

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

Introduction

Herefordshire Council is committed to working in partnership with parents, 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. A prime aim is to ensure that the school system is fit for purpose, will sustain improvement in the years ahead, and is able to meet the changes and challenges to come. This does include all five outcomes for children, given the significant impact schools can have on the broad life of a child.

This Statement of Principles will 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. Once the principles on which to base educational provision have been agreed, the review of school provision will make 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 Early Years & Childcare Plan;
- The Education Asset Management Plan;
- The 14-19 Learning Entitlement for Young People.

In these strategic plans there are common themes aiming to build an equal and inclusive society; to realise the potential of individuals and communities, to seek continual improvement and to provide excellent education, training and learning opportunities in Herefordshire for all ages.

It is noted that the Local Authority does have a changing role in terms of school provision. No longer are its statutory responsibilities centred on providing sufficient places and maintaining standards of teaching and learning. It also has duties to seek

more diverse provision and offer choice to parents. The DCSF envisage that the Local Authority will act as a strategic planner, commissioning places from schools.

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 in the widest sense of all 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

- The Local Authority in conjunction with School Improvement Partners will provide advice, support and challenge to secure continual improvement in the work of schools delivering all five outcomes;
- Schools will be encouraged to develop extended services for children and families;

- The role of schools in providing services and co-located bases for multi-professional teams delivering services across the five outcomes will be considered in the development of integrated services, and creation of 'teams around the child';
- 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 achieved through a report with recommendation for any future action to the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People.

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 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 review and refine the funding mechanisms for schools to establish greater parity between schools, and also broaden opportunities for pupils in the overall provision;
- We will encourage and facilitate networking and opportunities for collaboration;
- Advice, support, training and resources will be made available to schools to allow them to 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;
- Current transport arrangements will be revised in light of national initiatives to ensure that expenditure is focused on services which improve access to these groups most in need.

3. Partnership:

With other agencies, we positively embrace responsibilities set out in the Children Act 2004, and this will be reflected in our vision, strategies and plans. 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 learner. Indeed in a rural area, 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 association with the private and voluntary providers in delivering the Foundation Stage to children under 5, and the work within the 14-19 Strategy to develop individualised/personalised curricula for all pupils, prior and post-16.

4. Diversity:

We recognise the benefits of considering diversity of provision in pursuit of equity, inclusion, improvement and innovation, so that provision can be shaped to meet the particular circumstances of various areas of the County.

Practical Steps

The local authority will consider action which will

- select from the range of national initiatives i.e. Academies, Trusts, Federations (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 sustaining or improving standards and services in the locality, and that improvement is demonstrable;
- encourage community focused schools, at times working in clusters or networks, to provide local access to high quality education for children of all ages and adults, and to offer access to other services such as Health where that is appropriate;
- achieve co-located provision with other agencies on school 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 school 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 for learners through a period of change.

Practical Steps

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

- a shared vision 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 improve the service;
- with the cooperation of Governing Bodies, internal arrangements which allow headteachers at least 50% non-teaching time;
- the opportunities for 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;
- a broad, personalised curriculum is provided and 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 meet the needs of individuals and, in so doing reduce the incidence of exclusion;

- those pupils who have become disaffected or have been excluded will 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 children with the most complex low incidence need will have to go outside our boundaries.

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 challenges already posed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, and to be appropriately resourced in terms of finance, staffing, materials, equipment and accommodation.

Practical Steps

In order to achieve this

- The Local Authority will continue to campaign for more equitable funding for Herefordshire;
- resources will be focused to achieve maximum effect and will be directed to priorities;
- the LMS Scheme will be reviewed to reduce the resources allocated under non-pupil factors e.g. floor area;
- proposals will be brought forward 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 drive to improvements in teaching and learning;

- permanent need will be met in permanent buildings, which, where provided through new capital investment, will be built on sustainable principles;
- resources will be focused on those areas which have greatest impact on teaching and learning, through by reducing surplus space through 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

- The review will produce a robust Strategic framework within which all maintained schools, whatever their status, will have a place;
- Those schools exploring changes of status will be supported by the Local Authority on the understanding that the change of status will not affect the role of that school in the strategic framework;
- The Membership of Schools Forum and the Local Admission Forum will be reviewed in light of any changes in school status;
- We will endeavour to restrict pupil travel time to primary schools so that no child or young person, unless by choice, has to travel more than 30 minutes to school.

9. Schools within their Community:

The tangible and often intangible value that both primary and high schools can have in their community is acknowledgeable, and every effort should be made to improve that

relationship. First and foremost schools should be valued for presenting excellent education for children living in the area they serve. Through the extended schools initiative schools should increasingly offer additional experiences to their children, services for their parents, and to members of the public in the locality. As publicly funded and maintained buildings schools are one of the most valuable assets in the public domain in Herefordshire. Full use of these assets should be sought, but in a way which does not undermine their core role.

Practical Steps

The Local Authority will:

- Encourage and support schools to offer wider range of services;
- Advise on and support appropriate third party use of school buildings and sites managed through school governors;
- Consider the community provision made by the school in any debate over change.