

## Class sizes at Key Stage 2

- 1 One of the proposals in circular 245/2003 was to adopt a class size policy at Key Stage 2 of a maximum of 30 children to a class. The reasons for the proposed change of policy were sent with the circular and are attached as appendix 1. East Sussex has some of the largest classes at KS2 in the country – the January 2004 PLASC return showed that out of the 18,324 junior children, 9948 were being taught in classes of more than 30 children involving over 300 classes.
- 2 The reply forms show that 22 schools support the change of policy and 11 do not. 18 forms did not give a response to the question but of these seven gave comments which suggested the schools did have concerns about the proposed change. Most comments reflect concerns about the financial implication if KS2 classes are held at 30. This is linked to the employment of teaching assistants (TAs) which schools say they would have to reduce because their resources would be lower as there will be less income from AWPU. This in turn would reduce the pupil/adult ratio which schools believe would potentially result in reduced standards in the classroom.
- 3 The discussion paper indicated there would be circumstances where KS2 classes would need to exceed 30 pupils. This would be where accommodation does not permit the policy to be introduced (most noticeably at Ocklynge) and where the LEA deems it necessary for a school to exceed 30 because of the need to find a place within a reasonable distance of a child's home.
- 4 It is clear that some schools believe that financial difficulties will arise if the proposed change is implemented. The budgets for schools in 2005/06 will not be known until February 2005 but the class size policy will need to be set by 15 April 2004. In any event it is unlikely that any additional resources will be available to support a change in policy. It should also be remembered that Headteachers are responsible for determining the organisation of schools and they could establish an organisation with classes in excess of 30 children – Headteachers might also admit additional children without reference to the LEA. In addition it will be necessary for the LEA to prove its case before independent appeals panels and this will be difficult without the support of schools. In the case of aided schools decisions on admissions rest with the Governors.
- 5 The loss of an AWPU for each child would be in the region of £1,450 - £1,480. So after four years a one form entry primary school with 35 children in each class would lose about £30,000. That money would of course be available to other schools but would not resolve the difficulty for any school with budget difficulties. Some schools have already reorganised with larger classes to overcome budget difficulties.
- 6 It is important that any change in policy should not restrict schools in raising standards. Clearly, budget reductions could have an adverse effect. Furthermore, the responses from schools indicate that some believe a class size policy of 30 at KS2 could limit the benefits to be gained through workforce remodelling, because of the potential need to reduce the number of TAs employed. In light of this, it is proposed that over the next year the LEA –
  - Adopts an interim position re class size policy at KS2
  - Undertakes some financial modelling to assess the potential impact of a higher level of AWPU at KS2. This work to involve consultation with the School's Forum.

- Identifies and disseminates good practice in workforce development, including where schools are currently operating with classes below 30 at KS2
  - Provides schools with guidance on class organisation at KS2 within resources available which creates classes not exceeding 30 children
- 7 It is proposed to recommend that the County Council adopts, in principle, a class size policy of 30 children to a KS2 class from September 2005 but recognises that there will be exceptions to that policy. This will be firstly, where the LEA deems it necessary to exceed 30 children to meet its statutory duty to provide a school place within a reasonable distance. Secondly, where schools reach an agreement with the LEA defining where 'prejudicial to efficient education or the efficient use of resources' will occur above 30, the actual point to be agreed individually with the schools concerned. This would avoid the potential of fixing 'prejudice' in relation to a specific child. Schools wishing to operate with higher class sizes will be asked to submit proposals for a higher maximum which would be agreed with the LEA prior to the policy being introduced. Such an approach will enable schools to maintain current adult/pupil levels and thus overcome the views about possible reduced standards.
- 8 At the meeting of the School Admissions Forum it was agreed to support the approach suggested in this paper. The Forum believed it important that class sizes be reduced but recognised the difficulty in doing so and that exceptions would be necessary.
- 9 The Cabinet is recommended to agree that from September 2005 the County Council adopts the principle of a class size maximum at Key Stage 2 of 30 children to a class but that exceptions to the policy will occur -
- where the LEA deems it necessary for more than 30 children to be taught in a Key Stage 2 class
  - where a school believes it can satisfactorily deliver the curriculum to a Key Stage 2 class containing more than 30 children