

School Organisation Review

Councillors' briefing pack
January 2007



More information, including responses to our most Frequently Asked Questions and copies of all our documents, publications, research and leaflets, is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor

Background

The way schools are organised in Suffolk hasn't changed much since 1974. Currently, some children go to two schools (primary and secondary, the 'two-tier' system) and others go to three schools (primary, middle and upper: the 'three-tier' system) during their school life.

We wanted to see whether changing the school system would lead to more pupils achieving more.

The process

In January 2006, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet approved a two-stage review of the way schools are organised in Suffolk.

Stage 1 would decide in principle whether change was needed. A cross-party Policy Development Panel (PDP) led this stage, collecting consultation responses and evidence on a wide range of issues.

After considering a huge amount of evidence over the best part of 12 months, the Policy Development Panel (PDP) leading the review recommended that Suffolk adopt a two-tier system of education across the whole county.

The PDP believes a two-tier system would raise attainment at Key Stages 2, 4 and post-16, and allow more investment in teaching and learning. This is based on four key themes, plus the consultation results. The PDP believed that change was necessary if the authority was to achieve its vision and strategic objectives; while change would not guarantee improvement, it provided a better foundation for improving standards within the county and more opportunity for the future than the current mixed system.

These findings were presented to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet in January 2007. Cabinet approved the recommendations ahead of a final decision at Full Council on 22 March 2007. If the recommendations are agreed at Full Council, stage 2 of the review will decide how to implement the changes. There would be further consultation during this stage

Performance

Key facts

Improving educational attainment

- Generally speaking, Suffolk can be proud of the education service it provides. For example, the annual performance assessment by Ofsted and the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) has produced good outcomes for the county
- The authority recently achieved a grade 3 (the second highest grade) in the three areas inspected (grade 3 indicates services that consistently deliver above minimum requirements for users) and the inspectors reported that Suffolk continues to provide a good service for children and young people.
- However, the inspectors made some serious criticisms, singling out performance at Key Stage 2 and Post 16 as unsatisfactory (for the second year running) particularly in the 3 tier system
- Early outcomes in schooling (ages 5 to 8) are similar in both systems and suggest that learners start with the same levels of attainment.
- Standards are not high enough in either system, particularly at ages 11 and 16-plus (where the size of sixth form and students' attainment appear to linked). However, the research highlighted some key facts about the differences in performance in the two- and three-tier systems:
 - A significant gap in performance opens up across all core subjects by the age of 11. The 2 tier system outperforms the 3 tier system in all aspects of English, mathematics and science at the end of primary education.
 - 17 out of 18 three-tier school pyramids (groups of schools) in Suffolk lag behind the national average for the progress of pupils aged between 7 and 11.
 - 85% of three-tier schools are significantly below the national average for progress made by pupils between ages 7 and 11. The figure for two-tier schools is 12%
 - Suffolk is in the bottom 25% of all authorities for mathematics at Key Stage 2 (119 out of 150 in 2005)
 - The gap between the 2 and 3 tier systems is reduced in secondary education, but is never completely closed. By age 14, there is still a significant gap for English and this affects attainment at age 16 in qualifications that rely on good literacy skills.
 - Performance across the whole ability range is similar in the two systems but at age 16 there are significant differences for higher performing students attaining A* to C grades - the 2 tier system outperforms the 3 tier system *in all subjects at GCSE*.
 - Academic performance in two-tier schools is better than in three-tier schools on key measures such as 5+ A*-C GCSE results and GCE A-Level results. After age 16, the 2 tier system does better in the total point score per student by the equivalent of 2 grades – this will affect entry to higher education.

- There is not a single subject where the three-tier schools exceed the performance of two-tier schools at GCSE, despite specialist subjects being taught for two extra years in the three-tier system.
 - Lower attaining children are doing better within the 3 tier system. Pupils with low prior attainment make more progress in the 3 tier system than similar pupils in 2 tier schools. Middle and higher attaining pupils make more progress from age 7 to 14 in 2 tier schools.
 - Extra help (money and resources) over a long period has not improved three-tier performance enough.
 - The number of pupils staying on in further education in the three-tier system is significantly lower than that in the two-tier.
- These are serious failings and the authority needs a clear and effective strategy to improve matters. The evidence indicates clearly that it is the current system that is holding us back and the authority now has the opportunity to improve standards by changing the system, at a time when it faces significant challenges and opportunities in relation to 14-19 education, surplus places, recruitment and retention of teachers (particularly heads), capital funding (for example Building Schools for the Future (BSF)) and standards generally.
 - The difference in performance is linked to the different structures in place, and is not a reflection on school staff

National benchmarking and evidence

- The following tables set out the performance of 2 and 3 tier schools in comparison with national benchmarks at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.

For 2005 Results	2 tier schools	3 tier schools
% Suffolk schools below the national average at Key Stage 2 (age 11)		
English	36%	67.5%
Maths	40%	70%
Science	24%	52%
% Suffolk schools below Key Stage 2 floor targets (65% at Level 4+)		
English	12%	10%
Maths	25%	22%
Science	3%	5%
% Schools significantly below average for Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 CVA national average		
	12%	85%
% Schools significantly above average for Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 CVA national average		
	15%	0%

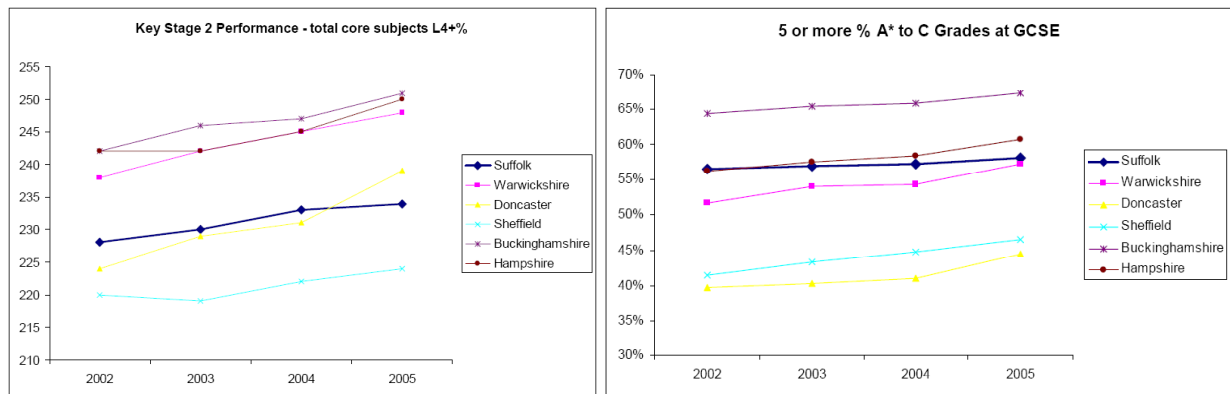
For 2005 Results	2 tier schools	3 tier schools
% Schools below the national average at Key Stage 4 (age 16)		
5+ A* to C grades	30%	39%
5+ A* to C grades including English and maths	35%	39%
Total points at GCSE equivalent	40%	33%
% Schools below Key Stage 4 floor targets (30% at 5+ A* to C grades)		
	5%	0%
% Schools significantly below average for Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 CVA national average		
	10%	6%
% Schools significantly above average for Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 CVA national average		
	50%	72%

Transfer

- The DfES found that each time a pupil moves school (school transfer) , their achievement and motivation dip.
- Suffolk County Council conducted two reviews of the effects of school transfer (in 1996 and 2001) and found that each change set back pupil progress by a year or more. Despite extra resources and the efforts of staff, two transfers (as in the three-tier system) puts greater strain on pupils and their achievement.

Evidence from other local authorities

- Five local authorities changed significant numbers of schools from 3 to 2 tier from 1992 to 2000 (Doncaster, Sheffield, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Warwickshire).
- Since changing, these authorities generally appear to be making improvements more quickly than Suffolk at Key Stage 2 (total % pupils gaining level 4+ in English, mathematics and science) and at GCSE level (% 5+ A* to C grades).



Long-term planning

- The review is part of a long-term plan to improve educational standards, school buildings and community facilities – and therefore opportunities for all.
- The authority cannot afford not to meet these challenges in terms of the quality of education (which will continue to be subject to public scrutiny), its reputation (as an authority that manages its services well) and the future economic prosperity of the county (in face of increasing competition regionally, nationally and internationally).

14-19 strategy

14-19 strategy

Key facts

Moving into further education

- The proportion of young people who continue their learning beyond the age of 16 remains unacceptably low in Suffolk.
- Not enough pupils are getting good qualifications after the age of 16.
- Levels of 16-18 participation remain low despite the opening of several new school sixth forms over the last ten years. A significant proportion (approx. 8% in 2005) of young people travel out of Suffolk for post-16 studies into Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Essex
- A high number of students who start courses in a school sixth form leave after the first year (22.6% of Year 12 students in Suffolk schools did not return in Year 13 (the drop-out rate is 3% higher in the three-tier system than in the two-tier system).

Future prospects

- In recent years the rate of pupil improvement at GCSE in Suffolk has slowed considerably and there is some concern about Suffolk's future progress in this respect. The provisional data for 2006 GCSE outcomes indicates a continued slowing in the pace of improvement.
- In recent years achievement at A-Level has been a cause for concern, being generally below national averages whether the student studies at school, college or through work-based learning.

Curriculum

- Local and national studies of advanced level achievement indicate that there are strong correlations between size of sixth form and student outcomes, with students in larger sixth forms being more likely to achieve higher outcomes. Larger sixth forms provide more choice, better results and better value-for-money.
- Young people need more choices from age 14, including new diplomas in subjects like health care, engineering, construction and hospitality.

Progressing the 14-19 agenda

- The Panel concluded that if the Council agreed to proceed to stage 2 of the School Organisation Review, the study should include a review of 14-19 provision for all students.
- The Panel recognised that in a rural county like Suffolk, there might be different solutions for different areas. However, all must provide good choice for students, high-quality learning and outcomes for students and value-for-money.

- The Panel believed that formal partnerships between schools might have to be established to make sure the new vocational diplomas were available across the county.
- The Panel also had concerns about the difficulty of reviewing post 16 provision within the 3 tier system. The Panel believed it was unlikely that performance issues could be addressed without considering structural change but this could not be achieved without adversely affecting upper schools, since removing their sixth forms would inevitably affect their viability. Given the seriousness of the issues faced by the county in terms of post 16 provision, and the need to review post 16 structures, keeping things as they are would be a disadvantage.
- The Panel felt that transport issues needed to be looked at separately, as this was very important in a rural county.

Financial issues

Key facts

Value-for-money

- The current system does not provide the best value-for-money. The two-tier system is more cost-effective than the three-tier system. If adopted countywide, more money would be invested in teaching and learning.
- Simply pouring more money, time and effort into improving the current system will not succeed.

Costs of an all two-tier system

- The 3 tier system is expensive with relatively high fixed costs, for example premises and management costs.
- The cost of change is estimated at £23m over 13 years. This is a one-off payment and provides a cost effective capital solution compared to the other options for change put forward (no change, all two-tier, all three-tier, new two-tier, all-age ('all through') schools)
- Costs to run an all two-tier system would be £4.4m a year *less* than the current arrangement – the savings would be reinvested in schools and would mean an extra £47 for each pupil, £9000 for a 200-place primary school or £42,000 for a 900-place high school (alternatively, if all schools had equal shares regardless of size, each school could receive around £15,000).
- The review will not add to the council's costs nor add to council taxpayers' bills.
- Because we have to spend first to save later, the up-front project costs will come from money borrowed (in the main) from school balances. Schools will have an *absolute guarantee* that they can access their balances during this period.
- Extra transport costs would be justified in light of the overall benefits.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and other funding

- Change to a two-tier system would be supported by the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, but not dependent on it. We will tie the phasing into our programme for BSF - which itself is tied to social disadvantage and underachievement - to make sure that we take advantage of the capital funding for secondary schools as soon as it becomes available.
- However, we are not simply tied to BSF funding – we have access to other sources, for example our continuing capital programme (£30m annually), targeted capital, Primary capital programme (PCP), Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding for post-16 and, if necessary, prudential borrowing.

Sustainability

Sustainability

Key facts

Viability of primary schools and demography

- It is not our intention to close local primary schools - there are only 21 schools with no room for expansion and, in each case, there is a local alternative. We will take every opportunity to strengthen the position of our primary schools in the community.
- Population change across the county has made significant changes to pupil numbers and places available in various parts of the county.
- Pupil numbers are going down in many areas (threatening the viability of many of our smaller schools) but are going up in many others (putting existing school places under pressure). Primary school numbers are in decline, with a reduction of 6% by 2010 (72 schools will have more than 20% surplus places).
- The review will enable us to improve the viability of many of our smaller schools as we would be adding two extra years as the age range is increased
- As set out above, the number of surplus places will enable us to avoid, in many cases, the prospect of temporary accommodation. We will use money from a variety of sources to build permanent accommodation wherever possible

Recruitment and retention

- If we have different structures in Suffolk to the rest of the country, it will be harder to recruit and retain staff in the future.
- We want to keep our good leaders, teachers and support staff, and will be developing a programme of professional development for staff.
- A major concern was linked to the recruitment and retention of teachers. A third of headteachers will retire from the education system in Suffolk in the next five years.
- The number of initial teacher training courses specifically for Middle School teachers has reduced nationally.
- Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) applications to Middle Schools fell from 24 in 2003-04 to 15 in 2006-07.
- Teachers and support staff would still be needed to support the same overall number of pupils, and we would provide high-quality training to make sure three-tier staff could fit into the new system.
- Wherever possible, we would hope that staff would follow pupils to their new school: the number of headteachers retiring in the next few years offers huge opportunities for all staff throughout the county's education system.

Other factors

- Services are more cost-effective to provide the fewer schools we have.
- Attendance is generally better at two-tier schools, although fewer pupils are excluded from three-tier schools
- Repeatedly moving schools is not good for the social and educational development of pupils.
- We anticipate that change would involve some building work. Suffolk County Council has years of experience working with schools to improve facilities, and this project, like any other, would be managed carefully to minimise any disruption.
- The Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) project – happening at the same time as our review - offers us an enormous opportunity to work alongside these developments to improve and transform Suffolk's schools.

Implementation

Key facts

Phased approach

- Local communities and parents will be consulted on the pattern of schools in their area. Consultation would be a formal procedure over 3 years, by which time people would be aware of the future plans for education in their area.
- We will maintain the drive to improve standards during any transition process.
- Any reorganisation would have to be done in three phases based on geographic areas due to the size of the county.
- Priority would be given to certain areas (for example, Haverhill) in view of the progress made in those areas towards reorganising the pattern of schools.
- The phases will start in successive years, beginning in Summer 2007.
- Each phase will take between 5-6 years to complete but local people will know within about 15 months of the start of stage 2 of the review what will be happening in their area.
- These timescales are determined by statute and government regulation and transition will take place gradually to keep disruption to a minimum:

	Phase 1 (Starting Summer 2007)	Phase 2 (Starting Summer 2008)	Phase 3 (Starting Summer 2009)
Alternative 1	Lowestoft	Haverhill	Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury
	Beccles, Bungay, Leiston	Mildenhall, Newmarket	Thurston, Stowmarket
Alternative 2	Lowestoft	Beccles, Bungay, Leiston	Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury
	Haverhill	Mildenhall, Newmarket	Thurston, Stowmarket

- Each phase will be planned and managed meticulously:
 - We will consult locally about the detailed proposals for the area
 - The transition will be carefully managed, including a staff protocol governing redeployment, training for school staff, funding for heads to manage the transition, advice and guidance for governing bodies and help on recruitment and retention of staff
 - Our communication strategy will ensure that local people are kept informed.

- It is not our intention to rely on temporary accommodation: this is because we have a high degree of surplus accommodation (for example, 25% of our primary schools will have more than 20% surplus places over the next 5 years).
- It is not our intention to close strong and successful sixth forms.

Potential timeline for students

The graph overleaf highlights a potential timeline for change.

- The top table in the chart shows how the three areas might be reorganized, allowing two years between decision making (following statutory notices) and the implementation of the first year of change in primary schools.
- The lower tables try to demonstrate the different stages that young people of differing ages, in each of the three areas, would go through as a result of reorganisation. As an example, any child over age 6 will see no change in their education if they are part of the proposed phase 3 implementation.

Links to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme

- Any implementation should be tied into the BSF programme, and as such, full organisation would take approximately 13-15 years to complete.

TABLE 1	2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010			2010/2011			2011/2012			2012/2013			2013/2014			2014/2015			2015/2016		
	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum	Aut	Spr	Sum
Area 1 (see also Table 2)	Preparation			Formal consultations. Publish statutory proposals			Decision published. Prepare proposals for capital projects where needed.			Primary schools now 5-10. Middle schools now 10-13.			Primary schools now 5-11. Middle schools now 11-13, become lower schools or close.			Reorganisation completed, awaiting secondary BSF...														
Area 2 (see also Table 3)	Preparation period						Formal consultations. Publish statutory proposals			Decision published. Prepare proposals for capital projects where needed.			Primary schools now 5-10. Middle schools now 10-13.			Primary schools now 5-11. Middle schools now 11-13, become lower schools or close.			Reorganisation completed, awaiting secondary BSF...											
Area 3 (see also Table 4)	Preparation period						Formal consultations. Publish statutory proposals			Decision published. Prepare proposals for capital projects where needed.			Primary schools now 5-10. Middle schools now 10-13.			Primary schools now 5-11. Middle schools now 11-13, become lower schools or close.			Reorganisation completed, awaiting secondary BSF...											

TABLE 2

Age at 31 August / Year Group	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Age 1 / Y-3				R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age 2 / Y-2			R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age 3 / Y-1		R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age 4 / YR	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age 5 / Y1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age 6 / Y2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age 7 / Y3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age 8 / Y4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Age 9 / Y5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Age 10 / Y6	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Age 11 / Y7	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
Age 12 / Y8	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Age 13 / Y9	9	10	11	12	13					





TABLE 3

Age at 31 August / Year Group	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Age 1 / Y-3				R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age 2 / Y-2			R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age 3 / Y-1		R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age 4 / YR	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age 5 / Y1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age 6 / Y2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age 7 / Y3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age 8 / Y4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Age 9 / Y5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Age 10 / Y6	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Age 11 / Y7	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
Age 12 / Y8	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Age 13 / Y9	9	10	11	12	13					

TABLE 4

Age at 31 August / Year Group	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Age 1 / Y-3				R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age 2 / Y-2			R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age 3 / Y-1		R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age 4 / YR	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age 5 / Y1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age 6 / Y2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age 7 / Y3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age 8 / Y4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Age 9 / Y5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Age 10 / Y6	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		

KEY
For Tables 2 to 4

	Young person attending primary school
	Young person attending middle school
	Young person attending a middle school building as a "lower unit" to an upper school
	14 Young person attending upper/high school

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

- **The main argument about standards relates to KS2 test results and these are likely to be dropped.**

There has been some recent debate about KS2 assessment with some suggestion that we may consider more teacher assessment and drop league tables. No decision has been taken and regardless of any changes in the future KS assessments are likely to remain. In any case, the results clearly illustrate a standards issue that has to be addressed.

- **This proposal is all about the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme which is not due to appear in Newmarket until 2012 – 2013. This leaves six years without capital investment.**

The BSF programme like the School Organisation Review will be phased across the county and there is bound to be some mis-match between the two. However, this is not the only source of investment. Others include; the annual capital programme (currently about £30m), Devolved Capital Funding, Primary BSF (available from 2009 and estimated to be approximately £5 -£7m each year in Suffolk) and potential capital receipts from the sale of surplus sites.

- **Our children are the ones that are likely to suffer the disruption - poorly qualified supply teachers, mobile classrooms etc.**

A substantial amount of the identified funding will address some of these issues through staff training and development. As well as presenting challenges, these changes will also offer new opportunities to the existing staff who we cannot afford to lose. During the phasing of the proposals, there will be time to plan and deliver changes to avoid using temporary classrooms. Newmarket currently has a very high level of surplus places, which would be filled before we need to consider extended facilities. We will continue to work in close partnership with Headteachers and Governors to ensure that the change is managed effectively and professionally.

- **My children will be more exposed to bullying as the mix with older children at an earlier age.**

This is not the experience of other parts of the county and country. Bullying is an unacceptable feature in any school system but there is no evidence that it is affected by school structure. Bullying tends to be 'horizontal' (across the same age range) and not 'vertical' (it is relatively rare for 11 year olds to be bullied by 16 year-olds).

- **Why are you proposing to use £23m of taxpayer's money on the administration of this programme?**

This money will be borrowed from unspent school reserves with the support of the schools forum. It will be paid back with interest. It is essential that we ensure that change is carefully managed and adequately resourced. Some of the money will be used for staff training and development and staffing resources to ensure that the disruption is minimised.

- **Why don't you use this funding to support middle schools in improving KS2 attainment?**

Support, training and advice has been targeted in middle schools over a significant period of time but this has not been as successful as was hoped.

- **If Middle Schools go we will lose the specialist facilities and or teachers.**

There is no reason why staff cannot be given the opportunity to use their skills in the two-tier system given that we will have the same number of children to teach. There will be investment in and extension of existing specialist facilities at upper schools through BSF and other funding sources.

Concern about loss of specialist facilities in years 5 and 6 has to be set against the fact that Primary Schools have out-performed Middle Schools in these specialist areas.

More of our Frequently Asked Questions are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor.

Communicating

Communicating

How are we getting the messages out?

- We are varying our communication strategy to meet the needs of specific audiences, ensuring that we deliver clear, consistent and simple messages.
- For our stakeholders (principally governing bodies, headteachers and their staff including the unions), we are continuing to communicate through their regular meetings, special meetings convened for the purpose, and cluster meetings attended by senior staff and, where possible, members of the Policy Development Panel (PDP).
- For parents and the public, we are communicating through our website (including a section on Frequently Asked Questions), ensuring that it is kept up to date as events proceed; through a leaflet summarising the PDP's report; and by regular press releases, briefings and broadcasts.
- For our other key partners (parishes and the districts), we have written informing them of the PDP's recommendations and will be responding to requests for briefings, where possible.

How did people respond?

- As expected, there has been significant adverse reaction to the PDP's recommendations in the areas most affected, mainly among Middle Schools.
- Efforts have been made to organise opposition to the recommendations.
- A body calling itself 'Parents Against Change' (PAC) has already organised a series of meetings for parents and these have been attended (on request) by both councillors and officers.
- Much of the documentation received will need to be challenged strongly on the basis of the extensive evidence and research underpinning the PDP's recommendations.
- It is expected that opposition will increase as we approach the decision by Full Council on 22 March 2007.
- A letter has been circulated in the Lowestoft area by the local MP, opposing the recommendations.
- There have been a series of briefings attended by the Portfolio Holder and lead officers to discuss the recommendations with MPs.

More information

- You can get advice and information about the review from:
 - Website at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor
 - Email at: sor@cyp.suffolkcc.gov.uk
 - Phone: 08456 031 842