



**Local Educational
Attainment Report
(Woking):
2002-2003 ACADEMIC YEAR**

**Local Committee for Woking
1 March 2004**

KEY ISSUES

This report describes school and educational attainment in Woking.

SUMMARY

This report highlights past and future issues relating to educational attainment of pupils within the borough. It should be read in conjunction with the report on services for children with special needs which is item 9 on this agenda.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

Local Members should use the discussion to identify strategies to further facilitate the improvement of education within Woking through their support of schools and/or pupil groups. Feedback on key issues can, if necessary, be taken to the Children & Young Peoples' Select Committee for consideration in the next Educational Development Plan cycle.

School & Pupil Attainment Within Woking

1. Educational attainment within Woking cannot be separated from the economic and social characteristics of the area. Surrey is a county of contrasts. On one hand, indicators of economic disadvantage show it to be advantaged. For instance, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, and the percentage of adults with higher qualifications is well above average, as is the percentage of the population in 'higher' social classes. However, in some local areas such as Woking disadvantaged communities sit next to, and contrast sharply with, more advantaged neighbourhoods. Like Surrey as a whole, Woking contains contrasting patterns of population with densely populated areas and others that are more rural.
2. Often, but not exclusively, low levels of attainment are associated with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Some Woking schools have to cater for a very wide range of additional pupil needs. The schools in this situation often find it difficult to improve. Low pupil numbers, which lead to budgetary pressures, sometimes compound their difficulties. The effect of parental choice can make the contrast of schools even more marked, as well as adding to transport difficulties in the area.
3. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is low in Surrey but the spread across ethnic minority groups is similar to the national average, except that there are relatively few black pupils (e.g. those of African or Caribbean origin). However, Woking has a high concentration of ethnic groups and some of the schools therefore have a higher percentage of pupils with English as an additional language. In general, the learning of pupils with English as an additional language is good. Although their early attainment may be relatively low, evidence suggests they usually catch up over time. However, it is possible that a high proportion of pupils with a lack of competence in the English language may sometimes adversely affect learning.
4. In Surrey, a slightly higher than usual percentage of pupils are taught in special schools at primary level. At secondary age the percentage is well above average. Surrey also has an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Woking has only 1 special school which is slightly unusual. Only 3 other boroughs have a single special school with the rest having 2, 3 or 4. The fact that the school specialises in helping pupils with learning difficulties means that pupils may travel in from quite a large part of Surrey and may not therefore live in Woking. At the same time, Woking children may travel out of the borough in order to be taught in schools which cater for their particular need (e.g. physical disability, emotional and behavioural problems).
5. There are approximately 11,600 pupils in maintained schools within Woking. This is the 6th largest pupil cohort in Surrey. Pupils attending maintained schools in Woking can choose from among seven infant schools, one first

school, five junior schools, fourteen primary schools, and four secondary schools, as well as the special school mentioned earlier. Woking has only one small school (small schools are those with typically less than 100 pupils) which is in sharp contrast to the more rural neighbouring borough of Guildford.

6. Woking schools generally function well in terms of their overall performance and management. Woking has one school in special measures (see later section for further information). The council provides schools in special measures with intensive additional support and has a good reputation for helping schools come off special measures within a relatively short period.
7. The overall attainment for Woking schools has remained similar to that of the previous year. Levels are often slightly lower than neighbouring boroughs (appendix A) but in terms of the progress that pupils make the 2003 results are very good (appendix B). 32% of schools at Key Stage 2 are designated as providing above expected progress in their pupils according to the governments performance tables. They are therefore in the top 25% of schools nationally. The same is true for two out of the five secondary schools (40%). Woking's strongest attainment is in the GCSE results which are higher than its neighbours in terms of pupils achieving at least one GCSE or equivalent qualification. This indicates the excellent work being done to ensure that as many pupils as possible have an opportunity to leave school with a qualification. The total point score for pupils sitting GCSEs is also higher in Woking. Other notable results are found in terms of the number of pupils attaining a Level 6 or above at Key Stage 3.

ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE:

Confederations:

8. Woking schools, like those in the rest of Surrey, have been offered an opportunity to work in confederations. It is hoped that this will allow schools to more effectively pool resources, share skills and staff, and to streamline the passage of pupils from primary to secondary phases.
9. School support for confederations is very strong within some areas of Surrey such as Spelthorne - where virtually all of the schools are committing themselves to promoting confederated working. The main benefit of confederations is perceived to be the co-ordination of the use of multi professional support. Formalisation of the confederations will proceed over the coming year.
10. The Sheerwater/Maybury Partnership is an example of schools already working together in Woking.

Teacher Recruitment:

11. Teacher recruitment remains an issue in many parts of Surrey. However, Woking is lucky because this issue is often more pronounced in those boroughs that border the London boroughs. This is due to prospective workers often preferring the London boroughs due to the wages for teachers being higher there. However, Woking schools can encounter difficulties due to housing costs, and due to the fact that school budget problems can mean it is difficult to organise attractive packages for new staff.
12. Surrey County Council has set up projects in the Education Development Plan to help alleviate the problem. FourS (the traded company presently being set up to provide school support) is currently implementing these.

Budget:

13. Budgets for Woking schools will be a key issue in the coming year. Due to Government legislation the funding system of schools has changed. The new system was not as coherent as Surrey County Council would have liked. Whilst the new system directed more money towards needy areas it has been problematic because it has meant that there could be sudden changes in the amounts a school received. This has impacted on the feasibility of long-term projects in some schools.
14. Due to the impact of teacher pay rises the relative amount of money available for schools to use on non-salary items has reduced. Therefore, without the government providing additional funds there will be relatively less money even for the needy areas that the funding system was set up to address. As the second phase of threshold payments for staff cut in, Woking schools will be experiencing very tight budgets. The pressure on budgets will be particularly acute for schools with unfilled places (see also Admissions section).
15. The situation is made more acute because schools will have to balance their books next year. Some schools have had deficits this year which Surrey County Council has been able to absorb due to having enough resources to provide a 'fall back'. However, next year the Council 'fall back' fund will have been used up.
16. School budgeting for secondary schools with sixth forms can have the added complication that the Learning & Skills Council, which disseminates funds, does not do it in a way that allows schools to plan ahead. Government regulations are attempting to ensure this changes so that 3 year planning is possible. However, some schools remain sceptical about the effectiveness of these regulations.

Admissions:

17. There are two main issues regarding future planning for admissions:
- a. The first is the falling birth rate in Surrey. In the next 10 years it is predicted that this will require careful management of school places. The impact will be felt first in the primary phase but will eventually reach the secondary schools. In Woking, the falling birth rate and other demographic changes mean there will almost certainly be a surplus of school places.
 - b. The second issue relates to prospective changes to the school admission process for September 2005. Surrey County Council has distributed a consultation document for parents to gather their views about improvements that can be made. Discussion centred on the benefits of changing the system from one where parents rank three schools in order of preference to one where the three schools selected are given equal weighting. It is intended that a report detailing the results will be presented to Members in March.

Review of primary school places:

18. As a consequence of falling rolls Surrey has initiated a preliminary review of primary school places within the Borough. There have been a number of exploratory meetings with Headteachers, school Governors and local County Councillors. There are currently no proposals for change but it is possible that options will be developed in the coming months. Options for change will be subject to a consultation process with schools, County Councillors and the public. The Local Committee for Woking will be consulted about any proposals.
19. During informal discussions questions have been asked about the extent to which Surrey takes into account future housing developments as part of the process for forecasting need for school places. The methodology for this process is well established and takes account of birth rates, demographic movement and outline planning approvals. To assess the impact of housing a standard formula of 25 pupils per primary year group per 1.000 houses is applied. The nature of housing can exaggerate the figures produced by application of the formula.

Review of secondary school places:

20. Pupil numbers in secondary schools are predicted to fall in the next 10 years and Surrey County Council therefore needs to consider the long-term impact on the organisation of secondary schools.
21. The County Council Executive agreed at its meeting on 11 November 2003 to support the Executive Director, Children & Young People, in setting up a working group to consider options for the future pattern of secondary school provision in the area. A full consultation exercise with schools and then the public will follow. This is currently being developed with Headteachers,

Governors and other bodies with consultation planned for the summer. All Local Committees affected by the consultation will be consulted in the summer.

Staffing levels in LEA Services

22. There are apparently a lot of vacancies in the area of Social Workers, Educational Psychologists, and Education Welfare Officers. This is often impacting on the services provided, where children and families most need it.

Bishop David Brown School:

23. An Ofsted Inspection of the Bishop David Brown school during the autumn term resulted in the school being placed in special measures.

24. The previous Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have left the school. Ani Magill (Headteacher of St. John the Baptist School) has been seconded as Acting Headteacher to support the recovery of the school. Ani is being supported by two experienced consultant Headteachers and staff are working hard to secure improvement.

25. The issues raised by Ofsted are being addressed through Surrey's support programme for schools in difficulty and substantial progress has already been made. Continued progress will be subject to regular monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

26. There has already been some favourable feedback from parents and pupils.

Truancy Patrols

27. Truancy patrols undertaken jointly by Education Welfare Officers and the Police are continuing to have an impact on school attendance. Further patrols are planned and each area of the County will receive one patrol per term: additional patrols are arranged where there are identified needs.

28. The following table shows simple data about the number of pupils stopped in Woking. The data for September 2003 – December 2003 is for part of the academic year. Woking is placed broadly at the mid-point in comparison with other Boroughs within the County.

Years	No's Stopped	% Truantiing	Variation by Borough
2001/2	274	15%	10 – 59%
9/02 – 7/03	272	32%	20 – 48%
9/03 – 12/03	84	40%	20 – 73%

What can the Local Committee do?

29. Local Members are often governors for schools, however schools in Woking may welcome a commitment from Local Members to visit their schools or to arrange some meetings to discuss issues which are important to them and which members can provide effective advocacy on.
30. Woking Local Members may wish to support Surrey's arguments that it requires more cash for schools. The present governmental system of directing cash away from the South East needs to be questioned.
31. Members will need to be aware of the pressure that some Woking schools will have to balance their books and eliminate deficits. Facilitating the discussion between schools as to how participating in confederations could be of use. Confederations would allow schools to share budgets so that funds could be used more effectively.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION:

32. For further statistical and field knowledge information Local Members should read the forthcoming Children & Young Peoples School Performance Report (2002-2003 academic year). This provides a detailed analysis of performance in Surrey schools. The report is scheduled for release in March
33. Information regarding pupil groups such as those with special educational needs is covered in the separate Children's Services report which is item 9 on this agenda.
34. The Local Education Officer and a school consultant from FourS will be present at the Local Committee meeting to provide more field knowledge and to answer questions that Local Members may have.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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