

REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL PLACES

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE

CABINET

16TH MARCH, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve a county-wide review of school provision in primary, secondary and post-16 phases of education.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

THAT the review be agreed in line with the phased programme set out in the report.

Reasons

- Falling Rolls in schools are significant, are projected to continue until 2016, and are already causing difficulties for schools to maintain the quality of teaching and learning and to consider the additional initiatives expected of them.
- The existing review policies within the School Organisation Plan do not provide an adequate basis to consider the full impact of the problem.

Considerations

1. Numbers in primary schools are projected to fall from a peak of 14,342 in 1999 to below 12,000 in 2016. There could be some recovery in the early 2020s but population projections suggest that numbers will recover by less than 5%.
2. Fewer children in schools will lead to reduced allocations from Central Government, and lead to reduction in teacher numbers. It will be important to ensure that the resources that are available are used to best effect. Indeed it is estimated that over 40% of the budget of a small school is spent on fixed costs [premises, head, secretary, caretaker] but only 13% of a large school.
3. This trend is highlighted by the age profile of children resident in the County.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources on 01432 260802

AGE GROUP	CHILDREN IN COUNTY	CHILDREN ON ROLL
0-1	1695	0
1-2	1770	0
2-3	1723	0
3-4	1707	379
4-5	1722	1486
5-6	1917	1720
6-7	2038	1816
7-8	2039	1823
8-9	2044	1800
9-10	2146	1872
10-11	2023	1851
11-12	2000	1914
12-13	2119	1896
13-14	2201	2045
14-15	2165	2061
15-16	2137	2001

4. The School Organisation Plan does have policies setting out the criteria when schools should be reviewed. On the basis of these policies the future of three small schools would be reviewed and provision in the Leominster, Ross-on-Wye and Hereford areas. Reviews confined to these schools would not address the issues evident in all areas of the county.
5. Falling Rolls create 'surplus space' and this suggests that resources are not being used to best effect.

	Primary Schools		High Schools	
	Total Pupil Numbers	Total School Capacity	Total Pupil Numbers	Total School Capacity
Weobley, Kington, Wigmore	1588	1876	1364	1460
Leominster, Bromyard	1661	2086	1081	1300
Kingstone, Peterchurch	1071	1316	1018	995
Hereford City	5296	6293	4818	4900
Ledbury & Ross	2759	3255	2176	2100
Total	12,375	14,826	10,457	10,755

6. The LSC is responsible for planning post 16 provision. They support the review given
 - It would be very difficult to review high school provision to 16 without taking account of sixth form provision, especially within the context of a developing 14-19 phase of learning and the need for curriculum progression routes that are increasingly indifferent to the traditional break at 16.
 - A changing context as the result of:
 - Criticism voiced during the Area Wide Inspection in January 2005 which was repeated in the recent Joint Area Review that some sixth form curricula remain insufficiently broad and also do not cater for learners at levels 1 and 2.

- Linked to the previous point, the DfES 14-19 Implementation Plan which will make great demands on schools with regards to the phased introduction of 14 new Vocational Diplomas.
 - The development of the New Measures of Success for Value Added at “A” level which will provide a new context for considering sixth form performance.
- The demographic decline of young people in the county is inescapable even though its full effects will take some years to work through to sixth forms.
7. It is acknowledged that no parts of the County operate entirely separately, but by considering each part of the County more thought can be given to the possibilities of cooperation between schools. It is suggested that the countywide role played by St. Mary’s R C High School and Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat High School be part of the Hereford City process.
 8. It is proposed that in each area, a discussion document be produced for consultation with schools, parents and diocesan bodies LSC and others. This would lead to recommendations from the local authority for further discussion. It would only be at the end of that stage that any statutory notice if required would be issued.
 9. In this review the following issues will be addressed.
 10. The SOC supported the proposal for a review, with one suggestion being made that primary schools should be reviewed on an area basis, but there should be a separate countywide review of high school provision. Consideration is being given to this, recognizing the need to balance the desire to explore cooperation between primary and high schools, and also to assess the possibilities or cooperation between high schools. In addition, consideration is being given to sixth form review and the links with the Area Wide Inspection of 14-19 provision and the improvement plan agreed by DfES.
 11. It is to be noted that schools are funded by a direct grant from Central Government. In the main this grant will vary in direct proportion to pupil numbers, and not reflect the number of schools within the County.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The review does create risks in introducing uncertainty and anxiety for school and parents. Parents may assume certain outcomes which are deleterious to some individual schools. The recruitment of staff to either small schools or from outside the county may be affected. Although there are these risks they can be mitigated by maintaining the review timescale and having clear communication strategy throughout the exercise to reduce uncertainty.

The risks associated with not proceeding with the review are greater.

It should also be noted that the review will require much staff time. The timetable proposed, although demanding should be met within existing resources. However, if there are other demands on staff the programme may have to stop or additional resource found.

Consultees

School Organisation Committee
Learning & Skills Council

Background Papers

School Organisation Plan
School Organisation Committee Report date 9.02.06
Letter from LSC to High Schools with Sixth Forms