

Questions from Woodfield Action Committee. Answers from Education Department

1. What do Lambeth intend to do regarding the growing number of Lambeth Children without ANY school placement? (either secondary or primary)

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Lambeth has reviewed its system for monitoring and supporting pupils out of school. Lambeth Council has recently produced and published its School Organisation Plan which provides comprehensive information about population changes. This will allow the Council to more effectively monitor and plan school places. The WES has recently informed the Council that it will provide additional monies from 01 April 2003 to increase the number of primary and secondary places across the borough.

It is the intention of the Council to propose the building of a secondary school in the south of the borough.

2. Why can't Woodfield be given school status and be a permanent small secondary school?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Woodfield Centre was established as a referral unit and the LEA would have to go through a lengthy legal process to establish a new school. To allow a school to have enough resources to deliver the full National Curriculum the smallest a secondary school should be is 4fe which is a small school with 600 pupils. The Woodfield Centre could only accommodate about 100 pupils.

3. Will the council in conjunction with the DfES look into changing the 'primary school model' of the Woodfield with the idea creating a small secondary school? And therefore releasing the full student allocation funding.

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The WES is keen to support Lambeth in developing another secondary school and we are awaiting the allocation of money identified in Answer One to allow us to build a new secondary school.

4. Will the council look into the costing of such a project?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : As soon as that allocation has been confirmed the Council will appoint a Project Manager to carry out feasibility studies and begin a formal consultation exercise with all interested parties.

5. Will the council look at the viability of year 9's at the Woodfield? For example will they cost out what it would take to provide the curriculum needs for year 9's etc. In other words will the council look at all possibilities before choosing the easy option of annex to Stockwell Park?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Council has taken into consideration the viability of providing for Year 9s at the Woodfield Centre. The issue here is that the Woodfield Centre was a primary special school with no specialist rooms. The cost of providing such facilities would be prohibitive therefore the Council considered alternative arrangements which was to make sure pupils had access to the specialise facilities available at a secondary school. It was not an easy option to decide to annex the Woodfield Centre as Officers and Councillors have received positive feedback about the Centre. However the Council is also clear that it must meet its duty to deliver the National Curriculum.

6. Will the council look into similar funding to the 'standards fund' so the Woodfield can continue as it is?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Council is unable to replicate the funding provided for 2002-03 from what is known as the LEA block. Funding for 2003.04 to support up to 100 pupils has been calculated using the schools funding formula.

7. Will the council pledge to find funding to keep the successful Woodfield centre open long term for years 7 and 8? Will you pressure and if necessary offer funding for Dunraven to allocate for the curriculum needs for year 9 for students from the Streatham area?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Council cannot keep the Woodfield Centre open long term for years 7 and 8. It is hoped that the new City Academy in Clapham and the proposed new school south of the borough will ameliorate the need for alternative provision for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils.

8. Why have Lambeth chosen Stockwell Park for annexing the Woodfield? Especially considering the distance the children would have to travel?

9. Stockwell Park currently have no vacancies, the intention is to mix Woodfield year 9 with Stockwell Park. How can this be done if they have no vacancies?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer to Questions 8 and 9:

Stockwell Park was chosen as it is the only school which has the capacity to increase its roll by up to 150 pupils. It is a community school and therefore the LEAS is responsible for admissions.

10. **If places can be found, why is Lambeth making the Woodfield an annex to Stockwell Park and not Dunraven which is closer? Is it true that the real reason for the annexing of the Woodfield is to plug the funding gap at Stockwell Park using the student allocation fund.**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Dunraven is full and is already above its admission number for some year groups. The LEA is not the admission authority for Dunraven School and could not divert admissions.

11. **Does the council think it is wrong to have 7 different admission policies in Lambeth?**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : It is neither right or wrong but it is challenging to work with seven admission authorities (7). The establishment of an Admission Forum will ensure that the Council is able to co-ordinate admission arrangements for 11+ transfer for all schools in Lambeth.

12. **Does the council agree that the overall provision for secondary education in Lambeth is more than one schools plan?**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Lambeth is developing a strategic vision for secondary provision in the authority but this can only be developed by co-operating with our neighbours. The government has appointed a senior official to look at what is called the 'London Challenge' which includes looking at secondary education across all London Boroughs.

12. **Does the council agree that it would be better from Dunraven to be building more places for local students on the existing site rather than a sixth form college? Would it not be better to use the Woodfield for a sixth form? Would this not be a better answer to the problem?**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : It is part of Lambeth's and the government strategy to develop 6th form provision as part of its secondary schools strategy as consultation with parents has shown that many prefer their children to attend schools with a sixth form. The Learning and Skills Council now has responsibility for 16 - 19 provision rather than the Council.

The decision to expand the school to include a 6th form was taken by the Governing body and is being funded by the DfES.

14. **Dunraven was proven last year by the Sunnyhill Campaign to be completely incapable of handling the admissions properly and fairly. Does the council concur with the campaigners that Dunraven are unable to cope fairly with admissions due to the weight of applicants?**

15. **Does the council believe that the 40/40/20 selection process at Dunraven is not only unrepresentative for the local community and unfair, but has seriously added to the problems of secondary school places in the Streatham area?**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer to Questions 14 and 15:

Dunraven school has an admission policy which is published annually. The admission process includes successful passing of an admission test. The school then selects pupils in the 40/40/20 criteria it is often in the position of offering a place to a young person who lives outside of its local area (Streatham).

16. **Does the council know how many students from outside the borough are being taught at Dunraven?**

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : 9.78% of pupils at Dunraven are from outside the borough.

17. **Does the council agree that Dunraven should be brought back under local government control? If not why not?**

18. Does the council agree with local parents that they want Dunraven as a community school and not the continuing slide towards an elitist foundation school?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer to Questions 17 and 18: The Council is working to develop collaborative working practices between all of its secondary schools. It is a matter for the governing body as to their status. Dunraven is a Lambeth School but as a Foundation School it controls its own admission arrangements. Whatever the view of the Council, only the governing body can change the status of a school or legislation from the government.

18. Will the council pledge to campaign for Dunraven to be back under local government control?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer: Councillors can discuss with the governing body opportunities for collaboration between all its schools. Despite its foundation School status Dunraven is under local government control.

20. Even once the new Academy school in Clapham has been built and a possible new school in Norwood in X years there still will be a lack of places when you take in to account that this year there are 2600 places needed and only 1300 places available. Even with the Woodfield Lambeth still do not have enough secondary school places to teach Lambeth children, so do Lambeth intend paying for the children to be taught at home privately?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The current position is that there are approximately 2500 pupils in Year 6 and 1300 places in Year 7 in Lambeth maintained schools. With the new City Academy and new secondary school in the south there will be an additional 360 places in Year 7. There are surplus places in neighbouring boroughs such as Southwark and Lewisham. Lambeth will not pay for pupils to be taught privately.

21. Lambeth only have control of 2 Comprehensive schools and 1 all girls school in what is an extremely populated borough why?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The profile of Lambeth schools is of 3 community schools with 7 schools, which are either voluntary aided or foundation. VA and foundation schools control their own admissions.

22. Lambeth sold Dick Shepherd, Tulse Hill and South London College, where has the money gone for these pieces of land?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Tulse Hill and South London College were not sold by Lambeth council. The Dick Sheppard site generated funds for the council as a whole and over £800,000 was allocated to educational facilities.

23. Who was responsible for these school closures?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : ILEA was responsible for the closure of Tulse Hill and South London College. Lambeth LEA closed Dick Sheppard school. At the time of its closure its roll had declined to about 130 pupils.

24. Was the money spent directly back into education in Lambeth? If so will the council provide proof to the fact?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Dick Sheppard funding has been used for Tulse Hill Adventure playground and the Old Library refurbishment in Norwood.

25. When the planning permission was passed for private housing estates on the Dick Shepherd and Tulse Hill Site, what plans did Lambeth set out to teach the new children moving into this accommodation? What procedures are in place to link housing planning in context of population growth and therefore education provision?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : At the time when Dick Sheppard closed Lambeth LEA had surplus capacity of over 30% in its secondary schools and also a high proportion of surplus places in primary schools.

26. Does Lambeth feel they are failing their residents/groups? If not why?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Lambeth council has been open in recognising its weaknesses.

27. Would any of the councillors who live in Streatham expect their child/children to travel to Stockwell Park?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : As an officer I am unable to answer for councillors. Officer attitudes to pupil travel are based on ease of bus travel for pupils.

28. Why do Lambeth councillors not respond to communications from Lambeth residents/groups?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Councillors and officers aim to reply to all communications. If you give particular examples I shall investigate them.

29. Is Lambeth embarrassed that so many of its children are having to be taught in different boroughs or do they feel this is an easy get out ie: they do not have to worry about doing it?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The shape of Lambeth and its central position means that travel across borough boundaries is relatively easy. Parental and pupil choice rather than borough boundaries are a determining factor in choice of a school.

30. Does the council agree that there is a gentrification process going on in Lambeth which is pushing ordinary people further and further out of central London and this is why so many school sites have been sold to developers for a quick buck?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : There is a gentrification in some parts of Lambeth but it is not uniform and there are still substantial numbers of council houses and street properties and estates owned by the council or housing associations.

31. Lambeth at present have a huge debt, is our children's education paying this debt off?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The Council has supported schools fully and has passed the amount the government has suggested. This has occurred over a number of years so it is not true that children's education is 'paying off the debt'. In addition the council has bid for and has been successful in gaining additional funding to improve school buildings. Although we recognise that there is still a need for improvement in many buildings.

32. Do Lambeth think its time to make a start on listening rather than dictating to its residents?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : The council aims to listen to residents and has both town centre forums and new area committees in addition to the scrutiny and executive process in order to do so.

33. Does the council agree that it is outrageous that parents and children at interviews at Bishop Thomas Grant are being selected on the basis of their social situation? I.e. Children and parents have been asked, "Do you come from a one parent or a two parent family", and "Do your parents work". Parents have raised complaints that their children have been labelled as troublemakers and were threatened "that the school would take them to the police". The children concerned have no record of trouble. Parents have complained that they have been treated dismissively when they answer the 'wrong way' and told they were very unlikely to gain a place at the school. Does the council agree that one fair and equal admission policy for the whole borough would ease this problem? Does the council also concur that no secondary school place should be decided on people's social or academic level but instead on their needs?

Answer from Lambeth Education Officer : Bishop Thomas Grant is its own admissions authority. We have passed on your concerns and asked them to let us have their response. The council shares your concerns that the difficulties that the current admission process causes to parents and children. We are currently discussing improvements with local secondary schools.