

a) **In Pursuit of Excellence**

Wirral Headteachers and Primary Team, School Effectiveness

September 2004

The following notes are an extract from the policy document 'In Pursuit of Excellence' which was developed with all Headteachers of Infant, Junior, Primary and Primary Special schools through consultations and consideration at the termly day conferences, over the academic year 2003-4. It was presented to Select Committee on 18 October 2004. Further work is planned for the Autumn term 2005 to ensure that the five outcomes from The Children Bill, workforce reforms and the enriched primary curriculum are all firmly embedded.

The extract considers the issues relating to funding, staffing and resources in developing an effective and viable primary school.

Principles of effective and viable primary schools (page 7-8)

Schools have been given more autonomy over their budgets for some considerable time; the government now proposes to provide financial stability through agreeing three-year budgets. This will allow for more effective decisions to be made on a long-term basis around the school improvement agenda and the needs of the community, in relation to the unique context of each school.

It follows that there needs to be a range of staff employed e.g Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, teachers and support staff who may include: learning mentors, cover supervisors, Higher Teaching Level Assistants, other classroom assistants, bursars, clerical assistants, cleaners, caretakers, grounds/security staff, cooks, lunchtime supervisors, specialist coaches and instructors.

It then follows that funding should be differentially used on staffing and resources to meet the needs and aspirations of each school, thus allowing for flexibility and creativity in delivering an excellent primary curriculum.

There is broad agreement that the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 should stand-alone and that while cross-Key Stage grouping could be used in exceptional circumstances, this would require a significant level of planning and intensive teaching input.

There is also broad agreement that vertical grouping (mixed aged teaching) can be effectively deployed within Key Stages. The table below gives examples of how vertical grouping could be organised.

Examples of pupil groupings within a primary school

| | No mixed aged Teaching | Some mixed aged teaching | | Maximum mixed aged teaching |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| Foundation Stage | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 1 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 2 | 30 | 30 | 30 | |
| 3 | 30 | 30 | | 30 |
| 4 | 30 | | | |
| 5 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 6 | 30 | 30 | | |
| Total School Size | 210 | 180 | 150 | 120 |

In order for a school to be viable and efficient, the number of pupils on roll will impact on the decisions made regarding staffing levels and organisation of the curriculum.

In principle, in order for a single form of entry school to be viable and efficient, the number of pupils on roll should be within the range of 180 and 210.

However, this range of numbers is only intended as a guide and should be considered alongside the other factors.

Other issues to be considered when establishing an effective and efficient primary school within a learning community include:

- the possibility of federation and amalgamation to ensure that community and faith needs are met;
 - innovative use of staff across two sites;
 - flexible delivery and use of curriculum time, with some part time staff to meet planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time;
 - sufficient space within school buildings to allow for multi-agency working and for staff to undertake planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) activities;
 - appropriate areas to be identified for teaching; meetings; quiet areas and deployment of space to help with behaviour strategies;
 - that children should have access to a school that is no further than 2 miles from where they live;
 - that schools are well placed within communities;
- that due consideration is given to parental choice.