

TO: SCHOOLS FORUM
DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2013

SURGE CLASSROOMS
(Director of Children, Young People & Learning)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is in response to the request from Schools Forum on 12 September 2013 for further information on the need for the additional surge class at Harmans Water primary school and the associated timeline.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 2.1 Bracknell Forest has experienced a four year period of rising school rolls across the Borough and the Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 2.2 A surge class is being taken at Harmans Water Primary school for Year 1 from January 2014 to meet the demand for school places arising from in year admissions.

Surge Classrooms

- 2.3 The Council aims to maintain a small surplus of primary places in each organisational area to prevent parents having to travel long distances to school, and the associated home to school transport costs that would be incurred for journeys in excess of two miles.
- 2.4 It should be noted however that the surplus of places in the intake year has reduced from 15% in previous years to less than 5% in September 2013 due to pressure from rising rolls. The financial implications of creating and maintaining a surplus of places make this a contentious issue but the Council aims to maintain a workable surplus within the available budgets.
- 2.5 A surge class provides up to 30 additional school places in one year group only, and this forms part of the Council's overall response to providing sufficient pupil places. Surge classes address specific pressure points either at that school or across an organisational area, and have previously been taken at five schools as set out in Table One below:

Table One: Surge Classrooms Previously Created

SCHOOL	DATE TAKEN
Whitegrove Primary	September 2009
Crown Wood Primary	September 2012
Sandy Lane Primary	September 2012
The Pines Primary	September 2013
Holly Spring Infant	September 2013

- 2.6 Further surge classrooms may also be required at other schools in future years.

In Year Admissions

- 2.7 The Council has a good track record of forecasting pupil numbers through its School Places Plan (SPP) which forecasts total numbers on roll and pupil numbers in the intake year at each school. In year admissions are, however, more difficult to forecast because they cannot be systematically predicted other than by trend analysis from previous years. In addition it is not possible to predict the ages of the pupils transferring between schools or arising from families moving into the Borough.
- 2.8 During the summer of 2013 the numbers of in year applications for September 2013 Year 1 year group rose significantly in excess of the previous years as set out on Table Two below:

Table Two: Numbers of In Year Applications received over the summer from Families Moving In

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
61	75	96

- 2.9 The 96 summer applications for 2013/14 greatly exceeded the numbers in previous years, and the surplus of 10 Y1 places at the beginning of July 2013 in North & South Bracknell was reduced to zero by the beginning of August 2013. As schools broke up for their 2013 summer break, School Admissions were unable to offer Y1 places to North or South Bracknell residents, and the only Y1 surplus places were the 6 at Wildmoor Heath in Crowthorne and 20 at College Town Infants in Sandhurst.
- 2.10 During the summer 9 other children from families moving into north and south of the borough could only be offered places in Crowthorne and Sandhurst. Rather than bussing infant pupils across the Borough the Admissions & Property team were directed to create a surge at Harmans Water to address this specific pressure.

Harmans Water Surge

- 2.11 Harmans Water Primary was selected for a surge class for the following reasons:
1. It had a spare classroom, so no capital was required, other than F&E and ICT
 2. It was centrally located in South Bracknell
 3. It had a waiting list of 11 in that year group
 4. The school had previously accommodated higher numbers
- 2.12 The waiting list was a significant factor because it would help fill up the surge class to reduce the resource implications for the school, plus this would free up Y1 places at other schools creating headroom in Y1 at more than one school.

Consultation

- 2.13 The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, as set out in the School Admissions Code 2012, state that own admission authorities are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. For a community or voluntary controlled school, the local authority (as admission authority) must

consult at least the governing body of the school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same PAN.

- 2.14 It has not therefore been past practice to consult on school expansions wider than the individual schools in question. It should also be noted that the crisis point was reached during the 2013 summer break when schools were not generally available to consult. The Council engaged directly with the Headteacher and Governors at Harmans Water, who agreed to take a surge class as soon as a suitable teacher could be appointed.

3 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 No issues, the proposed surge classroom is accessible to disabled people.

4 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1

Issue	Comment
Sufficient school places risk = HIGH	There were no Y1 places in North or South Bracknell, and the Council had no alternative but to create the additional school places.
Resource risk for the school = HIGH in the short term but LOW in the medium term.	A short term resource issue will exist until pupil numbers increase to the point where revenue costs are exceeded by formula funding. Medium term pupil forecasts mitigate this risk as pupil numbers will continue to rise.

Background Papers

School Places Plan

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