



## Pembroke CE Primary School: Changes to Herefordshire School's Transport Policy January 2014

We believe that the Cabinet decision to withdraw the Herefordshire free home to school transport eligibility based upon catchment school and replace eligibility based upon nearest suitable school is highly detrimental to our school community, to our neighbouring schools as well as many other schools around our county. We are pleased that the decision has been called in and will be reconsidered at next week's meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and would urge the members to use that opportunity to take heed of the concerns being raised not only by myself but fellow professionals and worried parents around the county.

We all acknowledge the necessity for the council to make financial savings and that there is a clear wish to provide the minimum statutory service but we feel that this decision is being pushed through following minimal consultation with the professionals who work in the schools and with the children and families who will be affected. The longer term effect of these changes is very hard to predict and could have a significant impact upon schools and communities who are already vulnerable. Herefordshire is a uniquely rural area and everything needs to be done to protect the future of education in our county for all of our young people. It seems that the decision made by the cabinet has been based on a financial saving that the council admits is "hard to forecast precisely" without due account being given to the happiness and welfare of the children and families, or to impact upon the schools that have served their communities for many years.

The changes in September will pose a number of problems for our school community, for example:

- Families of Y6 pupils will be forced to choose between sending their child, at this crucial stage in their education, to a new school that is closer or paying for transport to Pembroke. This does not seem to be fair or equitable as it is actually only a choice that those who have the financial means can make
- If the nearest local school only has space for 1 child from a larger family then siblings risk being split between 2 schools and communities. This also assumes that the families can actually afford to pay for seats on the bus to their current school
- Currently there isn't a bus running to Shobdon School or from Eardisland to Pembroke or from Lyonshall to Almeley all of which it would seem would need to be in place for September. We do not understand how this will be a saving on current provision and question if contactors have been consulted to see if they could support additional services
- Parents who make the decision to keep their children at Pembroke and drive to school will be adding to the problems that already exist in our congested village. Many hours have been spent in recent years devising school travel plans, encouraging parents to use the bus and reduce car traffic and congestion around school. It would seem that this



investment in time and energy was in vain

- As the impact from these changes is so difficult to forecast it is quite likely that the cost effectiveness of running the Pembridge bus service is decreased and therefore the alleged savings of introducing the alternative provision will not take place
- Having worked hard to develop excellent working relationships with the Kington Federation of Schools, for example many of our pupils enjoying visits, activities and exciting transition opportunities at Lady Hawkins' School; it would seem that the proposed transport changes will lead to the traditional catchment areas being a thing of the past. This makes joint working become harder to achieve and long established and successful networks of school to school support becoming fragmented and less effective for the benefit of our children

I strongly urge that the Scrutiny Committee consider overturning the decision made by the Cabinet, by taking a more rounded view, not solely based upon the council's sketchy financial model, but considering all of the needs of the children, families and schools in our county.

Kerri Finney

Head teacher  
Pembridge CE Primary School