in Admission Number at St Thomas. No comments were received during the extended consultation period. It is therefore proposed that the Director of Children's Services should proceed to the next stage of the statutory process, by publishing a formal notice to increase the school's Admission Number from 30 to 60 with effect from September 2009. The formal notice must appear in the Manchester Evening News and must be posted at all entrances to the school building/ site, in the local library and in the entrance foyer at Overseas House.
- 18 Publication of notices will introduce a four-week period for any interested party to either comment or object. The response to the formal notice will be reported to the Executive, for a final decision on the proposal.

FURTHER ADDITIONAL PLACES IN CHEETHAM/ CRUMPSALL

- 19 Subject to the outcome of the statutory change process, from 1 September 2009, 60 places will be available in Reception at Irk Valley primary, rather than 30 as at present. Ordinarily the increase would apply only to the Reception Year group, allowing the school to expand gradually over a period of seven years. However, given the recent sharp increase in demand for primary places in Cheetham and Crumpsall, the Director of Children's Services may need to discuss with governors, an earlier expansion of year groups other than Reception.
- 20 It may also be necessary to increase the number of places at another primary school(s) in the locality. In this respect other options are currently being developed. Further progress reports will be submitted to the Executive as necessary.

Contributing to the Community Strategy

(a) Performance of the economy of the region and sub region

- i. Irk Valley Primary School is currently being rebuilt at a cost of £6million +. Delivery is through the City Council's Framework. This is providing employment for local people and is benefiting the local economy.

(b) Reaching full potential in education and employment

- i. For any child or young person to reach their full potential in education and employment, maximum school attendance is essential. Part of the LA's strategic responsibilities for supporting school attendance is to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet known and projected future demand.
- ii. In the Cheetham/ Crumpsall area the demand for school places has been steadily increasing over a number of years. The proposed expansion of Irk Valley Community (and the associated capital investment) is a measure taken by the LA to ensure that place availability continues to be sufficient to meet the continuing increase in demand.

(c) Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect

- i) Ensuring that every child can access a place at a primary school which is reasonably close to their home is a key aspect in ensuring equality of opportunity, which in turn can impact on individual self esteem.

(d) Neighbourhoods of Choice

- i) The City Council's regeneration strategy recognises the importance of good schools in developing neighbourhoods where people want to live. The rebuilding and expansion of Irk Valley Community needs to be viewed from this perspective, in addition to the educational benefits which will be enjoyed by its pupils.

Key Polices and Considerations

(a) Equal Opportunities

- i) St Thomas is currently full to capacity and has a waiting list for admission. An increase in the number of places will ensure that more children living nearby will be able to gain admission to what is a popular and successful local school.

(b) Risk Management

- i) The proposed increase in admission capacity at Irk Valley is dependent on delivery of the new (larger) building in time for a 1 September 2009 start. The rebuild project is being delivered via the City Council's Framework. As a result all risks to completion on time have been identified through the agreed Framework processes. The new building will therefore be ready for occupation as originally scheduled.

- ii) In the unlikely event that completion is delayed, the existing school building and the additional, temporary classrooms remain available in the short-term, to prevent any education being lost.

(c) Legal Consideration

- i) The LA has extensive experience of successfully following statutory change procedures in respect of schools. The procedures being followed in respect of the proposed increase in admission numbers at Irk Valley Community are entirely in line with statutory requirements.