

<b>MEETING Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
<b>23 November 2009</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

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

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### **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS IN RURAL AREAS**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to advise the commission of the Council's approach and efforts to ensure rural school places are maintained and of any successes or obstacles experienced.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of the commission are requested to

1. Scrutinise the report.
2. Request further information if appropriate.
3. Recommend further actions if appropriate.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There are nine rural primary schools and one rural secondary school in the Peterborough Local Authority area (see details of schools in 3.6)
- 3.2 The rural schools are on the whole popular and school rolls do not show signs of falling as is the case in many other rural parts of the country. During the September 2009 admissions round, Castor, John Clare and Northborough admitted all the Reception age children in their catchment to the schools. Other rural schools had between 5% and 16% of their catchment opting to go to other schools. Most of these children went to other Peterborough rural schools.
- 3.3 The surplus capacity in rural schools tend to fill with those who wish to access smaller schools and are willing/able to travel out of the city. This works to the benefit of those schools in the urban area that are currently oversubscribed. However, this could have an impact when newcomers to the villages are seeking a school place and find the schools full. The legislation around admissions does not allow places to be 'reserved' for parents who move into an area during the year. Waiting lists do exist for rural schools in Peterborough.
- 3.4 During the admission round it may be the case that the number of children who want to attend a school exceeds the number of places available. In these circumstances an oversubscription criteria applies to decide which child will get a place. These criteria vary from school to school but the basic principles to decide places is in the following order –
  1. Children in Care
  2. Verified medical needs
  3. Children living in catchment areas
    - (a) Children applying with siblings already in the school
    - (b) Distance from school
    - (c) Pupils living in rural settings where there is no alternative within two miles of the school

4. Children living outside of the catchment.

- 3.5 The provision of home to school transport is significant within the rural area of Peterborough. Complex criteria apply to transport provision but the broad principles are that Peterborough City Council will provide free transport if –
- The nearest suitable school is not within walking distance of home (2 miles for Primary pupils, 3 miles for Secondary pupils)
  - Where the child's local school is full and the next nearest available school is over the distance thresholds above.

3.6 The table below outlines the current position in relation to availability of school places in the rural communities -

**Primary**

School	PAN	Overall School Capacity	NOR	(Reception Year) 4 year old NHS data				
				2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Barnack VC	17	119	114	25	16	13	11	16
Castor VC	25	175	150	17	14	13	12	8
Eye VC	48	336	296	41	43	43	45	36
John Clare	15	105	94	7	9	6	15	10
Newborough VC	30	210	188	25	15	32	16	15
Northborough	30	210	190	18	20	16	22	12
Peakirk cum Glinton VA	30	210	187	27	18	16	11	23
The Duke of Bedford	30	210	188	22	21	31	28	23
Wittering	90	595	295	32	24	30	37	31
<b>Primary Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>2170</b>	<b>1702</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>174</b>

**Secondary**

	PAN	Overall School Capacity	NOR	10 year old data				
				2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Arthur Mellows Village College	264	1634	1459	252	238	254	225	266

NOR – number of role

PAN – published admission number in each year group (based upon physical capacity)

3.7 As the table shows, there is significant space within the primary schools in the rural area. AMVC capacity was increased from September 2008 and although it appears there is space, Years 9, 10 and 11 have a lower PAN than year 7 and 8 as a result of building work increasing the size of the college from September 2008.

3.8 The table below compares the surplus spaces in rural schools against urban schools –

	Urban Schools % Surplus Places	Rural Schools % Surplus Places

Secondary	5.3	11.9
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- 3.9 The level of surplus places in the rural areas particularly at Wittering is a concern. The DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) consider school place planning issues at a local authority wide view and hence it appears we have significant places when the reality is that the places are in pockets across the city and overall the urban area has limited capacity. The DCSF constantly challenges authorities on surplus places as these are considered inefficient and indeed even recommends using capital funding to remove this capacity.
- 3.10 Wittering Primary school was expanded to a 3 form entry school (i.e. 90 children entering reception year) in 1999 in response to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) informing the Authority that a squadron would be returning from Germany and would be based at Wittering. However, this transfer never materialised and at the same time the MOD started to sell off their married quarters. This has meant that a number of families haven't settled in the Wittering area causing pressure on other parts of the City. There are no plans to reduce the size of the school although a children's centre will be based in the school premises. There are also no plans to close any part of the other rural schools.
- 3.11 Investment continues to be made into rural schools. Proposals exist around removing the mobile classroom at John Clare and re-providing a purpose built classroom for the reception and pre-school classes. The Diocese is also considering the buildings at Peakirk School.

#### **4. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT**

0-19 Educational Attainment:

Early years – NI72, NI92

Primary – NI73, NI93, NI94, NI107

Secondary (KS4) – NI75

#### **5. CONSULTATION/KEY ISSUES**

Members of the commission are asked to note the position around rural schools and make any further suggestions in relation to their communities.

#### **6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

#### **7. APPENDICES**

None

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