

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>SCHOOLS FORUM</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>23 SEPTEMBER 2011</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE HEREFORDSHIRE LEARNING COMMUNITY</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMISSIONING (ADULTS, CHILDREN &amp; HEALTH)</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

This is a discussion document.

### **Recommendation(s)**

**THAT Schools Forum note and comment on the report as part of its advisory function.**

### **Key Points Summary**

- The Herefordshire learning community is changing in response to greater opportunities and freedoms afforded by Government, including more opportunities for schools to be autonomous and collaborate with others.
- Schools Forum has requested that the Local Authority provide its vision through a set of guiding principles for the Herefordshire learning community. Draft principles, produced from discussions with partners, children and young people are set out in this paper.
- These principles are for debate and discussion to establish what they mean in terms of roles, responsibilities, contributions and actions of Herefordshire's learning community to fulfil the principles.

### **Alternative Options**

- 1 None tabled

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2 The discussion, alongside those with the Schools Strategic Planning Group, headteacher forums and the Herefordshire Association of Governors will be used to confirm the principles and approach in Herefordshire.

## Introduction and Background

- 3 The local authority is accountable for commissioning providers and for ensuring that every early years, school, college and training provider plays its part in giving children and families an excellent start and preparation for life. The local authority also uses its knowledge and expertise of broader contexts to ensure schools are able to collaborate for the greater good.
- 4 Early years providers, schools and colleges are responsible for determining with their communities, the vision and direction for their institutions.
- 5 Despite a recent marginal rise in birth rates, Herefordshire continues to experience falling school rolls as larger cohorts of pupils leave at ages 16 and 19 than enter reception. A significant consequence of this is that Herefordshire's overall funding for schools and early years provision is reduced, both for local authority maintained schools and academies and all types of early years providers
- 6 Other than for Reception Year, Herefordshire's early years provision is predominantly supplied by the private, voluntary and independent sector, with a small proportion being provided through 13 maintained nursery classes at schools.
- 7 Successive governments have introduced legislation to give greater autonomy to schools and to make it easier for popular and successful schools to expand. The current Government is introducing further legislation aimed at making such expansion easier for schools. The effect of this for schools in Herefordshire at a time of falling numbers of children in schools is that surplus capacity at other schools, and possibly vulnerable schools in terms of pupil numbers, is increased.
- 8 Against this background, Schools Forum has requested that the Local Authority provide its vision through a set of guiding principles for the Herefordshire learning community. Equally, the national direction is for governing bodies to play the pivotal role in determining, with their communities, the vision and direction for their institution. A successful learning community, including early years providers, schools, colleges, and the local authority will be underpinned by a collective set of principles, so that Herefordshire children and families are to be assured of equality of access, opportunity and achievement wherever they live.

## Key Considerations

- 9 The following guiding principles are set out to form the basis for discussion. They reflect the broad views expressed in partnership discussions between the Local Authority, the Herefordshire learning community, including the Schools Strategic Planning Group, and the wider community of Herefordshire including the views of children and young people, local business and commerce.
- 10 For Herefordshire, there are some really exciting possibilities with the potential freedoms within the national curriculum and through academy freedoms. One such example is the opportunities that will be afforded by Herefordshire's high speed broadband development. Herefordshire is well placed to create a cutting edge ICT curriculum which focuses much more on teaching our children and young people how to make ICT work for them in their learning and through to adult life and economic wellbeing. Children and young people live in a global society and need the skills and understanding to function in this context.
- 11 We now want to test these guiding principles through Schools Forum and other representative groups such as the Schools Strategic Planning Group, headteacher forums and the Herefordshire Association of Governors. The main purpose of these principles is to provide

challenge and stimulate a number of questions in terms of what they mean in practice for the Herefordshire learning community. This paper begins the questioning and thinking process which will help all partners to focus on what the final guiding principles mean in terms of the respective roles, responsibilities, contributions and actions of everyone involved in educating and developing the children and young people of Herefordshire now and into the future.

- 12 The children and young people of Herefordshire need vibrant and effective early years' providers, schools, colleges and training providers to help them become successful adults.
- 13 Residents and businesses in Herefordshire need young people who have the social skills, curiosity, ability to learn, and the right knowledge to help Herefordshire be a good place to live, work and invest.
- 14 To be an effective education system, partners need to be able to sign up to guiding principles for Herefordshire; understand what they mean in terms of their personal contribution; and commit to undertaking their role, responsibilities and actions to fulfil those principles.
- 15 Herefordshire has successfully delivered high quality education across a range of indicators over a number of years. The performance of young people by the age of 16 and those in full time education up to 19 has been strong particularly in relation to level 2 (GCSE and equivalent) and level 3 (A level and equivalent). Performance has consistently been in or close to the upper quartile nationally on key GCSE and A level measures with the largest post 16 provider, Herefordshire Sixth Form College, having a 99.4% A level (or equivalent) pass rate and two of the four maintained school sixth forms achieving a 100% pass rate. GCSE pass rates have seen a year on year improvement but there is still variation in the performance of High Schools. Although the performance of boys improved in 2011, and the gap between boys and girls achievement narrowed, there remains the need to raise boys performance in some schools where the difference is too great.
- 16 The performance of children by the end of the early years foundation stage and across primary schools has not been as strong and as a result the Herefordshire Public Services Vision and Joint Corporate Plan has set the raising of educational achievement and outcomes of children in early years settings and primary schools as a key corporate priority.
- 17 There were significant improvements in performance measures in 2011 in both early years and primary outcomes. The proportion of children reaching nationally expected levels of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage improved from 44.6% in 2010 to 56% in 2011. This is one of the biggest improvements in the country and moves early years performance from one of the worst nationally in 2010 to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in 2011. There is still much to be done to build on this strong improvement and move performance into the upper quartile.
- 18 In primary schools the overall achievement of children by the ages of 7 and 11 also improved in 2011. The proportion of children reaching expected levels of attainment (level 2c+) in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of 7 improved strongly. This was also the case for children at the age of 11 with improvement in the proportion of children attaining expected levels of attainment (level 4+) in English and in mathematics and in English and mathematics combined. Overall 80.9% of children reached the expected level in English and 78.6% in mathematics and the proportion attaining level 4 in both increase from 71.4% in 2010 to 75.5% in 2011. These figures are above the national average and indicate an upward trend which, if continued, will move Herefordshire primary schools into the upper quartile of performance nationally within the medium term.

## Draft Guiding Principles:

- 19 The following draft principles are set out for the whole Herefordshire learning community, including early years, schools, sixth forms and colleges as well as the local authority.
- Our business is about educating and developing EVERY child and young person. We will not turn our back on any child or young person.
  - We will have the highest expectations and believe in the talents and abilities of every child and young person.
  - Within 5 years, we are going to be at top quartile performance nationally for all education performance measures. For those where we are already top quartile nationally, we will be consistently in the top 3 against statistical neighbours. High quality education will deliver high levels of engagement, improvement and achievement.
  - We are going to use the freedoms within the revised national curriculum to develop curriculum arrangements which give Herefordshire children a head start in developing the skills and knowledge they need to be successful adults and to give Herefordshire an economic advantage over other areas. This will be grounded in evidence of what works in engaging and developing children and young people and accelerating their learning.
  - As publically funded institutions, all early years settings, schools and colleges are accountable not just to their children, pupils and families, but to their wider communities and Herefordshire as a whole. This entails operating within the funding available, making their facilities generally available to their communities, and successfully educating every child and young person by providing the best possible care, guidance and support and high quality teaching and learning experiences and approaches.
  - Every school is encouraged to be part of a formal school collaboration, hard federation, trust or academy chain to reduce running costs, enhance opportunities for children and staff, and to reassure their local community that every step has been taken to maintain high quality cost-effective education provision at a time of reducing resources.
  - For as long as formula funding schemes are determined locally, commissioning and other funding decisions will be taken which support collaborative arrangements. This will ensure that the level of subsidy which is essential to maintain a rural network of schools is realistic.
  - The local authority is also publically funded. It is accountable for commissioning providers and for ensuring that every early years provider, school, college and training provider plays its part in giving children and families a good deal, and for using its knowledge and expertise of broader contexts to ensure schools are able to collaborate for the greater good.
  - Some children have life experiences which make learning more difficult. Education providers, local authority, health commissioners and providers will all work together to make sure that every child and young person has their barriers to learning identified accurately and action is put in place to reduce or remove them and close the gap in achievement.

- Business needs good schools and colleges and vice versa. We will have the best collaboration possible between them to make school and college experience more relevant to the world of work and to give young people and staff more support from business to develop a more creative learning experience.

## Questions

20 The following questions are included to shape the discussion:

- How can these principles be applied to develop approaches that achieve the aspirations contained within them, including performance?
- How can these principles be applied to deliver exciting possibilities across Herefordshire's learning community whatever the status of individual institutions, for example, through the curriculum?
- How can these principles be applied to the funding arrangements for schools and early years providers and local authority statutory services?
- What additional opportunities can be afforded to children and young people by schools becoming academies?
- What skills and support do governing bodies need to enable them to evaluate and progress changes to their schools and colleges to ensure they are sustainable?
- How should the Local Authority work with schools if collaborative arrangements are not addressing the issues of sustainability with a particular school or schools?
- How long should the Local Authority allow collaborative arrangements to continue where educational standards and financial sustainability are at risk?

21 As part of the development of these principles the local authority will set out what it means to be a local authority school, as opposed to an academy or free school so that schools and the learning community are clear about the differences.

22 Governing bodies will play the lead role in determining, with their communities, the vision and direction for their institution. The local authority as part of Herefordshire's learning community will use the principles, once confirmed, to deliver its statutory duties. These include the commissioning of school places and school organisation. In this regard the local authority will work firstly in a facilitative way with individual or groups of schools to address long term issues of surplus places and falling roles. Where the principles of Herefordshire's learning community are not going to be achieved, the local authority will then take a more formal role in coordinating and leading reviews of local school provision. This will include consideration of alternative modes of delivery such as academy status and may, through due process, lead to some closures.

## Community Impact

23 The establishment of a clear set of guiding principles will have wide ranging community impacts, benefiting children and young people and their families across Herefordshire.

## **Financial Implications**

- 24 Despite a recent marginal rise in birth rates, Herefordshire continues to experience falling school rolls as higher cohorts of pupils leave at age 16 and 19 than enter reception. A significant consequence of this is that Herefordshire's funding for schools is reduced significantly.
- 25 If the Herefordshire learning community is to ensure that it provides its children and young people with the best possible outcomes individually and that it meets the needs of the people and businesses of Herefordshire into the future, more financially efficient means of delivering these entitlements need to be found. Herefordshire Council has a duty to ensure that this is done in a planned way.

## **Legal Implications**

- 26 Herefordshire Council has a duty to secure sufficient school places and also has a duty to ensure quality provision.
- 27 Schools are responsible for determining their own collaborative arrangements with other schools.
- 28 The Local Authority remains responsible for school organisation in its area including decisions on school closures, where this is necessary, and determining the capacity of schools, in liaison with the DfE in the case of academies.
- 29 Successive governments have introduced legislation to make it easier for popular and successful schools to expand and the current Government is introducing further legislation aimed at making such expansion easier for schools. The effect of this for Herefordshire at a time of falling school rolls is that surplus capacity at other schools, and possibly vulnerable schools in terms of pupil numbers, is increased.

## **Risk Management**

- 30 The risk to outcomes for children and young people are severe in a school market place which sees schools struggling financially due to falling rolls. This paper seeks to establish a way forward which will determine principles and actions to mitigate against this risk.

## **Consultees**

- 31 Schools Forum, Strategic Planning Group, Heads Forms, Herefordshire Association of Governors, Colleges

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

None identified