

Briefing notes on Issues included in the Forward Plan Issue 2004/05

SERVICE AREA: Education

Report ref	Report title
03/04 EAL0046	- Proposal to Create a New Voluntary Aided Muslim Primary School in Brent
<p>Summary:</p> <p>This report informs Members of the intention of FED 2000, the trustees of The Avenue Primary School, an independent school located at 5, The Avenue, London, NW6 7YG, to publish statutory proposals for the creation of a new, Muslim, Voluntary Aided Primary School. The consultation process began on 4th May 2004 when FED 2000 published a preliminary consultation paper outlining the scheme, as required by statute.</p> <p>Brent's granting of Voluntary Aided status to independent schools is subject to the Council receiving the necessary additional funding from central Government to cover the revenue implications of additional schools, to ensure that there is no detrimental financial impact on other Brent schools or the LEA.</p> <p>The first stage of securing this funding was for the LEA to seek agreement from the DfES to include the number of pupils on roll at The Avenue School in the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) return for 2004. The LEA has secured DfES agreement for this stage of the process. Therefore the pupil numbers will be included in central Government's calculation of Brent's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for 2005/06.</p> <p>However, annual increases in funding that local authorities receive cannot rise above a ceiling set by central Government, i.e. Brent's 2005/06 RSG cannot increase by more than a set percentage compared with our baseline figure – our 2004/05 RSG. As things stand, this ceiling means that the Council may not receive any additional funding for The Avenue School in 2005/06.</p> <p>To address this problem the LEA has requested that when calculating our 2005/06 funding, the DfES increase our 2004/05 baseline figure to reflect the pupils on roll at The Avenue School. This would, in turn, raise the ceiling and thus, Brent's 2005/06 RSG. Unfortunately the DfES have indicated that it is unlikely that our request will be approved. This means that Brent would not receive any additional funding as a result of the school becoming Voluntary Aided. This would penalise the LEA financially and breach the conditions under which Members have been asked provisionally to agree the application from The Avenue School in report reference 03/04 EAL0046.</p>	

The LEA wishes to continue its full support of the applications for VA status and has made efforts to push the DfES to reconsider their decision by making representations to Ministers (David Milliband) and encouraging the trustees of the school to communicate with the DfES directly on this matter.

So far no response has been received from David Milliband.

Nature of Decision to be taken/Intended Outcome

The Executive will be asked to support the application of the proposers to establish a new Muslim Voluntary Aided School in Brent on 1st April 2005 as long as the LEA is not financially disadvantaged as highlighted above and in the report, reference 03/04 EAL0046, under 3.0 Financial Implication and 5.0 Legal Implications. This will require the DfES to change its decision on increasing Brent's RSG baseline.

The Executive will also be asked to refer the decision on this report to the School Organisation Committee.

NOTE:

Menorah Jewish High School for Girls is also seeking VA status from 1 April 2005. Their report went before the Executive on 21 July 2003 (ref: 0006R) and approval was given. Approval from the SOC was also given in November 2003. However, in light of the events above Menorah's bid for VA status is also now in jeopardy.

Timescale for decision: 31 August 2004

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