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For Immediate Release

## **FALLING ROLLS TRIGGERS CONSULTATION ON SELHURST SCHOOL FUTURE**

Selhurst Mathematics and Computing Specialist School is facing a numbers crisis. It has just 460 pupils and over 270 spare places - more than a third of its 750 pupil capacity. The typical English secondary school has around 850 pupils.

Despite the school having achieved specialist status, in September this year only 40 pupils started at Selhurst leaving 110 surplus places in year 7. This compares with 50 starters in 2005 and 85 in 2004. Numbers have been declining over the last decade and are expected to drop further.

The drift is disappointing because the school has made great strides in recent years. Coming out of special measures some four years ago, staff, students and governors have worked hard to make the school a place of achievement. Last year's exam results were the best for some time and the recent Ofsted report was very positive about the quality of teaching and learning, about the ethos of the school and about the quality of leadership.

However, these positive factors do not appear to be making the school popular with enough parents. Based on current admission trends, the school will have just 200 pupils on roll in 2011. With parents and pupils opting for other schools, Croydon Council, as the local authority, fears the school is becoming educationally and financially unviable. In consequence the council's cabinet, when it meets on 13 November, will be considering a proposal to consult on the prospect of closing the school by August 2008.

This would mean there would be no further intake of Year 7 pupils. The 40 current Year 7 intake would complete their key stage 3 studies at Selhurst and transfer to other schools in September 2008. The 72 pupils presently in Year 8 would transfer to a different school in September 2007 in order to start and complete their key stage 4 education in new surroundings. However, the 161 Year 10 and 11 pupils would all be able to complete their education at Selhurst.

Initial talks have already taken place with the head, the governors and the staff. Formal consultation with the Selhurst governing body, parents and staff would be initiated later this month. A six week formal public consultation, required as part of the statutory process for school closure would take place early in the new year. The outcomes of the consultation and a decision on the closure proposal would go to the cabinet and council in March 2007. If the closure decision is made, a further formal round of consideration by

the council's school organisation committee would then be undertaken meaning that the earliest Selhurst could close would be August 2008.

Said chair of education, Councillor Maria Gatland: "Despite vigorous efforts by the head teacher and governing body it is regrettable that Selhurst has attracted very few first preference choices in recent admission rounds. This means there are high vacancy levels in each year group ranging from 32% - 73%. Clearly this is not sustainable and unless pupil numbers rise very quickly there is no way the school will be able to maintain a high quality of education for its pupils. This is very sad as there has been a long and distinguished record of public schooling in The Crescent where the Borough Grammar School for Boys was first located in 1913. Unfortunately, demographics show that with pupil numbers gradually falling in the secondary age range there is no indication that Selhurst's numbers are likely to recover. Naturally, if there should be a final decision to close Selhurst, we will endeavour to support pupils, parents and staff in the best way that we can."

A decision on what would happen to the vacated buildings would only be taken if and when a closure decision is finally confirmed.

Ends