



## **Children's & Young People's Directorate**

### **Review of School Provision**

#### **Kington, Weobley & Wigmore Areas**

#### **Discussion Paper**

Your views on school provision in this area are sought. If you would like to comment on any issue raised in this paper or linked to school provision, please respond by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 either in writing to:

**George Salmon, Head of Commissioning & Improvement,  
Children & Young People's Directorate, PO Box 185,  
Hereford HR4 9ZR**

or by e-mail to: [gsalmon@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gsalmon@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## **AIM**

This paper has been written and circulated to highlight the falling numbers of pupils in schools in this area, and to aid discussion over the action that should be taken in response to this.

## **BACKGROUND**

In England and Wales generally there are falling rolls in schools. This reflects the demographic pattern following the 'baby boom' in the late 1940's and the subsequent fluctuation in numbers of children in the country (699,200 births in 1991 in E & W 594,634 in 2001 and 639,721 in 2004, and the changing social pattern of women having fewer children (2.95 children per female in 1964, 1.71 in 2003).

There were 2,090 births in Herefordshire in 1991, which fell to 1,693 in 2004 – although this was an increase from a low of 1,567 in 2002, in line with the national trend. There is no evidence that the county has lower fertility rates than nationally, but the older age structure means that a lower proportion of the county's population is of childbearing age than in England & Wales as a whole. The Government Actuary's Dept (GAD) base their fertility rates on the population of women aged 15-44; 17.5% of Herefordshire population are females of these ages, compared to 20.7% of the national population. This proportion is expected to fall to 16.0% in Herefordshire by 2011 (19.9% in E&W), which goes some way to explaining why population forecasts indicate that the number of 0 year-olds in the county will fall to 1,440 from the current estimate of 1,700 (mid-2004).

As a result as at August 2005 there were 2,201 13-14 year olds registered with GPs in the County but only 1695 0 year olds. By 2011 it is projected that the number of 0 year olds will fall to 1,440.

However in recent years the % of children living in the County attending maintained schools in the County have varied between 87% and 95% (rates vary by school catchment area) i.e. not all children living in the County attend maintained schools in the County.

Based on the above, pupil projections indicate that, in September 2015 the reception intake could be approximately 1,300 compared to 1,486 in the academic year 2005/06. At present there is the capacity in schools to take 2,118 children into Reception Classes.

There is additional housing proposed in the Unitary Development Plan up to 2011. The Regional Spatial Strategy also suggests that the rate of house building may increase between 2011 and 2026. However, it is to be noted that 4,372 houses were completed in the County between 1999 and 2005. During this time the numbers of primary school pupils dropped by 1,253.

## **WHY ARE FALLING ROLLS IMPORTANT?**

Herefordshire will receive less money in the Direct Schools Grant from Central Government if pupil numbers drop and schools will consequently receive lower allocations.

Smaller school budgets will lead to fewer staff. Fewer staff threaten the quality of teaching and learning and the breadth of the curriculum on offer.

As budgets reduce, a greater proportion will be spent on fixed costs e.g. rates, heating, lighting, and buildings maintenance.

At the same time the expectations on schools are increasing, higher standards, personalised learning, broader curriculum, extended school services, responsibility for the wider children's agenda.

Falling rolls will not have a uniform impact. The various areas of the County will be affected to different degrees, although the majority of schools are likely to suffer from greater fluctuation from year to year, making planning more difficult.

It is in this context that the review of the provision of schools is being undertaken.

## **Local Context: Kington, Weobley & Wigmore**

The North West of the County is served by two 11-16 High Schools and one 11-18 High School. In the High School Partnerships there are 15 primary schools, 2 of which have half-time local authority nurseries.

Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School and St Mary's RC High School provide denominational places for 11-16 year olds although only 28 students from this area currently travel to these on free places. There are 4 voluntary aided and 6 voluntary controlled Church of England primary schools in the Kington, Weobley and Wigmore areas.

Additional facts and figures on the area are set out in the attached appendices.

### **Primary Sector**

The projected number of primary school pupils in this area at January 2011 will be 1,479 compared to a current level at January 2006 of 1,626, i.e. a reduction of 147, pupils, equivalent to 9%

Assuming the current level of DFES funding, and at constant prices it is estimated that the 15 schools in the area would have a budget of £4,258,187 compared to £4,549,187 in 2006/07, equal to a reduction of £291,000. If the same level of expenditure were made on fixed costs as in 2005/06 (premises related costs and headteacher salary), there would be £3,035,591 available for the variable costs in the 15 schools.

### **Secondary Sector**

The projected number of secondary school pupils in this area at January 2011 will be 1,286 compared to a current level at January 2006 of 1,365, i.e. a reduction of 79, pupils, equivalent to 6%.

Assuming the current level of DFES funding, and at constant prices it is estimated that the 3 schools in the area would have a budget of £4,566,375 compared to £4,787,575 in 2006/07, equal to a reduction of £221,000. If the same level of expenditure were made on fixed costs as in 2005/06 (premises related costs and headteacher salary), there would be £3,930,762 available for the variable costs in the 3 schools.

**Are we sure that we can maintain and improve the standards in teaching and learning?**

There are also more immediate issues, which should be considered in the review.

1. Quality of Teaching and Learning

Generally, the standards of teaching and learning are high. KS1 and KS2 results as a whole are above the County average.

One school has been given 'notice to improve' by Ofsted.

Ofsted Inspections have identified some issues related to children experiencing 'a degree of rural social isolation ..... many come with language skills that are below average ..... (some) have difficulty with articulation as well as with the social component of communication ..... are reluctant to converse other than in monosyllables.'

2. Staffing Issues

The primary schools' budgets are projected to reduce by £291,000 over the next 5 years. Schools may go into deficit over this period unless staff costs are reduced.

Nine out of the 15 primary schools were identified as having possible budget problems in a countywide exercise in Autumn 2005.

One school will be recruiting to the headteacher's post.

3. Wider Role of the School in the Community

Many of the schools have wider uses within the community they serve. Weobley Primary School and Weobley High School have developed as the first 'fully extended' school in the County. However many have a history of wider community use either on formal or informal bases (Shobdon, Brilley, Kington, Lady Hawkins, Wigmore High School). Others have links with playgroups (Leintwardine, Wigmore, Staunton, Credenhill, Kingsland, Shobdon).

A large part of the area has benefited from the Sure Start Programme. The implementation of the second phase of the Children's Centre Programme envisages a Children's Centre in Kington, and outreach working from Leominster.

Eardisley has a Doctors Surgery on site.

4. Catchment Areas

The request to change the provided school designation for Bearwood was deferred pending a review.

There are a number of examples of anomalies in catchment areas, mainly due to historical reasons. For instance, Luston Primary School has a catchment area which in part has Wigmore High School as provided school, and in part The Minster College. Kingsland Primary School has a catchment area which in part has Wigmore High School as provided school, and in part Weobley High School.

5. Quality of School Buildings

The total outstanding maintenance on all schools in the three areas amounts to £2,571,239 with 3 primary schools requiring high levels of maintenance in the medium term.

In terms of the suitability of accommodation, one school has no dedicated hall or library, another has no library and a third has no playing field.

The lack of progress in replacing Staunton on Wye Primary School is of particular concern.

6. Aligning Capacity and Pupils in Catchment

All but 3 schools have a greater capacity than the projected pupil numbers, however five are projected to have a greater disparity (both at least 25% and 30 surplus).

7. Temporary Accommodation

There are 7 temporary classrooms used by Primary Schools, and 7 by High Schools (as at January 2006). All but recent temporary buildings have higher running costs particularly energy. Given the anticipated steep increase in energy prices consideration should be given to removing the temporary classrooms where possible.

## Kington District

### Pupil Numbers On Roll / Forecast 2006-2011

Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.

Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.

Schools	NOR January 2006	Net Capacity	Projected Numbers January 2011	Pupil Percentage Change 2006-2011
Almeley Primary	66	63		
Brilley Primary	31	56		
Eardisley Primary	86	105		
Kington Primary	223	210		
Pembridge Primary	91	95		
Sub-Total	497	529	453	-8.85
Kington Lady Hawkins High	444	510	466	4.95

### School Maintenance Costs/Suitability Issues

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues	
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms
Almeley Primary	£539.10	£564.78	10.00	1
Brilley Primary	£2,320.94	£1,284.80	12.17	0
Eardisley Primary	£1,009.47	£826.81	4.67	0
Kington Primary	£820.60	£871.40	5.57	1
Pembridge Primary	£175.16	£167.79	9.42	0
Lady Hawkins High	£1,212.10	£1,055.24	3.46	2

## Weobley District

### Pupil Numbers On Roll / Forecast 2006-2011

Error! Not a valid link.  
Error! Not a valid link.

Schools	NOR January 2006	Net Capacity	Projected Numbers January 2011	Pupil Percentage Change 2006-2011
Canon Pyon Primary	96	91		
Credenhill Primary	156	210		
Dilwyn Primary	34	56		
Staunton-On-Wye Primary	64	70		
Weobley Primary	180	210		
Sub-Total	530	637	455	-14.15
Weobley High	444	499	392	-11.71

### School Maintenance Costs/Suitability Issues

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues		
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms	
Canon Pyon Primary	£192.36	£202.93	6.06	1	
Credenhill Primary	£801.95	£595.73	4.00	0	
Dilwyn Primary	£1,965.41	£1,193.29	10.13	0	
Staunton-on-Wye Primary	£444.05	£405.99	12.07	0	
Weobley Primary	£399.55	£342.47	2.87	0	
Weobley High	£1,414.52	£1,258.62	3.09	4	



## Wigmore District

### Pupil Numbers On Roll / Forecast 2006-2011

Error! Not a valid link.  
Error! Not a valid link.

Schools	NOR January 2006	Net Capacity	Projected Numbers January 2011	Pupil Percentage Change 2006-2011
Kingsland Primary	129	119		
Leintwardine Primary	95	105		
Orleton Primary	184	209		
Shobdon Primary	49	70		
Wigmore Primary	161	210		
Sub-Total	618	713	588	-4.85
Wigmore High	477	450	430	-9.85

### School Maintenance Costs/Suitability Issues

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues	
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms
Kingsland Primary	£226.18	£245.18	3.96	0
Leintwardine Primary	£570.36	£516.04	5.17	1
Orleton Primary	£847.39	£746.03	4.12	2
Shobdon Primary	£448.98	£314.29	10.90	0
Wigmore Primary	£159.43	£122.23	4.23	1
Wigmore High	£868.03	£920.12	3.32	1

### NEXT STEPS

Please respond by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Either in writing to      George Salmon

Head of Commissioning & Improvement  
Children & Young People's Directorate

## APPENDIX 3

P O Box 185  
Hereford  
HR4 9ZR

By fax 01432 260808

Or by e-mail to [gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk)

These responses will influence further debate on the action that should be taken in response to falling numbers of children. This action would be set out in a subsequent paper for further consultation before any action is taken.

Annex 3

### **Children & Young People's Directorate**

#### **Review of School Provision**

#### **Kingstone and Peterchurch Areas**

## Discussion Paper

Your views on school provision in this area are sought. If you would like to comment on any issue raised in this paper or linked to school provision, please respond by Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July either in writing to:

**George Salmon, Head of Commissioning & Improvement,  
Children & Young People's Directorate, PO Box 185,  
Hereford HR4 9ZR**

or by e-mail to:

**[gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk)**

### **AIM**

This paper has been written and circulated to highlight the falling numbers of pupils in schools in this area, and to aid discussion over the action that should be taken in response to this.

### **BACKGROUND**

In England generally there are falling rolls in schools. This reflects the demographic pattern following the 'baby boom' in the late 1940's and the subsequent fluctuation in numbers of children in the country (660,800 births in 1991 and 563,700 births in 2001) and the changing social pattern of fewer women having children, and having fewer children later in life (2.95 children per female in 1964, 1.71 in 2003).

In Hereford this national trend is exacerbated by fewer 20-34 year olds in the population, with over 400 more of the 15-24 year olds leaving the County each year between 2000 and 2003 than moved into the County.

As a result as at August 2005 there were 2,201 13-14 year olds in the County but only 1,695 0-1 year olds. By 2011 it is projected that the number of 0-1 year olds will fall to 1,440.

## APPENDIX 3

However only 87% to 95% of children living in the County attend maintained schools in the County.

Based on the above, in September 2015 the reception intake could be approximately 1,300 compared to 1,486 in the academic year 2005/06. At present there is the capacity in schools to take 2,118 children into Reception Classes.

There is additional housing proposed in the Unitary Development Plan up to 2011. The Regional Spatial Strategy also suggests that the rate of house building may increase between 2011 and 2026. However, it is to be noted that 4,372 houses were completed in the County between 1999 and 2005. During this time the numbers of primary school pupils dropped by 1,253.

### **WHY ARE FALLING ROLLS IMPORTANT?**

Herefordshire will receive less money in the Direct Schools Grant from Central Government if pupil numbers drop and schools will consequently receive lower allocations.

Smaller school budgets will lead to fewer staff. Fewer staff threaten the quality of teaching and learning and the breadth of the curriculum on offer.

As budgets reduce a greater % will be spent on fixed costs e.g. rates, heating, lighting, buildings maintenance.

At the same time the expectations on schools are increasing, higher standards, personalised learning, broader curriculum, extended school services, responsibility for the wider children's agenda.

Falling rolls will not have a uniform impact. The various areas of the County will be affected to different degrees, although the majority of schools are likely to suffer from greater fluctuation from year to year, making planning more difficult.

It is in this context that the review of the provision of schools is being undertaken.

### **Local Context: Kingstone and Peterchurch**

The West of the County is served by two 11-16 High Schools. In the High School Partnerships there are 10 primary schools, 1 of which has a half-time local authority nursery.

Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School and St Mary's RC High School provide denominational places for 11-16 year olds although only 22 students from this area currently travel to these on free places. There are 2 voluntary controlled Church of England primary schools in the Kingstone and Peterchurch areas, and no Voluntary Aided Primary Schools.

Facts and figures on the area are set out in the attached appendices.

## APPENDIX 3

### Primary Sector

The projected number of primary school pupils at January 2011 is 931 compared to a current level at January 2006 of 1,078, i.e. a reduction of 147 pupils equivalent to 13.6%.

Assuming the current level of DFES funding, and at constant prices it is estimated that the 10 schools in the area would have a budget of £2,827,085 compared to £3,111,085 in 2006/07, equal to a reduction of £284,000. If the same level of expenditure were made on fixed costs as in 2005/06 (premises related costs and headteacher salary), there would be £1,910,372 available for the variable costs in the 10 schools.

### Secondary Sector

The projected number of secondary school pupils at January 2011 is 934 compared to a current level at January 2006 of 1,028, i.e. a reduction of 94, pupils equivalent to 9.1%.

Assuming the current level of DFES funding, and at constant prices it is estimated that the 2 schools in the area would have a budget of £3,169,329 compared to £3,432,529 in 2006/07, equal to a reduction of £263,200. If the same level of expenditure were made on fixed costs as in 2005/06 (premises related costs and headteacher salary), there would be £2,550,381 available for the variable costs in the 2 schools.

**Are we sure that we can continue to improve the standards in teaching and learning?**

**Can resources available be used in more effective ways?**

There are also more immediate issues, which should be considered in the review.

#### 1. Quality of Teaching and Learning

The standards of teaching and learning are high. KS1 and KS2 results as a whole are above the County average and in line with local authority averages.

The GCSE results at Kingstone are in line with the local authority averages, whilst at Peterchurch they are well above.

Both high schools have recently undergone an Ofsted Inspection and the outcome of those inspections can inform the review.

Two primary schools have been inspected under the new Ofsted inspection process. One primary school was given 'notice to improve' but that related to the recruitment to headship, which has now been achieved.

## APPENDIX 3

### 2. Staffing Issues

The primary schools' budgets are projected to reduce by £284,000 over the next 5 years. Schools may go into deficit over this period unless staff costs are reduced.

Six out of the 10 primary schools were identified as having possible budget problems in a countywide exercise in Autumn 2005.

Three primary schools have just recruited new headteachers and one is due to complete the process in the next term.

### 3. Wider Role of the School in the Community

Many of the schools have wider uses within the community they serve. Two schools (Peterchurch Primary School and Michaelchurch Escley Primary School) have formal joint use agreements. In others (Longtown primary School, Much Birch CE Primary School and Kingstone High School) there are facilities on site either managed by or used by external bodies.

### 4. Catchment Areas

High School provision for the Parish of Moccas has been queried by parents in the past with some feeling that Fairfield High School is the nearest High School.

### 6. Quality of School Buildings

The total outstanding maintenance on all schools in the two areas amounts to £1,515,052 with 2 primary schools requiring high levels of maintenance in the medium term.

In terms of the suitability of accommodation, three schools have no dedicated library area and six have no dedicated ICT suites. Two schools make use of halls located in an adjacent community centre and one school shares its use of the hall with an attached community centre. Two primary schools have swimming pools on site. Kingstone High School has recently had a new sports hall built; Fairfield High School has recently had a new technology suite built however it has no sports hall and the playing field is detached from the school.

### 6. Aligning Capacity and Pupils in Catchment

All schools have a greater capacity than the projected pupil numbers, however four are projected to have a greater disparity (both at least 25% and 30 surplus).

Both high schools have significantly higher admission numbers than the number of children living in the area; this leads to a high percentage of out of area children attending both schools. This does need to be addressed in the countrywide review of high schools.

## APPENDIX 3

### 7. Temporary Accommodation

There are 8 temporary classrooms used by Primary Schools, and 7 by High Schools (as at January 2006). All but recent temporary buildings have higher running costs particularly energy. Given the anticipated steep increase in energy prices consideration should be given to removing the temporary classrooms where possible.

### 8. The Proposed Steiner Academy

A decision from the DFES is expected in mid-June. There is concern that if the proposal is approved, 300 additional places in the maintained sector will be created, which over a 10-12 year period is likely to mean more children resident in the County will attend this school rather than others.

## Kingstone District

### Pupil Numbers On Roll / Forecast 2006-2011

Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.

Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.

Schools	NOR January 2006	Net Capacity	Projected Numbers January 2011	Pupil Percentage Change 2006-2011
Clehonger C.E Primary	144	175		
Ewyas Harold Primary	98	140		
Garway Primary	80	105		
Kingstone & Thruxton Primary	188	210		
Madley Primary	152	168		
Much Birch C.E Primary	181	196		
Sub-Total	843	993	708	-16.01

Kingstone High	682	680	637	-6.60
----------------	-----	-----	-----	-------

### School Maintenance Costs/Suitability Issues

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues	
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms
Clehonger C.E Primary	£2491.94	£404.80	6.39	0
Ewyas Harold Primary	£508.16	£355.71	5.75	1
Garway Primary	£591.23	£450.47	6.86	1
Kingstone & Thruxton Primary	£557.94	£499.49	3.96	2
Madley Primary	£283.74	£256.71	4.85	1



APPENDIX 1

Much Birch C.E Primary	£265.88	£245.53	4.21	1
Kingstone High	£914.28	£916.97	2.26	1

## Peterchurch District

### Pupil Numbers On Roll / Forecast 2006-2011

Error! Not a valid link.  
Error! Not a valid link.

Schools	NOR January 2006	Net Capacity	Projected Numbers January 2011	Pupil Percentage Change 2006-2011
Clifford Primary	64	70		
Longtown Primary	44	56		
Michaelchurch Escley Primary	49	56		
Peterchurch Primary	78	105		
Sub-Total	235	287	223	-9.49
Fairfield High	346	350	297	-14.16

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues	
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms
Clifford Primary	£1,348.86	£1,233.24	6.56	0
Longtown Primary	£558.89	£439.13	6.42	0
Michaelchurch Escley Primary	£532.76	£466.16	5.72	1
Peterchurch Primary	£2,720.64	£2,021.05	7.21	1
Fairfield High	£515.02	£509.13	2.27	6

### School Maintenance Costs/Suitability Issues

School	Maintenance Costs		Suitability Issues	
	Cost per Pupil (NOR)	Cost per Pupil (Net Capacity)	Issues per School	No. of Temporary Classrooms
Clifford Primary	£1,348.86	£1,233.24	6.56	0
Longtown Primary	£558.89	£439.13	6.42	0
Michaelchurch Escley Primary	£532.76	£466.16	5.72	1
Peterchurch Primary	£2,720.64	£2,021.05	7.21	1
Fairfield High	£515.02	£509.13	2.27	6

## NEXT STEPS

Please respond by 21st July 2006

Either in writing to George Salmon

Head of Commissioning & Improvement

Children & Young People's Directorate

P O Box 185

Hereford

HR4 9ZR

By fax 01432 260808

Or by e-mail to [gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gsalmon@herfordshire.gov.uk)

These responses will influence further debate on the action that should be taken in response to falling numbers of children. This action would be set out in a subsequent paper for further consultation before any action is taken.

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

**June 2006**

**Organising and Managing Small  
Primary and Secondary Schools  
during Falling Rolls**

A report by Tom Canham, Education Management Consultant,  
commissioned by the  
County of Herefordshire District Council

**CONTENTS**

1. Introduction : purpose of the report	3
2. How other UK local authorities have tackled falling school rolls	3
3. Some alternative models for organising, leading and managing small schools in the UK	5
4. Some examples of different practice in the UK	8
5. The Federations Programme of the DFES Innovations Unit	13
6. The NCSL's 2005 study of federations in the Netherlands	15
7. To federate or not to federate: aspects to consider	17
8. How appropriate is federation for Herefordshire ?	21
9. Conclusion	23
10. References	24

### **1. Introduction: purpose of the report**

Herefordshire Council approved a review of school provision across the County, necessitated by the falling roll, in March 2006, and agreed that, amongst other issues, alternative school organisation arrangements would be looked into, including federation and co-operation between schools.

The author was asked to report on how other Local Authorities (LAs) were tackling the issue of falling rolls, on effective models for organising, leading and managing small schools both in the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere, including federation, and their appropriateness for Herefordshire.

### **2. How other UK local authorities have tackled falling school rolls: some examples**

Local Authorities appear and to have followed the advice of the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) and Audit Commission in their “Tackling Falling Primary School Rolls” papers<sup>(a)</sup>, referred to as a “toolkit”. Federation or collaboration have been considered as well as closure and amalgamation of schools, and in some cases services offered by schools have been broadened in line with the “Extended Schools” Government initiative.

Authorities neighbouring Herefordshire have been active in tackling falling roll problems recently. At the time of writing, *Worcestershire* is closing 45 first and middle schools, and opening 30 new ones, in the Wyre forest area, in order to change from a three tier school organisation to two tier, as well as reducing numbers of surplus school places. During consultation with schools, the authority asked schools to consider federations or collaborative arrangements but none responded positively.

One of *Gloucestershire’s* criteria in its recent Area School Reviews<sup>(b)</sup> was the aim to “improve collaboration between schools, perhaps through federation, to enhance educational and financial viability”. Recommendations to Cabinet were in several cases the alternatives of closure of a rural school, with the pupils being accommodated at a nearby school, or a federation between the two schools, subject to a proposal coming forward from the schools concerned. In one case savings over five years were calculated as £285,000 from closure or £11,000 per annum from establishment of a federation, but it is not known how a federation might save expenditure for the authority, since schools continue to be funded as separate schools. An officer and a man and has reported informally that schools not at risk of closure have been unconvinced of the advantages for themselves, but are now beginning to show more interest.

*Shropshire* approved primary school organisation policies in 2004 which were confined to closure or amalgamation. No programme of school review has taken place for some years, but admission numbers are reviewed and reduced from time to time. Officers may look again at policies on surplus places in the near future. There appears to be little interest in federation in the county, but it is not totally unknown in the county: an example is described below.

*Monmouthshire* has used a pilot collaboration between two small primary schools to ward off closure, but due to falling rolls both schools will close this summer. However, discussions are being held with other schools about alternative arrangements for supporting them during difficult times.

On the opposite side of the country, and massively different from Herefordshire in scale, is Kent, but in spite of these dissimilarities it is worth noting Kent's approach to falling rolls. Its primary strategy<sup>(c)</sup>, agreed with schools, is that primary schools should not generally fall below 100 on roll, in order to avoid having children from three or more age groups in a class. Nevertheless, there currently are 57 schools with 100 or fewer on roll. Wherever surplus places are forecast to rise above 7%, proposals are to be brought forward to reduce them to 5%. It was also agreed that federations should not be used to stop amalgamations or closures if this was a more effective way of dealing with surplus places.

#### *Commentary*

Herefordshire Council can be reassured that neighbouring authorities have similar falling school roll problems, but closure and amalgamation continue to be the main approaches used, with federation offered as a possible alternative to closure in the case of one authority.

### **3. Some alternative models for organising, leading and managing small schools in the UK**

Partnerships between schools have been an important element of a good number of the current government's initiatives, but groupings of schools for various joint activities have been happening for many years e.g. small school clusters. The terms "school federation" and "collaboration" are used loosely and variously in current educational literature, and occasionally "confederation" is used. For the purposes of this report, the definitions implied by the DFES in its guidance on statutory regulations<sup>(d)</sup> will be employed.

#### *a. Federations*

Since September 2003, all categories of maintained school have been able to federate together under one governing body if they wish to do so. They continue to be individual schools, with admissions determined by the appropriate authority, and keep their existing category and any religious character. The governing bodies are required to publish consultative documents, stating for example whether there is to be one headteacher for each school or one for more than one school, and whether any staff will work in more than one school. Schools continue to receive separate delegated budgets, but consider to what extent they wish these to be pooled within the federation. This is sometimes referred to as a "hard" federation, to distinguish it from a collaboration or collaborative (see below).

After consultation, the governing bodies decide whether or not to federate; if so, one governing body is established and the separate ones dissolved. A school can apply to leave the federation, and the governing body has to decide if it should leave or if the federation should be dissolved. A governing body of a federation can dissolve the federation after 14 days' notice.

The DFES Innovation Unit describes federations<sup>(e)</sup> as follows:

"A federation is a group of schools, often cross-phase, usually numbering two to five – although some are much bigger. Federations agree to work together for the benefit of all pupils and their school communities. This could entail sharing curriculum, teaching, ICT, sports facilities or even budgets. All of us run schools which have their own particular strengths and advantages. This can be in terms of facilities, staff expertise or local resources. Sharing these assets can help every school make education better for all its pupils."

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

*b. Collaboration or collaboratives*

Collaboration is a less formal step, sometimes referred to as a “soft” federation. The regulations<sup>(9)</sup> permit two or more governing bodies to have any of their functions carried out jointly by joint committees, and to hold meetings of two or more governing bodies. They can have a joint selection committee to appoint a headteacher, but all the collaborating governing bodies must ratify the appointment. There is no duty to consult or inform parents, the LA or other stakeholders, in contrast to the federation regulations.

*c. Co-headship*

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in its paper of this title<sup>(9)</sup>, uses this term to describe what is basically a job share, but one that has distinct advantages for the school. The NCSL refers to a growing number of LAs that employ two heads to lead schools, providing work-life balance and career refreshment benefits for heads, and a range of benefits for the school, such as better decisionmaking, a greater base of expertise and knowledge, more adaptability to complex demands and better teamwork.

The paper argues that this could be part of an answer to the “grey exodus” problem of heads retiring and proving difficult to replace, as voiced by a number of commentators.

*d. Executive headship*

This is described by two NCSL papers <sup>(9)(10)</sup> as situations where one headteacher is asked to take over the headship of another school, in addition to his or her own. In the case of primary schools, the purpose may be to lead a federation or to support another school that is failing, or to cover for a headship vacancy that is proving difficult to fill. In the examples of secondary schools cited, the arrangement was always time-limited, and intended to markedly improve the other school which was failing or had lost public confidence, more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

*e. Through Schools covering the 5-16 age range (or similar)*

The nearest to examples of such schools in the UK are developments such as Telford’s Hadley Learning Community and Essex’s Chafford Hundred Campus.

The LA website<sup>(10)</sup> describes Hadley as a Public Finance Initiative (PFI) development comprised of a new 1200 place secondary school, a new 420 place primary school and a relocated Special school. Community facilities include a crèche, nursery and childcare support, health services for young children, a learning resource centre, 150 seat theatre, café, swimming pool, fitness gym and sport pitches.

The Chafford Hundred Campus incorporates a public library, adult education and community facilities, as well as a nursery, a primary and a secondary school. The two headteachers, assistant headteachers and a business manager (all female) work as one team to create one institution, with primary-secondary “fusion rather than liaison or co-location”. The NCSL study describing this venture emphasises the learning school function that was their prime focus.

Several benefits of cross-phase team leadership are highlighted, including the range of strengths, the scope for developing individual specialisms and expertise, and for trying out different approaches from different practices and traditions. Difficulties faced included the creation of shared understanding (e.g. contrasting behavioural policy expectations), time



needed for meetings and for explaining practice, the challenge for less experienced colleagues of working within a different phase, and problems of inequality in terms of pay and expectations of headteachers and deputies, not to mention the very different daily routines, ethos and expectations of primary and secondary staffs. In addition there was serious doubt whether any team could function with two leaders.

#### *Commentary*

Co-headship may be a solution to difficulties in recruiting a headteacher in some circumstances, with some clear benefits to the school. It has no obvious advantage in circumstances of falling school rolls.

Executive headship is a well-tested solution where an experienced and highly competent headteacher is needed to step in to a vacancy whilst continuing to run their own school. It is difficult, however, to see how an arrangement of this kind, where temporary, could help to provide a permanent solution to the problem of falling rolls or of headteacher recruitment.

Both collaboration and federation offer a range of advantages through sharing of skills and expertise, resources and sites, and the opportunity for children to benefit from contact with much greater numbers of others. These could compensate small schools that would otherwise be disadvantaged by a falling roll and reduced resources, enrich substantially the curriculum and professional development opportunities, and would be likely to make headships more attractive and therefore easier for recruitment.

The two examples of closely co-operating schools have the major advantage of new, purpose built and sited premises, with a very creative agenda to pursue. However, neither is a through-school in the strict sense, and it appears from the second example that there are limits to the extent of potential collaboration between different phases. Nevertheless, the substantial merits, in terms of sharing ideas, professional development and resources, and the gains in mutual understanding and continuity of approach, should not be ignored.

#### **4. Some examples of different practice in the UK**

Many authorities, if not all, have examples of collaborative arrangements between schools, and some have federations. The examples given are from the DFES websites, but more can be found in Ronald Arnold's recent report<sup>(6)</sup>.

##### *a. Dorset*

The DFES/Audit Commission Toolkit refers to the Dunbury Primary School, which was formed by *amalgamating* (not federating) four village schools in 1993, under one headteacher and one governing body. All the "schools" have e-mail and video-conferencing facilities, which they use to maintain relationships with each other, share ideas and work, and keep in touch. The children go to school in their own village but also travel regularly to study and play together at the other sites. The head and school office are based at one school, but the head works at each of the schools one day a week. Each school has a leader who is responsible to the head for the day-to-day management of staff and pupils in that village.

Extra costs arise due to the head's salary being larger than normal, each of the base leaders is paid two additional points, and transport costs are incurred. However, these bring the benefits of maintaining a school in each village (apart from one of the four that has recently closed without controversy), a large staff appointed to the whole school, with professional

and social benefits, and a larger peer group for pupils to overcome social problems such as gender imbalance.

*b. Kent*

The DfES Toolkit reports that all of Kent's 617 schools agreed in 2003 to be grouped into 23 collaborative, cross-phase clusters of between 18 and 40 schools. The aim was to move from a competitive model to one of shared responsibility, based on the following principles:

- No child and no school left to fail
- Every child in a cluster community the responsibility of all the schools, not just one
- A more strategic central LA and more operational accountability at local level
- Head teachers to be joint managers of the whole education service.

Each cluster has an elected board of head teachers who set and monitor an annual cluster plan, in consultation with the other heads, and ensure that the day-to-day work of the cluster follows the direction set by the plan.

As part of the redefinition of the LA, Education Department staff have been devolved to work with the clusters, which are developing into Education Improvement Partnerships. A dedicated extranet has been set up to facilitate communications between the LA, schools and staff. The LA is to become more strategic, providing leadership, monitoring performance, challenging schools and providing intervention that is "swift and decisive, but always proportionate and fair" where necessary.

Kent, like most authorities, has a headteacher recruitment problem, and has decided on a "Grow our own" policy through its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) arrangements. It also urges governing bodies of primary schools to consider appointing single headteachers to two or more schools, in order to get a better quality of candidate. Part of its Primary Strategy<sup>(9)</sup> is a strong recommendation that headteachers should have at least 50% of their time available for management purposes. Kent supports "hard" federations financially (£200,000 per secondary school federation per annum for two years, rather less for primaries).

*c. Norfolk*

Norfolk has over 130 primary schools with fewer than 100 on roll, and of these, 40 have fewer than 50 children. In order to provide the best possible opportunities for children to attend a school in their "close local area", and to overcome the difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff, especially headteachers, the County Council has supported the development of Headteacher Management Partnerships<sup>(10)</sup>. These are in effect collaborations, as described above.

There are 11 such Partnerships currently, and in each case one head leads and manages two schools but the schools retain their separate identities and separate governing bodies. In the terms of the statutory regulations, therefore, these are "collaborations" rather than "federations". In most cases the head of one school has become the head of a neighbouring one, but in three cases the two governing bodies have agreed to appoint a joint headteacher to fill the vacancies in both schools. Ease or directness of travel between the schools is regarded as an important factor.

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

Additional funding of £19,422 per year (2005/6), on top of the school's budget share and any savings from not appointing a head, is given to the school with the larger number of pupils as at January. This enables the head to be paid at least two points higher, a full time teacher to be provided for the head's class in both schools, a lead teacher to be identified at each school and the cost of travel between schools to be met.

Governing bodies remain accountable for their own school budgets, but it is becoming common for them to appoint representatives to a joint committee that discusses and monitors the partnership.

Advantages that Norfolk sees are: an experienced headteacher, fulltime teachers for all classes, better staff development and sharing of subject leadership, opportunities for children to take part in activities in both schools, more flexible deployment of staff and better teaching and learning through joint planning.

Two partnerships did not survive, due according to a Norfolk officer to overload for the head in one case, and a substantial imbalance of pupil numbers (80:13) in the other.

*d. Northumberland*

The Toolkit refers to Northumberland's major reorganisation of schools from three tiers to two, with the intention of encouraging federations where schools continue. Northumberland's School Improvement Adviser reports informally that there are currently two "hard" federations, one being a middle and a high school, with the aim of rectifying under-performance, and the other is comprised of two rural First schools sharing a head.

Three more federations will be starting in September 2006, triggered by problems of headteacher vacancies and under-performance. In one case, one headteacher will be the overall head for five schools as another retires, and in another, one head will lead two schools, with a teacher with a Teaching and Learning Responsibility as the first point of contact on the other site (where the head is not based), but not deputising for the head. Heads do not see distance, even as much as 13 miles between schools, as an issue. The Authority has accepted that it will not make any savings, but neither does it expect to increase its costs.

In the adviser's experience, the attitude of the governors is the key to whether or not the idea will be taken on. Existing collaboration of some kind and mutual trust are important, plus a lot of time given to articulating the vision that the schools want to share. More enquiries are regularly being made by headteachers and governors, and the Authority is drawing up some supportive documentation for those considering federation. Heads taking on federations, in the adviser's view, are reflective practitioners who value the new focus a federation is giving them and draw energy from it.

*e. North Yorkshire*

The authority supports federations of two primary schools by giving them £10,000 of additional funding in their first year and £5,000 thereafter, plus extra travel costs.

*f. Somerset*

Michael Carter<sup>(6)</sup> in 2002 described a federation in Somerset between two schools two miles apart that came into being in order to avoid a closure, but reported that the arrangement was unpopular with some parents and governors, and said to be very difficult to manage. The head reported that no savings were achieved, but possibly extra costs from additional staffing and transport were incurred.

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

However, there are others that appear to be doing well. An example is the Weston Education Partnership, described in Ronald Arnold's recent report and in Innovations Unit material, comprising four secondary schools and two special schools, led by a Director and governed by a Strategic Management Board (SMB). The latter is composed of all the headteachers, two governors from each school, an LA representative and others, and meets termly. A Strategic Leadership Team is derived from the SMB, but without the governor members, and meets monthly. A range of curriculum, and teaching and learning, targets are pursued, and a notable feature is the Student Parliament, which has a wide and very effective role in the success of the federation.

*g. Wiltshire*

The DFES Toolkit states that the county's School Organisation Plan includes an expectation that schools with 90 or fewer pupils on roll will consider federation. It goes on to say that following unsuccessful attempts at closing small rural schools, the LA sees collaboration between schools as a key mechanism for addressing the problem of falling rolls. Its preferred option is amalgamation whilst retaining the individual school bases.

To pursue this, it has held seminars for heads and governors of small schools, has set up a part-time dedicated post to broker amalgamations and is providing financial incentives such as protecting existing school budgets for two years, providing a split site allowance and a new school's allowance to fund the head's time and administration in the term before the new school opens. In practice this appears to mean that there will be no financial savings, but considerable benefits are envisaged for the schools and pupils, as identified elsewhere.

*Commentary*

The advantages of school federations as a way of tackling falling rolls problems, the headship recruitment problem and a means of widening the curriculum and raising school performance are evident here. However, it also seems clear that no savings are generally made through federating, but in most cases extra costs are incurred in staffing and travel.

## **5. The Federations Programme of the DFES Innovations Unit**

Warwick University is engaged on evaluating 10 case studies within this Government grant-aided programme, which is mainly targeted at Key Stage 3 (KS3) pupil groups in secondary schools. Two interim evaluations have been carried out, but the final one will not be published until the autumn of 2006.

*a. Warwick University's Second Interim Evaluation*<sup>(6)</sup>

Three types of federation are identified, according to their *raison d'être*:

- i Arising from locally identified community or educational needs
- ii Established to tackle a significant weakness in one or more schools
- iii Created in order to tackle a need to improve school buildings.

Two main purposes of the federations are discerned: to achieve an improvement in standards, especially attainment, and to promote social and educational inclusion. None has been imposed, for example to reduce school places.

There is no common pattern of leadership, management and governance noted, but amongst both “hard” and “soft” federations there are variations in structures. Leadership in a “hard” federation may be through an Executive Head, Chief Executive or Director, but may be a clear management responsibility or more facilitating, or strategic.

Necessary qualities are underlined. “Where schools come together as equals, they continue [as a federation]”. Communication is seen as vital, needing complex structures and involving all. The “harder” the federation, the more important this seems to be. Trust is seen as key to all federations, and motivation is a mix of altruism in looking for pupil benefits and self-interest in looking for gain for one’s own institution and professional development.

Strong leadership, and strong distributed leadership, seem to be very important, but whilst person specifications may be easily drafted, the legal side of contracts for the Executive Head is unclear and the DFES is said to be considering education and employment law on the matter.

Although the evaluations state that federations are seen as very good value for money, due to the value added by the collaborative initiative and potential economies of scale through central purchasing, they see the appointment of key posts as Executive Head/Director as precariously funded through time-limited DFES grants and resources from other initiatives. The question of whether federations should continue ad infinitum once their objectives have been achieved is unanswered.

*b. Nine non-case study (mainly secondary school) federations*

These examples from the Innovations Unit show a variety of school mixes in mainly secondary level federations:

Cambridge	5 secondaries, with joint committee of governors.
Chesil	12 primaries, 4 secondaries, 2 specials, 2 juniors, 5 infants, 1 Further Education (FE) college.
Cumbria S. Lakes	8 secondaries, 1 special, 1 FE college.
Gateshead	2 secondaries.
Norfolk	4 secondaries.
Shrewsbury	7 secondaries, 1 special, 2 colleges.
West Sussex	1 secondary, 2 special.
West Wiltshire	1 secondary, 1 special.
Windsor & Maidenhead	5 secondaries, 1 special.

*Commentary*

In the case of what are mainly secondary school federations, they seem to have come about for specific, time-limited purposes that make a significant contribution to the quality of children's education and indeed appear unlikely to be sustainable once additional funding has run out. Common factors amongst otherwise very varied federations are strong leadership, equal partnerships, very good communications and mutual trust.

**6. The NCSL's 2005 study of federations in the Netherlands**

Other countries are known to have established federated or similar arrangements, in order to raise standards and/or to reduce the isolation of rural schools. Efforts have been made to collect information from a range of countries, but responses have been very limited. However, the NCSL's 2005 study<sup>(b)</sup> of primary school federations in the Netherlands has much useful information.

Reasons for federating included difficulties in recruiting leaders, falling rolls, the threat of closure, and the need for more time for educational leadership at school level. The average federation includes 11 schools. Some have a superintendent, who is an educational professional with responsibility for a strategic overview of the federation, either a principal in charge of each school or what the study referred to as a "more-school head", in charge of two or more schools. Where there was no more-school head or principal on site, there would often be a location leader (a teacher with responsibility for daily contact with teachers and parents).

Benefits reported were the sharing of resources, staff expertise and workload, leadership opportunities for all staff, and personal benefits (e.g. less stress). Key requirements included development of a collective vision, a strong sense of direction and purpose, agreed structures and procedures owned by all, the right leader, clear roles and responsibilities, excellent communications strategies and sufficient admin support. The retention of individual school identities seemed important but the researchers felt this might inhibit collaboration. They recommended creating single-identity establishments composed of separate units.

The more-school heads and superintendents were seen as dynamic, charismatic and dedicated leaders, with a clear vision, and drive and determination to improve standards and effectiveness. They were innovative leaders who were not afraid to take risks.

Possible issues were: getting the balance right between the needs of the federation and of individual schools, staff mobility affecting successful schools negatively, top-down implementation resulting in a lack of shared vision, regret at the distancing of the school board, more structures and rules, an unwillingness to spend funds on management tiers, and previously self-managing heads uncomfortable at having to refer some decisions to a higher tier of management.

*Commentary*

Although the education system in the Netherlands is rather different from the UK's, it is interesting to see that the use of federations to solve falling rolls and headteacher recruitment problems reflected the rationale expressed by LAs such as Northumberland, Norfolk and Kent. It is not clear, however, whether there is any possibility of dissolving a federation, and if there were, how many would opt to return to single school status.

The description of the more-heads' and superintendents' qualities were impressive, but raise the question as to whether all these qualities were essential to the role, and if so, just how many headteachers are there who are such gargantuans. Or do people grow to fit such roles? Certainly, if a LA was to decide to promote federations, it would be wise to provide some carefully-designed professional development for the task of leading and managing more than one school.

## **7. To federate or not to federate: aspects to consider**

### *a. Key ingredients for a successful federation*

Kent has identified the following factors:

- Sense of shared identity and common purpose
- A strong cohesive leadership across all levels of the schools
- The capacity to deliver (strong management infrastructure)
- A willingness to operate in a united way
- A commitment of both time and resources to ensure federation success.

The Warwick University evaluation described above offered its own observations:

- Equal status for partner institutions
- Communication vital, needing complex structures and involving all.
- Trust
- Motivation

Finally, Ronald Arnold offers valuable advice on setting up federations, as does the NCSL study, and he identified a number of key factors:

- Freedom of choice; no school to be forced into partnership
- Enthusiasm for shared progress
- Willing acceptance of some dilution of autonomy
- Common resolve and sensitivity to the needs of others.

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

His advice to LAs is worth mentioning. He values the contribution that LA officers and advisers can provide, given time, and recommends that clear advice services should be established for all. He also suggests the use of current executive heads to help those new to the role, and the provision of case studies from within the authority and elsewhere.

*b. Financial implications of federations*

The commentaries under sections four and six, dealing with examples in UK LAs and evidence from other countries respectively, indicate that examples of federations in the UK seem in most cases to require net additional funding.

The Standards<sup>(9)</sup> website explains that pump-priming grants were given by the Government to the first 37 pilot federations, but have been discontinued since the learning from these projects will enable other federations to set themselves up more economically. Start-up costs will be inevitable, it says, but there will be financial benefits from central purchasing, sharing of facilities and assets, and streamlined leadership and management arrangements. It concludes by saying that individual schools will need to weigh up for themselves the financial implications. The following activities, as a minimum, would need to be costed:

- Staff time, both teaching and administrative, for in-school discussions, research (perhaps including visits to existing federations and travel costs) and paperwork in order to investigate the pros and cons of federating.
- As above, for meetings and other exchanges with staff and governors of possible partner schools, plus travel costs.
- External guidance and support from a dedicated LA adviser or similar.
- Extra cost of higher salary for lead headteacher, and extra administrative support.
- Probable salary increase for staff in charge of other site(s) (if this is an additional responsibility).
- Increase in teaching staff costs if a teaching head no longer teaches a class as a result of taking on leadership of the federation.
- Travel costs between sites for lead headteacher.
- Travel costs between sites for staff and children, if the federation is to genuinely offer wider opportunities for pupils, sharing of all resources, and greater scope for professional development for teachers and other staff.

The saving of a headteacher's salary can of course be set against some of these costs if a headteacher's post is not filled. Some savings may be made as a result of economies of scale in purchasing equipment and materials, but these are unlikely to be very significant unless more than a handful of schools are federating. Should actual savings be made – which seems most unlikely – they would be savings for the school budgets concerned, not the authority, since each school in a federation continues to receive its normal budget share from the authority.



There is very little statistical evidence of federations' performances to weigh up against extra costs. Kent refers to a DFES analysis of performance in national pilot federations that, when compared to the national average, the percentage of 15 year olds achieving 5+ A\*-Cs at GCSE or equivalent in 2004 increased by 2.3%. However, a better performance at GCSE is not mentioned amongst the benefits quoted on the Standards site. Nevertheless, the benefits experienced for pupils and teachers in existing federations are generally quoted as substantial.

*c. To collaborate or federate ?*

The question arises as to whether federation, or a “softer” form of collaboration between schools, should be encouraged. The crucial distinctions are as follows in this simplified version of DFES guidance :

Nature of joint working	Governance	Staff sharing	Budget
Federation (sometimes referred to as a “hard federation”)	Single governing body for all schools	Shared management appointments made	Each school has its own, but single governing body can make budgetary decisions for the schools
Formal collaboration (sometimes referred to as a “soft federation”)	Separate governing bodies but joint committee delegated powers with joint	Shared management appointments made, but agreed protocol/contract to formalise commitment	Budgetary powers can be delegated to the Joint Committee
Informal collaboration	Separate governing bodies, & informal meetings	Unlikely to have shared management appointments	Schools can commit to joint expenditure, but need own governing bodies' approval

It is plain that creating a federation is a much bigger step, but the resulting joint enterprise will be able to plan, take decisions and act much more quickly and confidently. Not surprisingly, Kent has opted for hard federations as its preferred model for its clusters.

An alternative approach would be to begin with a collaboration, and develop it into a federation at a later stage.

*d. Process and time required for setting up a federation*

The process is straightforward, as follows:

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

- schools agree informally to look into the option of federation
- if all in favour, an agreed report goes to each governing body
- if all governing bodies agree, a formal proposal for consultation with all relevant persons is drawn up
- at least 6 weeks must be allowed for comments
- a joint meeting of governing bodies considers responses
- individual governing bodies decide whether they wish to proceed
- if so, the LA is informed, an instrument of government has to be submitted to the LA for technical approval
- the federation governing body is appointed/elected, and the individual governing bodies are dissolved.

The DFES has calculated that this will take between 25 and 56 weeks, taking account of factors such as the timing of holidays and whether or not decisions are taken at regular or special governing body meetings. This does not include early discussions leading to schools' informal agreement to take it forward, which could add some weeks or possibly months. Netherlands federation leaders in the NCSL study suggested allowing two to three years for setting up, and put great emphasis on careful discussions about structure, finance, and what they described as the emotional consequences of federating.

It is interesting to note that setting up a Trust school appears to be a simpler, and quicker, process. A governing body has to find a partner and decide to go ahead, must consult with parents and other stakeholders, consider responses, and then if it decides to proceed must publish formal proposals. At the end of the public consultation period, it may decide to become a Trust school. A local authority can then object, but only on limited grounds. The formal part of the process appears to take from 12 to 20 weeks, including achieving Foundation status (which can run parallel with Trust consultations).

*e. Pay and conditions of service for lead headteachers*

Mention was made above of the DFES considering education and employment law relating to headteachers leading more than one school. Local authority officers report informally that pragmatic solutions are found to the question of appropriate contracts and conditions of service, through the detail of letters of appointment and partnership agreements between governing bodies that set out expectations such as the time a head will spend on each site. Pay is usually related to the number of pupils overall in the federation, and LAs seem prepared to underwrite the federated element of the head's pay, should the federation eventually be dissolved.

*f. Ofsted inspections*

Norfolk report that Ofsted agreed to inspect both partner schools of one of their Headteacher Management Partnerships in the same week, with a good outcome for both. The Standards site states that the DFES is looking at the possibility of joint inspections in the future, so that a federation may be inspected as a whole. While separate inspections of federated schools continue, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the lead headteacher will need to oversee

the development of a SEF for each school, and be the main respondent to the inspection team during the event.

### **8. How appropriate is federation for Herefordshire ?**

Herefordshire is sparsely populated. 76% of its primary schools are rural, a figure exceeded only by Rutland and the Scilly Isles<sup>(9)</sup>. It has only 28 primary pupils per square mile, almost the lowest in the UK<sup>(8)</sup>. 37 of its 84 primary schools have fewer than 100 on roll, and several of its 14 secondary schools have fewer than 400. Not only are children “thin on the ground” in the schools, schools are also relatively few and far between. Rural primaries are often about four miles apart as the crow flies, but a lot further by roads, which are sometimes very narrow and used by slow agricultural vehicles. Neighbouring rural secondaries are between 12 and 25 miles apart.

With this background, it might be tempting to suggest that federating schools would face considerable practical difficulties. However, this could be shortsighted, for several reasons:

- Developments in ICT such as video-conferencing and student use of laptops open up a range of possibilities for powerful electronic links between schools wherever they are, enriching the curriculum and providing new opportunities for pupils.
- The very isolation of the communities that the rural school serves is a cogent reason for linking it to others and to provide a much wider community of adults and children to learn from. With only 0.9% of the county’s population in ethnic groups other than “white” (compared with 8.7% nationally)<sup>(10)</sup>, Herefordshire children are unlikely to have experience of other racial groups. Not only is isolation a Herefordshire feature, but so is low average pay (20% lower than the national average in 2004)<sup>(11)</sup>. Families are less likely to be in able to afford some of the cultural enrichment their counterparts in other counties enjoy, such as cinema and theatre visits, trips to theme parks and exhibitions, and holidays abroad.
- Research shows that federation between voluntary partners can be highly motivating and renewing: practical difficulties such as travel are there to be overcome, whether by volunteers, shared public transport, teacher exchange or some other means.
- Herefordshire schools already manage to collaborate in their “pyramids” – clusters of schools each composed of a secondary school and its feeder primaries – and no doubt in other ways.

Action as to be taken to attract high quality candidates to small school headships, and to enable shrinking schools to maintain an adequate curriculum whilst satisfying other needs such as meeting the requirements of Every Child Matters and the Extended Schools agenda, and responding to the Government’s expectation that schools need to work closer together. Evidence reported above shows that federation can help to solve these problems, but Kent’s approach of “growing its own” heads also merits consideration.

The financial aspect may be the most difficult for the authority. Since Government grant to LAs reduces as pupil numbers fall, fixed costs must absorb a higher proportion of spending unless accommodation can be put to other uses or be taken out of use. Finding extra funds to support federations in these circumstances will be very challenging.

---

Further information on the subject of this report is available from George Salmon on 01432 260802

## 9. Conclusion

This report has demonstrated that :

- falling rolls and headteacher recruitment are a common problem for those managing education, both across this country and beyond;
- similar approaches are adopted to tackle the problem;
- federation between schools is successfully used in this country and elsewhere, and sometimes to alleviate the effects of falling rolls and/or to solve the problem of headteacher recruitment;
- successful federation can have substantial benefits for children's education, teachers' professional development and for communities' learning and facilities;
- federation is only appropriate and successful in the right circumstances, and will not be right for some schools and communities;
- effective federation will require net additional expenditure.

## 10. References (in order of first appearance)

- a. Department for Education and Skills (2005): *Tackling Falling School Rolls: Toolkit*. London: DFES.
- b. Gloucestershire County Council (2006): *Area School Reviews: Issues for Public Consultation*. Gloucester: Gloucester County Council.
- c. Kent County Council (2006): *Kent Primary Strategy 2006*. Maidstone: Kent County Council.
- d. Department for Education and Skills (2003): *Guidance on the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations (SI 2004 No 2042)*. London: DFES.
- e. Department for Education and Skills (2005): *An Introduction to School Federations*. London: DFES.
- f. Department for Education and Skills (2003): *Guidance on the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations (SI 2004 No 2042)*. London: DFES.
- g. National College for School Leadership (2006): *Co-headship: A call for consultation*. [www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm).
- h. National College for School Leadership (2006): *Primary executive heads*. [www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm).
- i. National College for School Leadership (2006): *Secondary and Special school executive heads*. [www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-c.cfm).

- j. Borough of Telford & Wrekin (2006): *Transforming Telford*. [www.telford.gov.uk/Education+learning/Transforming+Telford/](http://www.telford.gov.uk/Education+learning/Transforming+Telford/).
- k. R. Arnold (2006): *Schools in Collaboration*. Slough: NFER, EMIE.
- l. Kent County Council (2006): *Kent Primary Strategy 2006*. Maidstone: Kent County Council.
- m. C. Wilson-Town (2005): *Headteacher Management Partnerships*. Norwich: Norfolk County Council.
- n. M.J. Carter (2002): *Sustaining the validity of small schools in a situation of falling rolls*. Hereford: M.J.Carter.
- o. University of Warwick (2005): *Evaluation of the Federations Programme (2<sup>nd</sup> Interim Report)*. Coventry: University of Warwick.
- p. National College for School Leadership (2006): *Federations*. [www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-e.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-e.cfm).
- q. Department for Education and Skills: *Federations*. [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/federations/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/federations/).
- r. Department for Education and Skills (2006): *Analysis of small schools by local authority*. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/fallingschoolrolls/context/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/fallingschoolrolls/context/).
- s. Herefordshire Council (2004): *The Education Service in Herefordshire*. Hereford Herefordshire Council.
- t. National Statistics (2003): *Census 2001*. [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pop2001/print v/county\\_of\\_herefordshire ua](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pop2001/print_v/county_of_herefordshire_ua).
- u. Herefordshire Partnership (2005): *Herefordshire Economic Assessment 2005-2007*. Hereford: Herefordshire Partnership.