

## **POLICY ON 14-19 EDUCATION**

**Report By: Head of Inspection, Advice and School  
Performance Service**

### **Wards Affected**

Countywide

### **Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee about the key issues surrounding 14-19 phase of education both locally and nationally.

### **Financial Implications**

2. Funding for Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority (LEA). Schools use their delegated funding to make provision for their Key Stage 4 pupils under the current LMS arrangements. Funding for all Post 16 pupils (16-19 year olds) is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This impacts directly on the four High Schools with sixth forms. All known costs for 2004-2005 are covered by the respective LEA and LSC budgets.

### **Report**

3. The national situation regarding 14-19 education is complex and is difficult to summarise briefly. In essence, the government is seeking to increase the numbers of pupils staying in education and training Post -16, provide a wider range of choice of courses to young people, target the skills gaps and broaden the curriculum at Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) with particular emphasis on preparation for the world of work in the future.
4. There are many players and providers in the 14-19 phase of education.

These include:

- High Schools
- Special Schools
- Pupil Referral Units
- Sixth Form Colleges
- Colleges of further education
- Work based learning providers
- Private and voluntary organisations
- Local Education Authorities
- Learning and Skills Councils
- The Connexions Service

5. Over the last few years National Government has initiated many changes in the 14-19 phase of education including the setting-up of the Connexions Service and the LSC at a national and regional level. LEA Ofsted Inspections now include a judgement on how 14-19 education is supported. In addition, Ofsted will also be conducting 14-19 Area-Wide Inspections in every LSC region so it is safe to assume that in 2004/2005 14-19 provision in Herefordshire will be keenly scrutinised as part of two different but related inspection processes.
6. The Learning and Skills Council is also charged with undertaking a Strategic Area Review (StAR) of Post 16 arrangements in consultation with Local Education Authorities, schools, colleges, parents, employers and other stakeholders.
7. In the longer term the Government's response to the "Tomlinson Report" (the Government's 14-19 Working Group due to report in Autumn 2004) is likely to have a profound impact on 14-19 education provision, particularly with the proposed introduction of a single diploma framework is suggested for all pupils at Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels, and curriculum provision offered through collaborative arrangements.
8. The situation locally in Herefordshire is both straightforward and complex. At Key Stage 3 (14 year olds), GCSE (16 year olds) and at 'A' Level Herefordshire pupils perform well above the national average. Whilst improvement at these benchmarks is always possible and should be strived for, more progress, for instance needs to be made in:
  - Improving staying on rates in education Post 16
  - Improving the quality and range of vocational education at Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) and Post 16
  - Bridging the skills gaps between what the education system produces and what employers and the growth areas of the local and national economy require
  - Giving pupils' more choice in terms of locally provided education and training
  - Addressing the inclusion, choice and diversity agenda for all pupils.
9. In October 2003 a 14-19 Conference was held at the Leadership Trust in Ross-on-Wye which brought together, under the auspices of the LSC, all the different local institutions and organisations involved in the 14-19 phase of education. This was a successful conference that tended to confirm that 14-19 Education in Herefordshire was characterized by energetic activity, some good quality provision and strong partnership working. What was missing was an overall 14-19 policy that brought these activities together into a coherent strategy to plan future provision.
10. Following the Conference, the various partner organisations including the LEA and LSC have been working closely together on a number of linked activities designed to bring greater coherence to provision within the County. These actions and activities are briefly outlined in the following paragraphs.
11. A Consultant (funded by the LSC) has been engaged to draft a "Strategic Framework for the Implementation of the 14-19 Agenda in Herefordshire". Working directly to a working group of representatives from across the County, the document is currently going through the final drafting stages and should be available by July.

12. The LSC and LEA have jointly funded a post for two years for a 14-19 Strategy Manager. The post has been offered to the successful candidate who should begin work within the next two months.
13. The Herefordshire Learning Partnership has been established, chaired by the Principal of the Herefordshire College of Technology (HCT). This partnership board covers all phases of education (from 0-80 plus) and is charged with taking a strategic overview and rationalising of many different groups and committees operating across the County.
14. Amongst its many roles and responsibilities it will,
  - Build and oversee a strategic framework for the delivery of the Learning Ambition of the Herefordshire Plan.
  - Act as the Strategic Area Review Steering Group for Herefordshire
15. The Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) for 14-16 year olds continues into its second year. Funded by the LSC, managed by the Marches Consortium and involving the secondary schools and the Education Directorate, the IFP is a front-line initiative, **now in its second year of operation**. It is widening the curriculum opportunities available to pupils at Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) through collaboration between schools colleges and WBLP (Work Based Learning Providers). The Herefordshire project was recently inspected by Ofsted as part of a national survey.
16. Local feedback is very encouraging with Ofsted praising many aspects of the programme, including leadership, course provision and the value pupils' place on having a more flexible curriculum. Ofsted also identified a single barrier to further progress namely where schools (only too aware of the league tables based upon 5A\*-C grades at GCSE) pay lip-service to the philosophy of vocational education. Other issues, such as a common timetable in a rural authority, remain a continuing challenge to overcome.

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT The Committee consider the report and comment on the matters raised.**

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified