

**Summary of Responses Received in the Consultation on the
Draft Primary Strategy for Change**

77 RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE CONSULTATION

Question 1

It is proposed that the Primary Strategy for Change provides a framework for co-ordinating capital investment from various sources over the 14 year period. Do you agree with this proposal?

Agree 66 (86%)

Disagree 9 (12%)

- This is a costly, expensive process
- Proposals insufficiently precise
- Consider community cohesion
- 14 years to long. A lot will change in this time
- Maximum 5 years with regular review
- No money for ICT
- Project Board Terms of Reference not stated
- Short term plan to 2011 – no 14 year strategy
- Devolve capital to Cluster for Governors to decide on investment
- Strategy should address issues during period of falling rolls (Dr Boden's Report) are next 6 years. Alternative strategy to be considered when rolls are steady or rising after 6 years
- Re-evaluate Strategy every 4 years
- The policy principles are unexceptional and do not advance the debate or confront the dilemmas of the previous school review proposals
- Principles should include high standards in all schools with support to achieve and quality assure this
- Principles should include commitment to maximise parental choice
- Funding should be free from conditions and constraints

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Question 2

The Strategy proposes a Project Board to oversee the implementation of the programme.

Do you agree with the proposals for this Board?

Agree 56 (73%) Disagree 20 (26%)

- Represent all communities
- Should be democratically elected panel
- Make sure another layer of bureaucracy – existing structures should suffice
- This is expensive
- Should be elected project Council, represent Towns and Rural
- Board should have broad representative of schools including small primaries
- Recommendations of Project Board should go straight to Cabinet, not through DCS
- Project Board should not lead to new appointments – use existing staff
- Members must declare interests
- Parent should have place on Project Board
- Project Board should include Elected Members who are not School Governors
- Reporting line is confusing – difficult to identify who is accountable
- Independent, non-executive Chair for Project Board
- How will Project Board members be appointed?
- How does this Board relate to Cabinet, Schools Forum etc?
- Should have Headteacher/Governor majority
- How will the Board be funded?
- Board members must have appropriate skills and experience

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Question 3

In the early part of the programme, the basis for selecting projects is where the capital investment would:

- **Make a major difference to education achievement**
- **Provide a means to reduce surplus space**
- **Support the more vulnerable pupils**
- **Address the worst buildings and improve the educational estate, thus reducing on-going running costs**
- **Provide opportunities to deliver wider services e.g. through Children's Centres**

Do you agree with the criteria?

Agreed 53 (69%) Disagree 14 (18%)

Criteria for "make a difference to education achievement"

- Needs of rural communities must be paramount
- Disagree with criteria 'as a means to reduce surplus space' x10
- All school should have fair amount of investment
- Criteria should be ranked or weighted
- Criteria needed for judging 'major difference to educational achievement'
- Judges on 'worst building' would be objective
- Add criteria – support gifted and talented children
- Add criteria – support local needs
- Rural schools would not get investment if prioritised on areas of deprivation, but rural school buildings are some of the most dated and inappropriate
- Capital should be devolved to Clusters
- Review net capacity to ensure correct
- What sort of considerations make a school 'viable'?
- Take account of educational and community considerations
- Investment programme should not adversely affect any other school
- Need further communication and consultation on planned expenditure

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Question 4

It is proposed that the strategy would focus investment on a limited number of strategic projects rather than attempt to distribute the relative small allocation over many schools

Do you agree with this approach?

Agree 35 (45%)

Disagree 38 (49%)

- Priority – consider needs of the community
- Allocation should be spread across more schools – small amount will mean more to a small school x 9
- Keep some budget for small schools
- Depends on which projects
- Enhance existing buildings and community needs
- Yes, provided investment does not adversely impact on neighbouring small schools
- Evaluate all projects – smaller amount of money could make a big difference at a small school
- Need must be the criterion, no matter where a large or smaller project
- Key aims for investment must be in a SMART format so that decisions can be measured against the key criteria
- Rural schools will lose out to bigger urban schools

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Question 5

A number of schools are constrained in what they offer by the overall size of the building or the site.

Do you agree that these should be the major considerations to influence the choice of schools to be totally replaced?

Agree 25 (32%)

Disagree 44 (57%)

- Many rural schools offer high quality education with constraints of building/site. Schools are not just buildings
- Go with criteria in Question 3 (pg 12)
- No other factors e.g. distance to other schools, how valued it is and how important to the community
- Standard of education should be the major factor x3
- Don't replace unless a health and safety concern – use money to add/build to existing buildings
- Make catchment areas smaller to match reducing demand
- Concerned that data on this is not accurate
- Only if demand for places warrants it
- Good staff/small classes more important than buildings
- Also include road safety issues and parking
- Agree so long as capacity of schools, not increased to detriment of other schools
- Schools should operate in clusters to share facilities. Therefore individual circumstances should be taken into account

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Question 6

To encourage investment under this programme, the Strategy proposes to establish a central fund of £100,000 per annum which can be used to attract match funding from other sources.

Do you agree with these proposals?

Agree 62 (80%)

Disagree 14 (18%)

- Sum should be higher to assist more schools across the County x8
- This economic emphasis ignores the stated principle in Section 1

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Question 7

The DCSF raises the question of giving priority to investment to build additional school kitchens to encourage healthy living. Where there are insufficient funds to run these kitchens, for example, at smaller primary schools, the current policy is to invest in high school kitchens and supply primary schools from the centres when it is needed.

Do you agree with this approach?

Agree 50 (65%)

Disagree 26 (34%)

- Invest in high school kitchens first
- Logistics cost more than building kitchens
- Existing primary school kitchens should also receive investment
- Healthy living should be promoted through investment in food preparation facilities in primary schools, where pupils can learn to prepare own meals
- Use some funding to improve primary school services/dining areas/furniture and receiving/storage/transportation
- All schools should have their own kitchen – funding should be sought
- Proposals ignores the convictions expressed in Section 1
- Explore innovative community based solutions to providing healthy food, rather than transport large distances
- High School kitchens do not provide best options for Primary pupil meals
- Is this practical in a rural area?

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Question 8

The national guidance seeks information about the Local Authority's approach to surplus spaces. In Herefordshire, it is proposed to remove surplus spaces where possible by removing temporary accommodation and re-assessing school capacities, especially in terms of what alternative use can be made of space within schools.

Do you agree with this approach?

Agree 35 (45%)

Disagree 29 (37%)

- Strategy is unclear – apply to individual schools or at Cluster level?
- Removing temporary classrooms will not save money. Keep surplus places
- Temporary accommodation to be removed only when surplus to need
- Critical that definition of 'surplus space', 'surplus places' and 'net capacity' are defined and aligned for all schools in order in inform process of selection of schools for investment
- Must take into account local population trend and social and educational benefit of temporary accommodation
- Good schools should not have their capacity reduced
- Agreed, so long as schools stick to their PANS
- Not if this reduces parental choice
- Capacity calculation must be robust and all schools must adhere to approved admission numbers

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Question 9

The national guidance seeks to ensure that parental needs and preference are met. In 2007 and 2008, around 95% of parents applying for places in Herefordshire were offered their first preference. The strategy does not propose to make any changes in this regard.

Do you agree with this proposal?

Agree 70 (88%) Disagree 4 (5%)

- Provided schools continue to offer high quality choice
- Local Authority maintain a diverse range of school options
- Colwall not on Appendix 1 list
- Backdoor way to close rural schools – badly written/throw out paper
- Ill advised to make multi-year determination based on fluid situation – review annually to ensure balance of supply/demand maintained at current level
- Consider re-draining some catchment areas to provide more equitable distribution of pupils
- Council should promote parental choice and involvement in local schooling

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Other comments:

- Avoiding cost of transporting pupils out of their communities should be a high priority
- Concern with forecasts – families and businesses moving into Herefordshire, attracted by the life-style
- Housing policy does not support rural schools
- Questionnaire should have included option to say 'neither agree nor disagree'
- Primary school children shouldn't have to travel far to school
- Questionnaire has loaded questions
- Rural life being undermined by closure of rural schools
- Strategy is not detailed enough
- Strategy does not address the real issues
- Support rural schools with this funding
- Investment should reward successful schools as well as helping to improve lesser achieving schools
- The Strategy must include explicit reorganisation of the significant statutory role played by the Churches in education provision in Herefordshire, given that around 50% of Primary Schools are Church Schools