

Children & Young People's Directorate
Dr S Menghini

Your Ref:
Our Ref: SM
Please ask for: Sharon Menghini
Direct Line / Extension: 01432 260039
Fax: 01432 340189
E-mail: smenghini@herefordshire.gov.uk

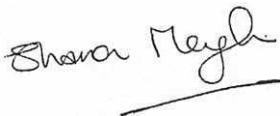
October, 2009

Dear Colleague,

HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS TASK GROUP CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Further to the consultation document circulated a few weeks ago, please find attached a copy of an "easy to read" version for your ease of reference.

Yours sincerely,



**SHARON MENGhini
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Working in partnership for the people of Herefordshire
Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford, HR1 1SH

Herefordshire Council Main Switchboard (01432) 260000, www.herefordshire.gov.uk
NHS Herefordshire Main Switchboard (01432) 344344, www.herefordshire.nhs.uk

**HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS TASK GROUP
INTERIM SUMMARY REPORT**

FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SEPTEMBER 2009

**CONSULTATION DATES:
25 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO 2 NOVEMBER 2009**

INTRODUCTION

In December 2008 a meeting took place with Cabinet Members, Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors to look at how to make sure that our schools continue to provide high educational standards for our children and young people in the 21st Century. Part of this includes considering the way our schools are managed and work together with each other and the community to plan for the future.

As a result of this meeting a group called the Herefordshire Schools' Task Group, otherwise known as HSTG, was put together with the job of taking these issues forward in a clear and planned way. The group is made up of School Head Teachers, Governor and Diocesan representatives, local officers and chaired by David Brown, an independent chair. The main aim of this group is to make sure that schools and their local communities are involved and have the opportunity to have their say about these changes for the future as we move forward.

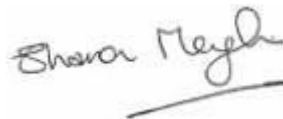
The reality is that the pressures of falling rolls and financial constraints mean that this is a complex and sensitive task that we all face. It is a task that needs to be planned for in order to provide a considered response that further builds on the excellence and good practice that exists within the county.

This summary paper is the result of their HSTG considerations and the council is now asking you to be involved and to let us know your thoughts and opinions so you can contribute to the debate and have your voice heard. All the responses we receive will be discussed at the Cabinet Meeting in November 2009, which will outline the messages from the consultation and inform future planning.

We hope that you will take the time to read and debate the content with your peers and parents as much as possible to ensure that the broadest discussions can take place and everyone has an opportunity to take part.



**COUNCILLOR PHILIP PRICE
CABINET MEMBER, ICT, EDUCATION
& ACHIEVEMENT**



**SHARON MENGHINI
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

CONTEXT

Herefordshire is a County of good educational standards and strives for excellence. Herefordshire Schools Task Group (HSTG) believes that we need to build on the strengths of this as well as making sure that all children and young people experience an education that answers to their needs and aspirations.

The purpose of the task group is

- To establish a set of criteria to underpin the future of education and learning provision which can then be applied to establish a strategic development plan for the next ten years.
- To agree a set of principles which can then be applied for the drawing up of a draft model of schools provision prior to full consultation.
- To look at the different dynamics of Herefordshire – market town, rural areas, city etc and to have the flexibility to consider any other issues as they arise.

These tasks need to underpin how we organise and deliver education to children and young people over the next 10 years, however there are a number of challenges that face Herefordshire as it moves into the 21st Century.

These include:

- The priority to continually improve the quality of educational outcomes
- The impact of a decreasing number of children attending our schools (falling rolls) which leads to some school and educational establishments having more places than required.
- Financial realities – Less pupils in a school result in less funding (see Appendix 1).
- Changes in school workforce

Any answers to the challenges which face Herefordshire are most likely to come from local leaders, in consultation with Governors, Head teachers, young people and local communities who will be supported by the Local Authority.

The HSTG understands the difficult issues this change brings and believes that it is only by encouraging debate about this change that any real long-term answers will be found.

There is a real change happening nationally regarding the way that schools are organised and how they are managed, led and governed. This matched with ever evolving technology means that continually there are new opportunities for learning for children and young people.

Planning for this change is now a major role of school leaders and Governors and the HSTG believes that this is also an important part of the future education in Herefordshire.

On a national level, the Government is committed to maintain this pace of change with support for commissioning new schools, dealing robustly with low standards and supporting schools to play an important and active role in their own development in response to its communities' needs.

This provides many opportunities for the HSTG to look at how schools within the county deliver education and part of this includes schools working even more closely together in families or ‘**Clusters**’ in order to have a clear strategic vision of provision and planning for education and learning over the next 10 years.

This vision and style of working is fundamental to ensuring that the communities and children and young people in Herefordshire benefit from the opportunities of our changing world and that their education and learning gives them the best opportunities to fulfil their aspirations in the 21st Century.

Please take the time to read the accompanying document, please send in your response sheet either as individuals or as a group as explained in the document

We value your thoughts and input and look forward to receiving your replies.

Key milestones are set out below.

| DATE | ACTIVITY |
|----------------------|--|
| January 2009 | Herefordshire Schools Task Group Established (HSTG) |
| January – July 2009 | Monthly meetings of HSTG |
| June 2009 | Pre-consultation draft document issued to Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors |
| July 2009 | Data and finance presentation to Schools Forum |
| September 2009 | HSTG considers feedback from Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors / consultation paper finalised / presented to Cabinet |
| 25.09.09 – 2.11.09 | Formal consultation period |
| 4 November 2009 | HSTG meet to consider key messages from consultation responses |
| 26 November 2009 | Final consultation report presented to Cabinet |
| January 2010 onwards | Professional groups to consider Cabinet decision and implementation |
| | Other relevant activities |
| December 2009 | Pupil Admissions consultation |
| April 2010 | Connexions and Learning and Skills Council formally transfer to Local Authority |
| August 2011 | Strategic Housing Consultation |
| September 2011 | Building Schools for the Future Strategy for Change Consultation |

HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOL FUNDING

1. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from central government is paid as a ring-fenced specific grant and must be used in support of the Schools Budget (ISB). It is the main source of income for the Schools Budget and can be used for no other purpose. It is based upon a per pupil formula using the January School Census data. This is then distributed to our schools using formula decisions made at Schools Forum.
2. National funding reflects factors such as deprivation which affect urban and rural areas in different ways. The county has one of the lowest funding levels of the nationally distributed DSG at an overall ranking of 147 out of 149.
3. Pupil numbers in the county are decreasing annually.

| Year | Status | Pupil Reduction | Amount per pupil £ | DSG Reduction £ |
|---------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 06/07 - 07/08 | Actual | 278 | 3,523 | 979,394 |
| 07/08 - 08/09 | Actual | 326 | 3,687 | 1,201,962 |
| 08/09 - 09/10 | Actual | 342 | 3,830 | 1,309,860 |

The total reduction in pupils over the period is 946 and the DSG reduction is cumulative. In this financial year, if the pupil numbers had remained at 2006-7 levels, the authority would have had £3,623,180 additional funding.

4. Within the locally agreed distribution of the DSG currently some small schools receive additional funding. The total small schools protection element in 2008-9 was £958,609.
 - i. 69 schools receive some form of protection
 - ii. In Primary Schools it is £109.80 per pupil below 200 on roll (63 schools).
 - iii. In High Schools it is £215.35 per pupil below 655 on roll (6 schools).
5. In addition to funding based on the numbers of pupils, every school receives a fixed base allocation for management and premises as shown below :

| | Primary | Secondary | Special |
|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| 2008-9 | 29,292 | 13,681 | 11,876 |
| 2009-10 | 30,083 | 14,051 | 12,196 |

6. Maintaining the status quo in terms of numbers of settings means that every school in the authority has reduced levels of funding and overall pupil entitlement is compromised in relation to that of other authorities. A strategic evaluation of existing provision is required in order to achieve the most effective use of resources available, by reducing

levels of funding currently maintaining individual premises in various forms of protection and by increasing funding to directly support teaching and learning in schools. It is evident that any school reorganisation producing fewer schools will result in a combination of savings including fixed costs for individual premises and the small schools protection element. All remaining schools will benefit from these savings as they will stay within the ISB for redistribution via the funding formula across a smaller number of schools.

HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING CLUSTER WORKING

Standards of education are paramount and any review of the way education is delivered and planned for should celebrate and build upon the success of Herefordshire's existing educational provision. It is suggested that there are a number of areas that Clusters of schools need to consider and include when working together which are outlined below.

Please look at these options and let us know how strongly you agree or disagree with the suggestions below

Cluster Working Recommendation 1 – CWR1

Engagement of all people who have an interest in the school is essential. Local communities and appropriate authorities must contribute to and take ownership of the outcomes of the process. This process should include opportunities for discussion, debate, thoughts, ideas and be open and inclusive. It is important to note here that all those who seek to participate respect the views of others and respect faith, culture and professional differences.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| CWR1 | | | | |

Cluster Working Recommendation 2 – CWR2

Co-operation is essential to meet the identified challenges ahead. It is also a necessary part of retaining a widespread and diverse variety of education as currently chosen by parents. It is fundamental to the continued improvement of children and young people and a vital part of schools sharing leadership, teaching and wider support services. Co-operation can take a variety of forms including sharing physical facilities, staffing and resources. Governors, Headteachers and appropriate authorities will work together through their cluster schools, to establish a firmer foundation for this. All schools must be pro-actively engaged in such discussions.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| CWR2 | | | | |

Cluster Working Recommendation 3 – CWR3

Provision planning is to be adopted and applied by all schools as part of annual self-evaluation. Local Authority, Diocesan and Trust Representative officers alongside School Improvement Partners should support all Governing Bodies to undertake, by September 2010, a formal evaluation of different options to feed into the creation of a strategic plan for Herefordshire.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| CWR3 | | | | |

Cluster Working Recommendation 4 – CWR4

Cluster Meetings of Governors, Headteachers and Local Authority and Diocesan/Trust representatives will take place termly, with agenda and minutes of the meetings to be made available on Herefordshire Council Website. These meetings will look at finance and pupil data and will help inform the strategic planning for Herefordshire provision. Evaluation of standards relating to all schools and other members of the clusters will be made available to aid discussion and strategic planning.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| CWR4 | | | | |

Cluster Working Recommendation 5 – CWR5

Schools facing challenges have specific issues relating to their development and sustainability. These challenges can include finance, falling rolls, changes in leadership, standards and inspections. Governing bodies have the responsibility to provide strategic direction for their schools in order to maximise the opportunities on offer for their children and young people and ensure continuous improvement of standards and delivery.

Cluster representatives and school leadership teams should be fully involved in such developments and offer solutions and models for consideration to include new models of working.

Where agreements, models and/or solutions cannot be identified through this approach Local Authority officers will further support and challenge in order to bring about an agreed plan of action.

2. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Leadership changes are a normal part of school life. An essential part of education provision in the next 10 years will be developing, recruiting and retaining the best possible school leaders in Herefordshire. The purpose of this is to ensure that standards and the quality of what we provide, continues to improve and that our schools are effectively led into the 21st Century.

Developing different models of school leadership is one way of recruiting and retaining high quality school leaders and will be considered at every opportunity. For example, models of School Leadership could include the appointment of “executive heads” for groups of schools or other less formal ways of ensuring that high quality leadership can be sustained. It will be at school and local level that more innovative and creative solutions may be found. Community, diversity, faith and rural/urban contexts will all have an impact upon how models are developed but all schools, their Headteachers and Governors, should be active participants within their clusters in finding new models of working.

Please look at these options and let us know how strongly you agree or disagree with the suggestions below

Leadership Recommendation 1 – LR1

Change of leadership will require a review of different potential leadership options/models with Governors, cluster schools, Headteachers and appropriate authorities. This will include different models of how the school is governed as well as design of staffing structures.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| LR1 | | | | |

Leadership Recommendation 2 – LR2

Succession planning will follow the evaluation of a school’s future sustainability by Governors, Headteacher, cluster schools, and appropriate authorities.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| LR2 | | | | |

Leadership Recommendation 3 – LR3

Changes to the leadership of a school will be discussed in Cluster Meetings before any recruitment process takes place. Headteacher vacancies will also be shared with all Heads prior to recruitment so that every opportunity for alternative models is explored.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| LR3 | | | | |

Leadership Recommendation 4 – LR4

Resource and capital implications will be considered and prioritised throughout the planning process with Local Authority officer support to look at finances and resources available to the cluster of schools.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| CWR4 | | | | |

3. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS

Local schools can have a direct impact upon community sustainability and Herefordshire supports all schools being active participants in their local community and the wider community they may serve, through faith, specialist provision, federations and external work. The combined needs of rural communities and how well they work together is to be praised and supported.

Parental preference is a central factor in school place planning nationally and in Herefordshire. Parental preference is one of the key drivers of change. It can create pressure on school places and also leave surplus places elsewhere, leading to changes in school provision.

HSTG differentiates between ‘small schools by design’ and those schools with surplus capacity and/or falling rolls. This will enable a more strategic consideration of school provision in Herefordshire.

Small schools ‘by design’ are those representing a specific and distinct model of education. This might relate to very isolated communities where cost of transport would be high even within an overall transport review. Such schools will be a continuing part of the pattern of education provision.

Small Schools which are sustainable ‘by design’ will have taken action to plan against:

- Lack of resources to ensure full safeguarding measures are effective
- Potentially restricted curriculum/ extra-curricular opportunities which impact upon standards
- Limited opportunities for social development.

Such schools will have explored different models of leadership, cluster provision and which models are financially sustainable.

Cluster Meetings will consider schools’ sustainability as part of their regular meetings and key performance indicators will be used to consider sustainability and forward planning.

Please look at these options and let us know how strongly you agree or disagree with the suggestions below

Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 require you to indicate your preference regarding how much surplus capacity a school would need to have, for example, empty pupil places (surplus capacity) and a decreasing number of children attending that school (falling rolls), before discussions and monitoring would take place to look at the future of that particular school.

Sustainable School Recommendation 3.1

Surplus Capacity:

- a) 25% (currently 20 Primary Schools, 0 High Schools)
- b) 30% (currently 16 Primary Schools, 1 High School)
- c) 35% (currently 8 Primary Schools, 1 High School)

| SSR 3.1 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| a | | | | |
| b | | | | |
| c | | | | |

Sustainable School Recommendation 3.2

Falling Rolls:

- a) 50% fall in admissions over a 2 year period
- b) 20% reduction in pupil numbers on roll over a two year period
- c) Both A and B

| SSR 3.2 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| A | | | | |
| B | | | | |
| C | | | | |

Recommendations 3.3 and 3.4 detail the current threshold levels in use when considering total pupil numbers as an indicator of sustainability. You are asked to consider if these are set at the right levels.

Sustainable School Recommendation 3.3

Primary Pupil Numbers:

- a) 36 or less (Small Schools Policy threshold)
- b) 37 – 45 (Monitoring threshold)
- c) 45 – 60 (Financial viability and sustainability)

| SSR 3.3 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| A | | | | |
| B | | | | |
| C | | | | |

Sustainable School Recommendation 3.4

Secondary Pupil Numbers:

- a) 200 or less (Small Schools Policy)
- b) 201 – 350 (Monitoring threshold)

| SSR 3.4 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| A | | | | |
| B | | | | |

Schools facing challenges of performance, budget deficit, recruitment or a combination of factors will be required to take appropriate action and will be considered, at the regular Cluster Meetings.

4. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING FINANCE

Financial realities should not uniquely determine educational provision which is about standards, safeguarding and wider aspirations. However, Herefordshire is the third lowest funded local authority and has to work within the nationally set funding of schools model. All stakeholders will support the leadership of the Council in its continuing efforts to achieve a fairer resource allocation for Herefordshire.

Capital planning is essential in order that every school organisation plan encompasses all finance planning and works.

Please look at these options and let us know how strongly you agree or disagree with the suggestions below

Finance Recommendation 1 – F1

Clusters should consider pooling Devolved Formula Capital monies to create centres of excellence in specialist areas with guaranteed access for all.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| FR1 | | | | |

Finance Recommendation 2 – F2

New builds of large Primaries and all High Schools should incorporate centres of excellence with guaranteed access to specialist facilities, as should all schools where these possibilities exist.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| FR2 | | | | |

Finance Recommendation 3 – F3

All strategic capital developments such as Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital planning should be coherent and align with any other developments, unless there is a risk to accessing the capital grant due to any external timescales.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| FR3 | | | | |

Finance Recommendation 4 – F4

Any new build needs to be consistent with surplus places planning.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| FR4 | | | | |

Finance Recommendation 5 – F5

Any new build should take account of the higher pupil density and closer proximity of schools in central areas of Herefordshire thus realising opportunities for different approaches.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| FR5 | | | | |

5. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING NATIONAL STRATEGIES

National Strategies and Central Government Initiatives

The development and implementation of Central Government strategy will impact upon the design and delivery of provision within the county and should be taken into account when planning for long-term sustainable developments. The outcomes from such activities aim to improve achievement, attainment and access for all children and young people throughout their educational careers.

Please consider the National strategies below and provide your comments

Current key Central Government strategies include:

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Increase in participation
- 14 -19
- Machinery of Government / Learning and Skills Council
- Connexions
- Narrowing the Gap

11-19 Strategies will bring significant changes. The planning for this new commissioning role for the Local Authority needs to be aligned with school provision planning more generally. Schools, colleges and work-based learning providers will form a network of provision delivering traditional learning opportunities enhanced by diplomas and apprenticeships for young people up to the age of 19. When high schools are therefore planning provision developments such plans will need to fit within this strategy and context. Any capital planning will also need to be agreed and defined within this in order to provide a cohesive network of provision.

When Clusters are considering provision planning they need to consider the national and local context.

5. Considerations Regarding National Strategies

Comments:

Please circle whether this is a:

Personal response or Professional response

If professional, please state profession.....

Responses to the consultation can be submitted through:

- the web consultation link www.herefordshire.gov.uk/consult
- via email to schoolstaskgroup@herefordshire.gov.uk
- via post to: F. Lennon Children & Young People's Directorate, PO BOX 185, Blackfriars Street, Hereford. HR4 9ZR