

# ENHANCING LIVES THROUGH LEARNING - A VISION FOR SCHOOLS IN CUMBRIA

## 1. BACKGROUND

### General

Cumbria is as large as Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside, Lancashire, Cheshire and Warrington combined, and makes up approximately 50% of the land-mass of the North West Region. Eden is the most sparsely populated district in England and is as large as the area covered by Cheshire and Warrington. Conversely, the population density of Barrow is thirteen times the County average. Parts of the County, along the M6 corridor, have relatively good road/rail links to other areas, whilst West Cumbria and the Barrow peninsula suffer geographical isolation from each other, from surrounding areas and the North West in general. For example, it takes around the same time to travel from Workington to Barrow (60 miles) as it does from Preston to Coventry (130 miles). The geography, topography and rural nature of Cumbria often make access to services extremely difficult.

### Demographics

The County has a population of 489,000 people – 220,000 of whom are in employment. The rate of registered unemployment is low but inactivity rates are high in Barrow and the West Coast, where a number of people are incapacity benefit claimants (8,000 in each area – DWP December 2004). In addition, the Index of Multiple Deprivation data shows that Barrow, the West Coast and parts of Carlisle are relatively deprived areas. In Barrow and West Cumbria, these data combined with low-wage/low-skill jobs means that many aspirant and well-qualified young people leave the area – and do not return, an issue exacerbated by an ageing workforce. Fewer than 100 companies in Cumbria employ over 200 people. There are approximately 15,575 VAT registered businesses and 85% of these employ less than 10 people

### A County-Wide Strategic Approach to School Organisation – Why Now?

- Pupil numbers are set to fall further; in the primary phase by about 4,000 i.e. over 10% over the next five years and in the secondary phase by around 7,000 i.e. over 20% between now and 2016/17.
- Unfilled primary school places will climb to 17-18% by 2010/11 and in the secondary phase to 24%-25% by 2016/17.
- Looking further into the future, the child population continues to fall. The Office of National Statistics predicts that in Cumbria in 2028 there will be 21% fewer children than there are now in the 0-14 age group. Their data indicates that the steepest decline will occur over the next ten years. Beyond that the numbers continue to fall but to a rather lesser extent.
- Schools will get smaller, for example the number of primary schools with fewer than 35 pupils will grow from the current 19 to 36 in 2010/11. In the secondary sector, the number of schools with fewer than 220 pupils will increase from the present four to eight by 2016/17.

- Schools will be less full; the number of schools with more than 25% unfilled places will rise from the current figures of 22 primary and seven secondary to 57 by 2010/11 and 20 by 2016/17 respectively.
- Alongside the need to address steep falls in pupil numbers is the requirement to deliver upon a developmental agenda e.g. extended schools, children centres, 'Every Child Matters'.
- Lastly, despite the many educational and social changes over the last few decades, there has not been a comprehensive review of school provision. It would be remarkable, therefore, if the current network of schools came even close to offering the best educational opportunities possible for Cumbria's young people six years into the twenty-first century.

### **Every Child Matters (The Vision for Children's Services in Cumbria)**

In Cumbria, the best for every child, young person and family. Enabling children and young people to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.

Our aim is to ensure that schools are working in partnership to deliver the ECM agenda, to ensure that every child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

All Cumbria services have a part to play in delivering this aim. This means that:-

- when a child needs help we will work to deliver that help as early as possible when a need has been identified;
- we will work collaboratively to ensure every child receives the services most appropriate to meet their needs, from the most appropriate services;
- sometimes the services required will be specialist, in these cases we will work to ensure these services are centred around and informed by the child;
- we will ensure that a child's holistic needs are identified and met and that services are delivered by a workforce that is developed and working collaboratively.

This means we will need to find new ways of working. We will plan and commission services to deliver these needs and will work to bring professionals together to provide multi-disciplinary approaches. We will utilise the national initiatives such as Children's Centres and Extended Schools to deliver these aspirations.

### **Standards in Cumbria's Schools**

When we look at the standard measures for school performance, Cumbria performs well in the Key Stage 2 tests, in the top quartile nationally in English, Maths and Science. At Key Stage 3, the progress of pupils in Cumbria is broadly in line with similar pupils in similar schools. The only exception to this is the performance of higher achieving boys, which is below what would be expected. At GCSE, performance is again broadly in line with similar pupils in similar schools. However, the improvement of value-added performance in the secondary sector is one of the Government's key priorities for Cumbria. Post 16 value-added across Cumbria is satisfactory judged by the measure in use across the County, though there are significant variations in the performance of schools.

The project team will develop more detailed local models for assessment of school standards.

Our intention is that high quality education and improving standards should be for all. One of the intended outcomes of any investment proposals must be parity of esteem and collaborative working between schools. It is also important that there is diversity in school provision, which will enable choice.

### **Early Years**

Currently all 3 and 4 year olds have an entitlement to a free nursery education place from the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This entitlement is for 12.5 hours per week for 33 weeks of the year at a maintained nursery or primary school or a facility in the private, voluntary and independent sector. This entitlement will be extended to 38 weeks a year from 2006, and to 15 hours for 38 weeks by 2010 – phased in from 2007.

The long term goal of the Government is to put in place a coherent new framework for all early years services so that early years education and child care is delivered seamlessly. To support its vision, the Government intends to legislate to give local authorities a new duty in terms of local child care provision. The present aim is for this duty to be effective from April 2008.

This agenda has clear implications for early education provision in schools with an expectation that they deliver “wrap-around care”.

### **Higher Education**

The recent recommendations by Sir Martin Harris regarding the proposal to establish a University for Cumbria should result in greater access for young people in Cumbria to a range of university education opportunities. These will be provided through a network involving the Cumbria Institute of the Arts (CIA), St Martin’s College, the University of Central Lancashire, Lancaster University, the Open University and the four further education colleges in the County at Barrow, Carlisle, Kendal and in the West. In many parts of Cumbria there is a need to widen young people’s participation in university education and this should be a consideration in determining future patterns of secondary education in the County.

### **Workforce Development**

The Every Child Matters policy incorporates the challenge of workforce reform – the need to increase the attraction of working with children and young people and especially to further improve training, skills and inter-professional relationships. We see effective recruitment, retention and development of a high quality school workforce as a significant factor in enhancing school improvement. We see training and development opportunities for classroom-based staff and effective professional and leadership development as key components in raising standards. Investment in, and valuing of, the whole school workforce in terms of their development, professional status and work-life balance is an essential element in bringing about school improvement.

## 2. VISION

### The Vision – Enhancing Lives Through Learning

- Raising attainment, achievement and standards for all children and young people.
- Promoting inclusion.
- Ensuring children’s and young people’s personal development and well-being.
- Enhancing learning opportunities and the curriculum.
- Increasing participation in learning post 16 and post 19.
- Enabling young people as they progress to adulthood to make a full contribution both socially and economically.
- Securing first class buildings and facilities.

In considering school organisation, raising attainment is our highest priority because this is the key to improving the life chances of our young people and giving them choices in the future. These chances must be for all. Our vision is for an inclusive education system where barriers are removed to enable every learner to achieve. To achieve this we welcome the Every Child Matters agenda which, when we deliver the outcomes and aims, will enable every child to learn and thrive. Schools will deliver a relevant and wide-ranging curriculum with appropriate and exciting learning opportunities for each and every child. The curriculum will be driven by the needs of the learners themselves. This will lead to improved rates of progression and increased participation in learning providing Cumbria with a well educated, well trained workforce and economic success.

### Our Objectives

- We must achieve transformational change which will lead to radical improvements in **performance outcomes**.
- We will address the issue of a potentially increasing number of surplus places in both primary and secondary schools.
- We will create a school system which delivers value for money and the efficient and effective use of all educational resources.
- We will secure delivery of the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes.
- We will establish a culture of collaboration to improve the capacity of our schools to improve and to enable partnership working with other providers.
- We will embrace the extended schools initiative enabling schools to better serve their communities and to encourage adult learning.
- We will deliver the 14 to 19 agenda working with the LSC, ensuring that a wider range of academic, vocational and work-based learning is available for young people in every locality.
- We will ensure that children and young people grow, develop and learn so that they are capable socially and economically throughout their lives.

### An Entitlement to Education

Future school organisation should be based on an entitlement for learners in both the secondary and primary sectors. These entitlements apply equally to children in special schools.

An Entitlement for Learners in **Primary Schools**:

- High quality teaching that is creative and inspiring.
- A broad and balanced curriculum, which caters for a learner's interests, aptitudes and particular needs, ensuring progression in learning.
- Curriculum flexibility which facilitates personalised learning and meets the needs of the gifted and talented as well as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- A play-based curriculum for Foundation Stage.
- An engaging programme of learning which reflects different learning styles.
- To be literate, numerate and able to use ICT.
- Opportunities to develop self confidence, enterprise and financial skills and to work in teams.
- Effective personal, social and health education including sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drug abuse.
- Being healthy and staying safe.
- Understanding their rights and responsibilities and those of others.
- Enrichment opportunities and extended services to contribute to learner's enjoyment, achievement and creativity.
- Preparation for subsequent stages of education.
- Accommodation that is fit for purpose and equipped to the highest possible standards.
- Access to new technology so that the entitlement is technology rich.

An Entitlement for Learners in **Secondary Schools**:

- High quality teaching that is creative and inspiring.
- A choice of high quality and relevant programmes of learning and pathways that meet learners' needs and lead to outcomes that they value and are valued by wider society.
- Curriculum flexibility which facilitates personalised learning and meets the needs of the gifted and talented as well as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- An engaging programme of learning which reflects different learning styles.
- To be literate, numerate and able to use ICT.
- Being healthy and staying safe.
- Understanding their rights and responsibilities and those of others.
- The opportunity to develop enterprise, financial skills and personal qualities to achieve future economic well-being.
- To develop an understanding of career options and to learn through work, about work and for work.
- To develop the facility to work co-operatively, communicate effectively and to use information and critical judgement to solve problems.
- Enrichment opportunities and extended services to contribute to learner's enjoyment, achievement and creativity.
- Impartial and high quality information advice and guidance which enables learners to make informed choices.
- Personal and academic support.
- Accommodation that is fit for purpose and equipped to the highest possible standards.
- Access to new technology so that the entitlement is technology rich.

## Schools for the Future

Our aspiration is to take the opportunity which re-organisation can bring to give schools improved buildings, facilities and information technology. We want buildings which inspire and motivate learners and are appropriate for the future. They should offer, where possible, extended services for pupils and the wider community, with exciting new designs and systematic planning for modernisation. Ideally, schools will have excellent specialist, sport and social facilities, together with state of the art ICT infrastructure. Disability access and good security are also essential.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

#### Principles Underlying School Organisation

- Priority for Learners  
School organisation will be driven by the needs and aspirations of learners and not by those of institutions.
- Sustainable Development  
Our aspirations are to help children maximise their potential during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood so that they will continue to make an investment in a Cumbria of the future.
- The Performance of Schools and their Capacity for Improvement  
Decisions on school organisation will be guided by the current performance of schools in terms of pupil outcomes and by judgements about their capacity to deliver the high quality education envisaged in this paper.
- Inclusive Planning  
Planning for school organisation must include all providers from foundation stage to higher education.
- School Size  
No simple judgements on numbers alone can be made about the future of schools. We intend to design criteria which will be applied to all schools and against which schools' viability can be judged.
- All-Through Primary Schools  
There is a preference for 3-11/4-11 primary schools as opposed to separate infant and junior schools. This is based on the belief that, when school organisation change is appropriate, they offer better continuity of education, more financial efficiency and greater organisational and educational flexibility.
- Church Schools  
The number of church schools is a significant feature of school provision. The Church Authorities are key partners in service provision. The balance of church and secular provision should be maintained.
- Specialist Schools  
All secondary schools should be encouraged to have specialist status with new specialisms being complementary to existing provision.
- Post 16 Provision  
All young people, regardless of where they live, should be able to choose from a wide range of high quality courses and qualifications that meet their needs.
- The Use of ICT  
Pupils and teachers should have access to high quality ICT systems which will improve teaching, learning and attainment. The use of ICT is particularly appropriate in a rural community, enabling distance learning and communication with home.

- The Rural Dimension  
In some rural communities, where access to other provision would be too problematic, schools will need to be maintained regardless of size. We will take into account the sharing of school-based facilities with rural communities.
- Transport to School  
Journey times to and from school should be appropriate and reasonable for children of different ages. Currently Cumbria's position is that the maximum journey time to or from school for a primary age pupil should normally be 45 minutes and for one of secondary age, one hour and 15 minutes.
- Real Consultation  
The extent of the consensus for change is a major factor. We must ensure that proper consultation takes place particularly at a local level and with those most closely involved and those likely to be most affected. The views of young people and their parents will be important. We need to balance the benefits of strategic mid- and long-term planning with the potential detrimental effect on individual schools. However, the background to this is the responsibility of the Local Authority and the Learning Skills Council to plan for the effective and efficient use of resources.

#### 4. SOURCE MATERIAL

DfES Five Year Strategy  
14-19 White Paper  
Every Child Matters – Change for Children  
Youth Matters  
Statutory Requirements for:  
- work related learning  
- careers education  
- citizenship education  
- enterprise education  
Cumbria County Council Corporate Strategy  
Cumbria Education Development Plan  
Cumbria School Organisation Plan  
LSC Annual Plan  
Strategic Area Review Plan  
White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All'

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