

HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS TASK GROUP

CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

9th NOVEMBER 2009

The formal consultation held on the Herefordshire Schools Task Group Interim Report ran from 25th September 2009 to 2nd November 2009.

The document was made available to all stakeholders and interested parties through a range of sources including schools, libraries, and the corporate council consultation web-site.

All 95 responses were formally acknowledged and logged. Responses were accepted until the date of the HSTG meeting of the 4th November 2009. This allowed for potential delays caused through the recent disruption to postal services. The 8 responses received after this deadline have been logged separately.

Breakdown of responses:

The 95 responses were received from:

- Single responses – 37
- Group responses – 56
- Not recorded – 2
- Total: 95

The responses were from the following:

- Personal responses – 29
- Professional responses - 62
- Not recorded - 4
- Total: 95

Group responses:

- Governing Bodies x 20
- Clusters x 5
- Parish councils x 11
- Schools x 13
- Colleges x 2
- Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads – HASH
- South Wye Primary Head Teachers
- Schools Forum
- Early Years and Extended Services Forum
- Out county – Worcestershire CYPD

Of the 95 responses received 75 provided quantitative and 20 qualitative feedback.

Analysis of Responses

The following information details the analysis of the 75 quantitative responses according to each section.

Section1: Cluster Working Recommendations

1.1: Engagement of all stakeholders is essential. Local communities and appropriate authorities must contribute to and take ownership of the outcomes of the process. The process should be open and inclusive where all those who seek to participate respect the views of others and treat those views with due regard to the differing faith, cultural and professional perspectives.

Strongly Agree	60	80.0%
Agree	13	17.3%
Disagree	2	2.7%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
No Response	0	0.0%
	75	100.0%

With 60 of the 75 responses indicating strong agreement and a further 13 agreeing there is positive acknowledgement and strong support for recommendation 1. This provides a strongly agree response rate of **80%** and a total support percentage of **97.3%**.

1.2: Co-operation is essential to meet the identified challenges. 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	48	64.0%
Agree	19	25.3%
Disagree	6	8.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
No Response	2	2.7%
	75	100.0%

48 of the 75 respondees strongly support recommendation 2 with a further 19

agreeing. This provides a positive response rate of **89.3%**.

1.3: 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	30	40.0%
Agree	36	48.0%
Disagree	6	8.0%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.3%
No Response	2	2.7%
	75	100.0%

With 66 of the 75 respondees registering agreement there is strong positive support for recommendation 3. This provides a positive response rate of **88%**.

1.4: 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 the Herefordshire Council Website. Accurate information relating to financial and pupil data and 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	27	36.0%
Agree	27	36.0%
Disagree	14	18.7%
Strongly Disagree	3	4.0%
No Response	4	5.3%
	75	100.0%

With 27 of the 75 respondees registering strong agreement and another 27 agreeing there is positive support for recommendation 4. This provides a positive response rate of **72%**. Those that registered disagreement or strong disagreement equate to **22.7%** which is the highest negative response within this section.

1.5: Schools facing challenges have specific issues relating to their development and sustainability. 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. As part of this duty governors should be required by the Local Authority, and Diocesan Boards if appropriate, to consider all options should such challenges face their school.

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. If necessary the Local Authority will use its powers to intervene if no cluster engagement has been undertaken prior to appointing to leadership vacancies or developing solutions to school specific issues.

Strongly Agree	21	28.0%
Agree	28	37.3%
Disagree	8	10.7%
Strongly Disagree	4	5.3%
No Response	14	18.7%
	75	100.0%

Of the 75 responses to this recommendation 21 strongly agree with a further 28 adding agreement. This equates to a positive response rate of **65.3%** - the lowest level of positive response for this section. **16%** indicate disagreement with this recommendation whereas **18.7%** did not respond.

Summary:

Section 1 – Cluster Working Recommendations: - has received a response rate average of **82.4%** in support of these recommendations. This evidences strong support for all 5 recommendations within the section with percentage positive responses ranging from **65.3% - 97.3%**.

Section2: School Leadership

2.1: 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 governance as well as design of staffing structures.

Strongly Agree	28	37.3%
Agree	36	48.0%
Disagree	8	10.7%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.7%
No Reponses	1	1.3%
	75	100.0%

With 28 respondees strongly agreeing and 36 agreeing this recommendation has strong support. This equates to 64 of the 75 respondees supporting this recommendation. This provides a positive response rate of **85.3%**.

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

Strongly Agree	27	36.0%
Agree	34	45.3%
Disagree	10	13.3%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.7%
No Reponses	2	2.7%
	75	100.0%

27 of the 59 respondees strongly support this recommendation with a further 34 agreeing making a total of 61 out of 75. This provides a positive response rate of **81.3%**.

2.3: Changes to the leadership of a school will be discussed in Cluster Meetings prior to any recruitment process taking place. Recognising that solutions may not be limited to the host cluster all Headteacher vacancies will also be shared with all Heads prior to recruitment so that every opportunity for alternative models is explored.

Strongly Agree	25	33.3%
Agree	30	40.0%
Disagree	13	17.3%
Strongly Disagree	4	5.3%
No Reponses	3	4.0%
	75	100.0%

Of the 75 responses 25 strongly agree with and 30 agree with this recommendation. This equates to a positive response rate of **73.3%**. This is in comparison to a **22.6%** negative response rate.

2.4: Resource and capital implications will be considered and prioritised throughout the planning process with Local Authority officer support.

Strongly Agree	22	29.3%
Agree	39	52.0%
Disagree	7	9.3%
Strongly Disagree	3	4.0%
No Responses	4	5.3%
	75	100.0%

With 22 of the 75 respondents strongly agreeing and 39 agreeing there is positive support for this recommendation. This represents a positive response rate of **80.4%**.

Summary:

Section 2 – School Leadership Recommendations: - has received a response rate average of **80.4%** in support of these recommendations. This evidences strong support for all 4 recommendations within the section with percentage positive responses ranging from **73.3% - 85.3%**.

Section3: 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.

Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 required an indication of preference for the threshold at which discussion and monitoring would take place involving cluster schools, Headteachers and appropriate authorities.

3.1: Surplus Capacity:

a) 25% (currently 20 Primary Schools, 0 High Schools)

Strongly Agree	13	22.4%
Agree	15	25.9%
Disagree	11	19.0%
Strongly Disagree	6	10.3%
No Response	13	22.4%
	58	100.0%

Percentage in agreement of 3.1a = **58.3%**.

b) 30% (currently 16 Primary Schools, 1 High School)

Strongly Agree	6	8.0%
Agree	20	26.7%
Disagree	16	21.3%
Strongly Disagree	10	13.3%
No Response	23	30.7%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.1b = **34.7%**.

c) 35% (currently 8 Primary Schools, 1 High School)

Strongly Agree	16	21.3%
Agree	15	20.0%
Disagree	11	14.7%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.7%
No Response	28	37.3%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.1c = **41.3%**.

3.1a has the greater positive support with 58.3%.

3.2: Falling Rolls:

a) 50% fall in admissions over a 2 year period

Strongly Agree	12	16.0%
Agree	19	25.3%
Disagree	14	18.7%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.7%
No Response	25	33.3%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.2a = **41.3%**.

b) 20% reduction in pupil numbers on roll over a two year period

Strongly Agree	13	17.3%
Agree	15	20.0%
Disagree	26	34.7%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.7%
No Response	16	21.3%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.2b = **37.3%** with **41.4%** disagreeing.

c) Both A and B

Strongly Agree	2	2.7%
Agree	23	30.7%
Disagree	16	21.3%
Strongly Disagree	7	9.3%
No Response	27	36.0%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.2c = **32.7%** with **30.6%** disagreeing.

3.2a has greater support receiving 41.3%.

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

3.3: Primary Pupil Numbers:

a) 36 or less (Small Schools Policy threshold)

Strongly Agree	5	6.7%
Agree	35	46.7%
Disagree	8	10.7%
Strongly Disagree	7	9.3%
No Response	20	26.7%

Percentage in agreement with 3.3a = **53.4%**. 75 100.0%

b) 37 – 45 (Monitoring threshold)

Strongly Agree	6	8.0%
Agree	36	48.0%
Disagree	7	9.3%
Strongly Disagree	6	8.0%
No Response	20	26.7%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.3b = **56%**.

c) 45 – 60 (Financial viability and sustainability)

Strongly Agree	13	17.3%
Agree	35	46.7%
Disagree	8	10.7%
Strongly Disagree	8	10.7%
No Response	11	14.7%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.3c = **49%**.

3.4: Secondary Pupil Numbers:

a) 200 or less (Small Schools Policy)

Strongly Agree	13	17.3%
Agree	33	44.0%
Disagree	5	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	7	9.3%
No Response	17	22.7%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.4a = **61.3%**.

b) 201 – 350 (Monitoring threshold)

Strongly Agree	6	8.00%
Agree	37	49.4%
Disagree	4	5.3%
Strongly Disagree	6	8.0%
No Response	22	29.3%
	75	100.0%

Percentage in agreement with 3.4b = **57.4%**.

Summary:

Section 3 – Sustainable Schools Recommendations: - in analyzing the responses to this section it became evident that the information collated does not provide clear strategic recommendations for each of the sections and in particular sections 3.1 and 3.2.

There is clear support for thresholds and levels to be set within each area of sustainability and this is evidenced in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

HSTG acknowledges that the way in which this section has been framed did not support the collation of clear and accurate data.

Section 4: Finance

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

Strongly Agree	13	17.3%
Agree	31	41.3%
Disagree	15	20.0%
Strongly Disagree	12	16.0%
No Response	4	5.3%
	75	100.0%

Of the 75 respondees 44 positively support this recommendation. This represents a positive response rate of **58.6%**.

4.2: 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	16	21.3%
Agree	41	54.7%
Disagree	12	16.0%
Strongly Disagree	5	6.7%
No Response	1	1.3%
	75	100.0%

16 of the 75 respondees strongly support this recommendation with a further 41 agreeing bringing the total of positive responses to 57. This represents a positive response rate of **76%**.

4.3: 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	19	25.3%
Agree	51	68.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	3	4.0%
No Response	2	2.7%
	75	100.0%

Of the 75 respondees 70 positively support this recommendation. This represents a positive response rate of **93.3%**.

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

Strongly Agree	19	25.3%
Agree	40	53.3%
Disagree	2	2.7%
Strongly Disagree	12	16.0%
No Response	2	2.7%
	75	100.0%

59 of the 75 respondees supported this recommendation. This represents a positive response rate of **78.6%**.

4.5: 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	5	6.7%
Agree	34	45.3%
Disagree	14	18.7%
Strongly Disagree	15	20.0%
No Response	7	9.3%
	75	100.0%

39 of the 75 respondees support this recommendation. This represents a positive response rate of **52%**.

Summary:

Section 4 – Finance Recommendations: - has received a response rate average of **71.7%** in support of these recommendations. This evidences support for all 5 recommendations within the section with percentage positive responses ranging from **52%-93.3%**.

Quantitative Feedback Summary Matrix:

Section	Average % Support	% Support Range
1	82.4%	65.3% - 97.3%
2	80.4%	73.3% - 85.3%
4	71.7%	52% - 93.3%

For section 3 please see individual responses and summary.

Qualitative Feedback:

20 responses received through this consultation provided written feedback and comment on each section. These are available in full as a separate reference document.

Section 5 of the consultation paper requested written feedback on the implications of National Strategies on school planning. The responses to this section are contained within the reference document.

This summary identifies key themes.

1: Cluster Working:

- Support for clusters being at the centre of planning.
- Sensible way forward but would need support from LA.
- Requirement for accurate data and information.
- Requirement for definition and identification of clusters.
- Requirement for LA to lead on county-wide strategy.
- Demand for strong political leadership and action.
- Does not support the development of post 16 strategy or provision.
- Must be proportional representation.
- Requirement for LA to lead on developing models.
- Strategy should be based upon pupil entitlement.
- Should be a county-wide strategy that clusters respond to.
- There may be models that evolve across clusters.
- Other agencies should support the need for change.
- Capacity would be an issue for schools and LA.
- Frequency and requirement for meetings would be a concern.
- Must consider parental choice.
- Encouragement for all clusters to work as collectives.
- This may set schools in competition.
- Some models of such working already in Herefordshire.
- Early Years settings need to be considered and included.
- Financial viability and sustainability would need to be considered.
- Stronger links between governing bodies across clusters required.
- Effective governor support required.
- LA challenge role of concern as may override cluster decision.
- Diocesan involvement essential.
- Collaboration must add value for the children and young people.
- Succession planning must be proactive not reactive.
- Concerns about sharing head teachers.
- Support for sharing staff and resources.

2: Leadership:

- Executive heads model is for inner cities not rural areas.
- Disagree with leadership and cluster models.
- Models offer exciting and challenging visions.
- Action from LA officers and elected members urgently needed.
- Unclear – who will have the decision authority?
- Could result in strong personalities trying to ‘empire build’.
- In line with our thinking.
- Must not be detrimental to children and young people.
- Decision must be down to local schools with advice from cluster.
- Needs to be developed in line with organisational change.
- Success of small schools in part due to Head teacher presence.
- May ‘railroad’ federated models of leadership.
- Better to reduce headships and administration costs rather than damage communities by closing schools.
- Would require high quality advice and support from officers.
- All schools should strive to find creative solutions.
- Model of executive headships not an ideal way forward but does make financial sense.
- No reference to crucial role of School Business Managers.
- Following best practice and selecting strong appropriate models is crucial.
- LA has a huge role to play in supporting governing bodies when considering different models of provision.
- Governors must retain responsibility for appointment of head teachers.
- Wider consultation should be included such as DCS/ OfSted etc.
- There have been too many missed opportunities to consider different models of leadership already. Actions speak louder than words.

3: Sustainable Schools:

- There can be fluctuation year on year with small school numbers.
- Recommendations eminently sensible.
- Criteria should consider post 16 provision.
- Difficult to respond.
- Believe this to be driven by urban:rural issues.
- Thresholds should consider pupil entitlement.
- Should be driven by realities and needs of the community.
- Support for small schools by design.
- Impact upon other schools should be mitigated against.
- A degree of surplus capacity is inevitable.
- This is an opportunity to review Small Schools Protection formula.
- Should all be reviewed regularly.
- We need a firm strategy for reorganisation of schools.
- Must consider faith schools.
- Pupil numbers should not be the only criteria.
- Very large schools should have their capacity reduced.
- Size should not matter providing the school is performing well and has creative plans for sustainability.

- Imperative to keep schools open to reduce travel times.
- The encouragement of innovative solutions makes it illogical to set fixed criteria.
- We would be concerned before reaching the levels set within this and seeking support.
- Cannot agree with any as will be skewed by other factors.
- This is a matter for LA policy.

4: Finance:

- Very idealistic and probably unrealistic.
- Agreement for centres of excellence.
- Difficult to ensure equity and access to centres of excellence.
- Will require transport and access planning.
- Will require mature approach.
- 'Should' still allows for individual autonomy.
- Funding is different across sectors. Primary has less flexibility or funding stream available.
- Flexibility between capital and revenue would be helpful.
- Should exclude Secondary sector as they have access to more funding streams.
- Financial planning is key.
- Schools need to maintain control.
- Whole-hearted agreement and support in securing fairer funding for Herefordshire.
- There is a need to address transport costs.
- Devolved funding could cause friction between head teachers.
- 'Super schools do not mean better schools'.
- Economies of scale can be achieved through schools purchasing together.
- Situation more complex when considering faith schools etc.
- Finance needs equality across the county per pupil head.
- More personnel with an educational background should be involved in finance discussions.
- It is just as important to maintain sustainability in rural areas as central areas.
- Centres of excellence should not be at the expense of other schools.
- With expert support from the LA we would consider pooling a proportion of our budget.
- Schools should contribute to a project which is of benefit to the cluster.

5: National Strategies:

- Funding not flexible enough.
- Must consider rural implications.
- These are largely statutory so must be considered.
- LA should become commissioners.
- Agreed in principle.
- Need to challenge and ensure strategies are fit for rural Herefordshire.

- We seek to work with any national initiative in a way the best suits the needs of our children.
- Decisions should be deferred to after forthcoming elections.
- Our vision should have Herefordshire at its centre.
- Requirement to work closer together in the delivery.
- Difficult to sometimes understand them.
- A stronger steer is required for 14-19 developments.
- We should work together to influence government strategy.
- 'So many strategies – So little time!'

Additional Comments:

- A county strategic plan is required.
- Engagement with partners when devising strategy.
- Bottom-up approach will result in a lack of cohesions and decisions based upon self-interest.
- Consultation period too short.
- Consultation paper too complex.
- Management of consultation poor.
- Impressed by openness of debate.
- Web based responses difficult.
- Appreciation for the work of HSTG.
- Challenge to include all comments on report to Council.
- Asking for comment on principles which does not move situation on.
- Parents require a more informed debate.
- Guidelines a step in the right direction.
- Governors and head teachers unsuited to making hard decisions which impact upon their schools.
- Positively received and allows for new strategic plan.
- Positively endorsed.
- Status quo is not sustainable.
- Small Schools Subsidy should be reviewed asap.
- PANS should be reviewed.
- Demand for strong action from political leaders and officers.
- LA should make strategic decisions – not schools.
- Disappointed that there is no indication of how challenge will be met.

Kathy Roberts.
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 9.11.09.