



Progress Report – JULY 2008

January 2008

Having made absolutely no progress on a local level in more than a year, Fairford Leys Parents write to Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Education, to ask his advice. He informs us that, under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to listen to parents' choices when planning school places.

Section 4.31 The Government is committed to ensuring that every parent can choose an excellent school for their child. We have made it clear that the wishes of parents should be taken into account in planning and managing school estates. Places should be allocated where parents want them, and as such, it should be easier for successful and popular primary and secondary schools to meet parental demand. [...continues to define a successful and popular school]

Section 4.32 The strong presumption is that proposals to expand successful and popular schools should be approved.

1st April 2008

Fairford Leys Parents make a formal Parental Representation to Bucks County Council to ask them to expand the school. In the meantime, the Ernest Cook Trust (approached by the Parish Council) has identified some land on the outskirts of Fairford Leys which they are willing to lease to Bucks CC for a nominal fee, for the purposes of building a second site. The Government tell us of the Standards and Diversity Capital Fund, which exists specifically for cases such as ours, where we need money to expand existing schools.

Government guidelines state that Local Authorities should respond to parents within a 4 week time frame, giving an outline plan to consult with parents, and a timetable for action.

6th May 2008

Seven weeks after our Parental Representation, we have received only a one-line response from Councillor Clayton, telling us that she was "considering the points raised and would be back to us in due course". They clearly fail to understand their statutory duty to respond to us appropriately, so we contact the Secretary of State to request his intervention on our behalf. His department contact Bucks CC, and tell them to respond.

Parents:
please get
involved!

Please contact us – as parents fighting together, we have a voice under the 2006 Education Act!

FairfordLeysParents@yahoo.co.uk

(and add this address to your address book, so our emails don't get caught in spam filters!)

Tel: 07904 362003

Things you can do:

- Get in touch even if you have a child that needs a place from 2009 – 2013!
- Get in touch even if you know that you will get a place – we need to know exact numbers!
- Sign the Petition by July 19th (copy at Koffrica Cafe in the village centre) – will be handed to the Secretary of State
- Make your voice heard with us in a visit to the Council Offices on July 24th (meet outside HSBC in Market Square at 2 p.m. sharp, with your children! Let us know in advance, please, if you will be there, so we can send you information!)
- Write to your MP (John Bercow)
- Write a letter of complaint to the Council

6th June 2008

Finally a response from Bucks CC. They state that expansion of the school is unfeasible for three reasons:

1. It is not practical or feasible (no supporting data provided)
2. The Governors do not formally support expansion
3. Funding from Government will only cover 50% of capital cost, and Bucks CC don't have the other 50%

Councillor Clayton tells us that she is going to write to the Governors to ask them to make a formal stance on the issue (clearly in the hopes that they will say that they don't favour expansion). We also write to the Governors to request copies of any correspondence with the Council on this issue.

The "Action Plan" outlined by Bucks CC consists of:

1. Writing to the Board of Governors to ask for their stance on the issue
2. Writing to the Diocese to ask for their stance
3. Waiting until the final plan for growth in Aylesbury has been ratified, so that they can plan all primary school places together

....in other words, a "Plan of Inaction"

Most importantly of all, Bucks CC still refuse to tell us at what schools there will be spaces in 2009 onwards. And they propose no plans to consult with parents at all in planning or management of those spaces (as required under their statutory duty to respond).

4th July 2008

Fairford Leys Parents respond to Councillor Clayton's letter, highlighting the errors in her arguments, and asking for further clarification on why the Council feels they cannot meet their Statutory Duty to listen to parents, and expand the school. There are far too many errors in Bucks CC arguments to list here, but the most important are:

1. They claim the problem is temporary, and then tell us that they have carefully calculated that we need 420 places because we have 1750 dwellings. There are in fact 2,071 dwellings in Fairford Leys, so their numbers are wrong, and using their own calculations for "average number of places generated in new developments show that the over-subscription is here to stay: we need at least 560 places.
2. They state that the Governors do not support expansion. In fact, the Governors write to Bucks CC telling them that they had formally favoured expansion in 2007, and still do now. Their preferred option is expansion on a second site, because this will cause minimal disruption to the existing school.
3. They state that they are under no obligation to expand existing schools or listen to us as parents while surplus capacity exists elsewhere. Under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, this is blatantly untrue.

Once again we ask her to tell us urgently where spaces will exist in 2009 – for those of us who need to put in applications in September / October this year, this is a very urgent issue. Even the Local Government Ombudsman has told Bucks CC to write to us and provide this information, but still we have nothing.

9th July 2008

Bucks Herald: Governors express surprise at Bucks County Council's U-turn on expansion. Having approached the Board of Governors to ask whether they would support expansion, Bucks County Council now claim amnesia and claim that the Governors mis-understood their requests for information. Still, they claim that there is no solution for Fairford Leys children and that we will have to wait until the final plan for Aylesbury is ratified (in 2010). Behind closed doors, they acknowledge that there is a problem with primary places in Aylesbury from 2009, but they just don't want to admit we are right and solve our individual problem because then they'd be seen to give in to those who shout the loudest (or bother to shout at all!)