

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN HEREFORDSHIRE IN THE 21st CENTURY

Introduction

Herefordshire Council is committed to working in partnership with schools, settings, colleges and their stakeholders together with other partners to meet the wider Every Child Matters agenda and the requirements of the Children's Act. We act to ensure that the education system is fit for purpose to sustain improvement in the years ahead, and is able to meet the changes and challenges to come.

We affirm this Statement of Principles to guide our work, set our standards, underpin our values and inform the future organisation of schools to enable us with partners to give the best opportunities and the best outcomes for all learners. Our aims for all our children and young people are:

- that they all can have the best start and maximise progress in their education;
- that through their learning and entitlement they can develop all their abilities and talents to achieve the highest standards
- that through high quality provision and support they can realise the highest aspiration and expectations for their benefit and that of the whole community
- that such a sound foundation will prepare them for a positive and fulfilling adult life as citizens living in a global context.

To deliver this vision, resources will have to be used to maximum effect. The provision of school places and school organisation are major determinants in how resources are allocated and expended. The aim is to see agreement on the principles on which we want to base educational provision, and then in the review of school provision proposals which will deliver the vision. Decisions taken now will shape provision over the next 20-30 years.

In developing the Statement of Principles we have taken account of the vision, ambitions and local priorities set out in the

- Herefordshire Partnership Plan,
- The Children and Young People's Plan,
- The Education Asset Management Plan,
- The 14-19 Learning Entitlement for Young People.

There is a common cause to build an equal and inclusive society; realise the potential of individuals and communities, seek continual improvement and provide excellent education, training and learning opportunities in Herefordshire for all ages.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

1. The Best for All of Herefordshire's Children and Young People

We place the child/young person, his/her needs and the development of his/her potential, at the centre of all we do. We base our strategies and decisions on what will benefit the education and welfare of all of Herefordshire's children and young people.

In line with the holistic approach under Every Child Matters, we believe that, with consistent nurture, support and encouragement from their schools, peers, family and community, our children/young people can succeed in their learning and grow into mature, healthy, well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society.

We seek the greater involvement of children and young people, individually and collectively, in the development of their learning and self-esteem by taking account of learner voice, opinions and assessments in a variety of forms. We value their contribution to developing provision and appropriate educational pathways.

Practical Steps

- Schools will be encouraged to develop extended services for children and families,
- The role of schools in providing co-located bases for multi-professional teams delivering services across the 5 outcomes will be considered in the development of integrated services,
- The Shadow Partnership Board and Youth Council will be consulted as part of the current school review,
- The statutory requirement to review any school placed in a negative Ofsted Category will be pursued more robustly.

2. Equity:

We believe that all children and young people should be equally valued and should have a common entitlement in their school, settings and in the community educational partnerships. We believe that educational strength, expertise and experience should be shared for the benefit of all, and the enterprise and innovative capacity of individual schools must contribute to the collective resources in the county.

In an era of diversity, specialism and declining numbers, parental preference can best be addressed within a county-wide strategic framework, which ensures a high quality of basic entitlement for all, supplemented by enrichment opportunities available through collaborative working between schools and other providers.

Practical Steps

In order to achieve the aims of equity and excellence for all in the context of limited financial resources and falling rolls,

- We acknowledge the need to refine the funding mechanisms for schools to establish greater parity and opportunities in the overall provision.

- We will encourage and facilitate networking and opportunities for collaboration
- Our schools must be inclusive with appropriate access to the curriculum for all
- Schools need to be supported in developing skills to meet the full range of pupil needs, carefully monitoring outcomes and targeting resources to greatest effect.

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3. Partnership:

Together with other agencies, we aim to positively embrace the Children Act 2004 in supporting and strengthening our beliefs and strategies. We believe in open and constructive partnership working with and between schools, key agencies and parents/carers to ensure we deliver a first class education service that meets the needs of each pupil. Indeed in a period of falling rolls, partnership working between schools is likely to be the only way in which some specific needs of individual learner can be met.

Practical Steps

To achieve better outcomes for our children and young people, we will work together with partners to create new structures or arrangements in the development of a flexible learning organisation that can successfully face new challenges as they emerge. At present, this includes a review of the role of the school in delivering the Foundation Stage to children under 5, and the work within the 14-19 Strategy to develop individualised/personalised curriculum for all pupils.

4. Diversity:

We recognise the benefits of furthering diversity in countywide provision in pursuit of equity, inclusion, improvement and innovation.

Practical Steps

The local authority will consider action which will

- select from the range of national initiatives (and where appropriate adapting them to local circumstances), to support the transformation of primary and secondary schools to sustain a first class service.
- endorse and promote new arrangements in school organisation such as co-locations and amalgamations of infant and junior or primary and secondary schools, mergers and federations where these are the most appropriate means of securing improved standards and services in the locality.
- encourage community focused schools working in clusters or networks to provide local access to high quality education for children of all ages and adults and access to other services such as Health where that is appropriate.
- achieve co-located provision with other agencies on schools sites to further the effective delivery of the ECM agenda through the aligned development of children's centres and extended services,
- consider different legal status for schools, where this is judged to bring significant benefit to children and young people.

5. Leadership:

Strong leadership from the local authority, headteachers and schools governing bodies is essential to meet the evolving agenda and to manage the changes. We recognise the strength of leaders in Herefordshire and will continue to support and challenge them to ensure a high quality experience of learners through a period of change.

Practical Steps

We will work in partnership with headteachers and governors to create:

- a unity amongst leading professionals built upon common values and principles;
- a passion for excellence;
- a commitment to working collaboratively with many partners for the benefit of Herefordshire learners;
- a commitment to each other to support, to challenge and to lead
- a willingness to consider the development of new ways to disseminate best practice and generate new approaches to the improvement of the service.
- with the cooperation of Governing Bodies, internal arrangements which allow headteachers at least 50% non-teaching time.
- the opportunities to consider different models of school leadership through, for example, federated schools.

6. Additional Needs:

We believe in equal opportunities and in positive, active intervention for children with additional needs and those who are vulnerable.

Practical Steps

We aim to ensure that:

- the needs of these children and young people are identified at an early stage so that the school and, where necessary, specialist staff can intervene speedily and appropriately with greater emphasis on in-school provision;
- a continuum of provision is developed which has greater flexibility to ensure access to the best outcomes for an individual as no single school or setting can meet all needs at all times;
- there is appropriate transition or transfer arrangements for pupils between school and specialist settings, which include short-term intervention or part time placements, and flexibility between sectors;
- the provision of a broad, personalised curriculum presented in an innovative, vibrant, exciting and challenging way. This will offer, particularly at KS3 and KS4, a diverse menu of alternative curriculum pathways to reduce the incidence of exclusion;

- those pupils who have become disaffected or have been excluded must be encouraged and supported to re-engage in their education within their own school or at another local school as quickly as possible so that they have the maximum chance of success;
- Herefordshire's specialist provision is developed so that only a few cases with the most complex low incidence need will have to go outside our boundaries.

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7. Resources:

We recognise that a high quality of teaching and learning exists in Herefordshire schools. However, we also acknowledge the need for schools to be fully fit for purpose for the twenty-first century challenges, and to be appropriately resourced in terms of finance, staffing, materials, equipment and accommodation.

Practical Steps

In order to achieve this

- the LMS Scheme will be reviewed to reduce the resources allocated under non-pupil factors e.g. floor area
- school organisation will be examined to reduce the percentage of budget spent on non-teaching costs
- e-learning opportunities will be advanced through ICT systems and infrastructures.
- capital investment will be made, as resources allow, to ensure that buildings and facilities support the full participation of children and adults in curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- resources will be focused on those areas which have greatest impact on teaching and learning, through both changes in school organisation and in the LMS Scheme,
- schools will be supported in developing and sustaining partnerships to improve local access to specialist staff, resources and services which can be better provided collaboratively than individually.
- training programmes will be provided to ensure that all staff have access to high quality training and development to maintain and improve standards and to demonstrate and disseminate best practice.

8. A Community of Schools:

We are committed to maintaining a community of schools in Herefordshire that primarily serve their local area but may also allow for parental preference, accessing the curriculum and extended services on a strategic countywide basis. In maintaining this commitment to quality and excellence in a time of falling rolls and increasing demands, we recognise that we cannot compromise on quality in times of scarcity.

Practical Steps

- We will endeavour to restrict pupil travel time to schools so that no child or young person, unless by choice, has to travel more than 45 minutes to school
- We will continue to apply the Best Value Performance Indicator which identifies those schools with more than 25% surplus spaces (and at least 30 places). This will be used to inform the school review process

NEXT STEPS AND SOME EARLY CONSIDERATIONS

Comments are sought on these principles. Once agreed, by the Council the ability of current provision to deliver the vision at a time of falling rolls will be assessed. The traditional model that schools educate children between the ages of 5 – 16, with some to 18 between 9.00 and 3.30 on 190 days in a year, following a standard curriculum is rapidly changing to reflect the national transformational agenda. At this stage it is envisaged that schools in the future will offer more flexible services with schools offering places or provision for children and young people of all ages as well as adults in the local community.

Possible ways forward include

1. more diverse provision in terms of status of school (aided, trust, academy, federated) and age-range. This will be supported where it can be reasonably demonstrated that standards of teaching and learning will improve, or that resources can be used more effectively;
2. in the primary sector all schools will be expected to have at least 3.5 F.T.E. teachers, including a headteacher with no more than 0.5 teaching workload. (This would require all schools to have at least 55-60 pupils on roll);
3. in the secondary sector all schools must be able to demonstrate that they are able to offer either independently or working in partnership with another school, the learning entitlement for academic and vocational subjects
4. no Sixth Forms should be created with fewer than 120 students;
5. any school where the per pupil funding for children without SEN exceeds the DfCFS unit DSG funding (currently £3,400) will be subject to more detailed review;
6. school transport will be organised where practical, and where geography allows, to reduce the journey time for students to less than 45 minutes;
7. all accommodation used for the core teaching and learning will be in permanent accommodation, that meets the current standards expressed in DfCFS Building Bulletins. Future capital investment programmes of the Council should be formulated to make good those areas which are below standards;
8. parental choice will be supported through ensuring that there is diversity of provision, and that schools are provided in strategic locations throughout the County, (and not necessarily through expanding schools which only the more mobile parents can access).

Again comments are sought on these ideas. As part of the process to develop proposals for individual schools, the following information is being collected on the circumstances of each school;

- quality of education as assessed by Ofsted;
- funding level in terms of per pupil amount ;
- number of children under the age of 5 living in catchment area as at August 31st 2007 ;
- projection of future numbers of children on roll;
- current and future surplus space;
- distance to alternative schools;
- quality of accommodation;
- number of temporary classrooms;
- number of children on excessive journeys;
- volume of services offered to community under extended schools;
- potential for all through school or alternative organisation.

This will be used alongside other information which maybe brought to our attention to shape proposals that will emerge in the next stage.