

F REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS

The Hatters Lane School – Fresh Start

- 1 The Hatters Lane School will formally close on 31 August 2001 and reopen the next day as a Fresh Start school with the new name Highcrest Community School.
- 2 There is capital funding of £3.2m for the school and additional revenue funding of approximately £260,000 per year for three years. This has made possible a good deal of work to improve accommodation at the school and recruit new staff. We believe that the school is now on a sound footing for a promising future.
- 3 The school has already achieved a marked improvement in Key Stage 3 SATs results this year compared with 2000. The comparative figures are:

	Mathematics	English	Science
2000	23%	30%	22%
2001	50%	51%	49%

- 4 This reflects great credit on the Headteacher and her staff and is, I think, a vindication of the strategy of support that we put in place for this school.

School Organisation and Amalgamations

- 5 Southcourt Infant School, Aylesbury, will close on 31 August 2001. The school was established in 1926 to serve the new Southcourt Estate, so it has been providing primary education to the children of south Aylesbury for 75 years. Beech Green Nursery School will close as a separate establishment at the same time. The children from both schools will transfer to the enlarged Oak Green School which, as many members will recall, last year absorbed Willowmead Infant School. This completes the re-organisation of primary schools in south Aylesbury. I think it is appropriate to express our gratitude and appreciation for all that Southcourt Infant School and Beech Green Nursery School have achieved for local children over many years, and to send the staff and pupils of Oak Green our best wishes for the future.

- 6 Members who served on the Council in the last session will be aware of the amalgamation of Meadowcroft Infant and Junior Schools, Aylesbury, to form The Thomas Hickman School on 1 January 2001. I can now report that work is about to start on a major remodelling of the former Junior School buildings, which will be completed by next summer. The new building work will include early years and community facilities for which funding of £450,000 has been obtained from the Targeted Capital Fund.
- 7 Further ahead, Berryfield Infant and Icknield Junior Schools, Princes Risborough, are due to combine on 1 January 2002, and Greenway Infant and William Durrant Junior Schools, Chesham, on 1 September 2002. Discussions are continuing about the possible amalgamation of King's Wood Infant and Junior Schools, High Wycombe. These amalgamations are all in line with the County Council's policy of combining adjacent infant and junior schools where this is appropriate.

Secondary School Building Programme

- 8 The previous Cabinet Member for Schools approved in principle a building programme for secondary schools over the next 2-3 years. The programme is necessary because we have very little spare capacity in our secondary schools and pupil numbers will continue to grow for the next few years. Detailed planning is now under way for the building programme, which will be carried out over the next two to three years.

Key Stage 3 Strategy

- 9 Work is to begin in secondary schools next term to transform teaching and learning of English and Mathematics at Key Stage 3. The launch of the Buckinghamshire Key Stage 3 strategy on 5 and 6 June was well attended by Headteachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, and heads of mathematics and English departments in secondary schools, including secondary special schools. All English and mathematics departments have had three teachers from each department trained for three days, and evaluation has shown that the training has been very successful.

Education Development Plan

- 10 Draft guidance has been received from the Department for Education Skills on the form and content of the next Education Development Plan (EDP), to cover the period 2002/07. The draft guidance sets out five national priorities which the Government wants LEAs to address in their EDPs, namely:
- Raising attainment in Early Years towards the early learning goals, and in primary education, especially in numeracy and literacy.
 - Raising attainment in Key Stage 3
 - Raising attainment in Key Stage 4
 - Narrowing attainment gaps and tackling under achievement
 - Support for schools causing concern
- 11 Each LEA is also expected to identify three local priorities based on a detailed audit of schools' performance across the whole county. I will be bringing forward in the early autumn, proposals on how to involve the whole schools service and Members in developing the next EDP.
- 12 I would stress that this is a draft for consultation. The final guidance document is expected in October, and the new EDP should be approved by the Secretary of State by the end of March 2002.

LEA Improvement Plan

- 13 I am pleased to report that the Leader of the Council has received a letter from Stephen Timms MP, Minister of State at the DfEE, thanking the Council for the revised LEA Improvement Plan following the re-inspection of the LEA by Ofsted in June 2000. Mr Timms writes that the revised Plan "is clear, focused, and addresses all of the recommendations in Ofsted's report". He adds that Ofsted believes the LEA "has the capacity and the will to build on its achievements".

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

- 14 I have already been made very much aware of the difficulties that headteachers and governing bodies are finding in recruiting quality teachers for our schools for September 2001. This is a regional and national problem and we have tried to put our local perspective on this through a considerable number of local initiatives, mostly taken in association with our headteachers.
- 15 As one solution to the problem this coming September there will be a significant number of overseas-trained teachers working in our schools. This is as a result of both County Council and school initiatives. We organised a recruitment trip to Vancouver in Canada and hope to have some 20-25 Canadian teachers in our schools from September, and indeed we will be welcoming them to the County at the end of August. In addition schools themselves have recruited a significant number of overseas-trained teachers and because of this we will be organising a formal and full induction programme for these teachers to acquaint themselves both with the overall English education system but also more particularly the system in Buckinghamshire.

Post-16 Provision/Funding

- 16 The Learning and Skills Council is due to take over the responsibility for the provision and funding of post-16 education in our schools from April 2002. I am aware of the great concern with which secondary headteachers view the situation and indeed I know the secondary headteachers met recently with the Executive Director of the local Learning and Skills Council. Over the next few months we will be doing a considerable amount of work both with schools and in liaison with the Learning and Skills Council to ensure that proper and adequate sixth form provision takes place in our schools which is successful and cost-effective. This will mean the County Council acting as a joint partner both with secondary schools and the local Learning and Skills Council in carrying this forward.

**MARION CLAYTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS**