

The Strategic Framework for School Organisation – Guidance for Local Partnership Groups

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Although we accept that Cumbria has a mixture of communities, rural and urban, which sometimes have very different needs, there are some principles which ought to guide school organisation.

1.2 The principles which underpin this guidance are:

- **Broad and effective curriculum provision**

- This will be a curriculum which meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all learners. It must support pupils with special educational needs and should be inclusive with access for all.
- Whilst the priority will be literate and numerate young people, it should also provide choice and the opportunity for specialist study. Also there should be support for learning outside the school day, promoting participation in sport, the arts and other interests.
- It should provide effective personal, social and health education, including sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drugs misuse.
- The curriculum should prepare pupils effectively for subsequent stages of education, ensuring progression and smooth transition.

- **Encouraging collaboration between educational providers**

- Collaboration is essential to deliver the 14 to 19 agenda. This will include collaboration between schools and also with other providers such as Colleges and Work Based Learning organisations.
- Collaboration will also be essential to deliver inclusive provision particularly for those pupils whose behaviour is challenging. Schools should come together to provide opportunities both inside and outside schools.

- **Limiting the number of phase transitions for learners**

- We believe that children are more likely to succeed when there is maximum stability for their schooling. For this reason we prefer all-through primary schools. This is based on the belief that they generally offer better continuity of education, more financial efficiency and greater organisational and educational flexibility. We do not support either 9 to 13 (“middle” schools) or separate 11 to 14 schools. Similarly we prefer an all-through system of secondary education from 11 to 16 or 11 to 19, provided there is real collaboration between different providers within the area.

- **Promoting the Children's Services agenda**

- Though schools will not always be the platform or delivery point for extended locality-based services for children and their families, we believe that in many cases they will be well placed to do so. In addition we believe that every school should be an "extended" school in terms of the opportunities they can offer beyond the school day.
- Cumbria is an increasingly diverse community with children and young people from a wide range of culture backgrounds, educational expectations and learning needs.

The needs of vulnerable groups, challenging pupils and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities must be actively considered and where possible, options that increase the opportunity for inclusion (such as co-location) should be offered for consultation.

2.0 Academies

- 2.1 Academies provide a good route to capital funding and there are national political drivers in this direction. Though the introduction of Academies would not be the first choice in a world where capital funding was available through, for example Building Schools for the Future, there is no presumption against establishing them.
- 2.2 Academies will need to be admissions compliant, SEN compliant and behaviour/exclusions compliant. In all these areas we expect an Academy to work together with local provision and arrangements. In addition the "Lead Sponsor" and that person/organisation's educational philosophy and principles would need to be acceptable to Cumbria County Council.
- 2.3 We will only support the establishment of an Academy where it is compatible with and collaborates with the local 14 to 19 and post 16 provision.
- 2.4 Establishing a collaborative Learning Trust in a locality, to include an Academy, is an attractive proposition because it will give common strategic direction to a number of schools. The Trust could involve a university, colleges and a local authority and well as sponsors.

3.0 Trusts

- 3.1 Trusts will give schools the same degree of autonomy as Foundation schools have currently. Trust schools will be their own admissions authority (though they must follow national admissions guidance and regulation), they employ their own staff and they own their buildings and land.

- 3.2 In line with the principles above we welcome collaborative Trusts where groups of schools in a locality, at primary or secondary level, or cross phase, come together with a common purpose for the benefit of learners. These collaborative Trusts will enable a common strategic direction for schools through their governance arrangements, and be able to operate in partnership over admissions, arrangements for wider curriculum opportunities and for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- 3.3 There is no support for establishing new selective schools (though there is no intention to close existing Grammar School Provision), or for admission processes which entail selection.

4.0 Federations

- 4.1 See Appendix 1 which defines the ways schools can work together.
- 4.2 Federations and the new Trusts concept are similar operationally and in terms of common purpose. Trust schools will have more autonomy.

5.0 14 to 19 Provision

- 5.1 We support collaboration across this phase but not the establishment of 14 to 19 institutions.
- 5.2 Separate 14 to 19 schools are not the most effective way forward for the future. They would increase the number of transitions and give little time or flexibility for learners in Key Stage 4. The corollary of this, the establishment of an 11 to 14 school, is not acceptable.
- 5.3 However, schools will need to enter into collaborative arrangements in the future to deliver the 14 to 19 entitlement. This will be difficult to deliver in a single school. (See section above on Collaboration)
- 5.4 Current initiatives to deliver 14 to 19 education in partnership are not sufficiently robust – we need to look at firmer arrangements in terms of joint curriculum design and delivery.
- 5.5 A 14 to 19 Centre, shared by different providers, with shared governance would be an ideal way of delivering the range of curriculum required and the progression implied by the new curriculum design.

6.0 Sixth Form Colleges

- 6.1 Sixth Form Colleges are effective in some locations and provide a range of courses and choice for learners beyond that available in an 11-19 institution. Where an effective Sixth Form College exists we would not support a proposal to establish a school sixth form.

- 6.2 We welcome collaboration between Sixth Form Colleges and FE Colleges where provision is integrated and a wider range of academic and vocational options is accessible.
- 6.3 A Sixth Form Centre, with a discrete identity, where provision is shared between two or more schools, can be effective in an 11 to 19 context because it will provide a greater range of courses and more choice.

7.0 All-Through Schools –

7.1 3 to 16/18 or 3 to 14

- Whilst these might be philosophically attractive, in practical terms they are difficult to manage. They produce a complicated scenario which could be possibly be considered in only one or two of our most rural communities, where a more creative solution may be needed.
- A 3 to 14 school would produce difficulties in Key Stage 4 (as above), but again might be an answer in exceptional circumstances where there is a rural dimension and difficult travel arrangements to alternative provision. Careful consideration would need to be given to a post 14 progression route. This solution would be more acceptable if it was arranged through the hard Federation of two or more schools, where the progression route was securely managed.
- Federations or Trusts which adopt an “all through, cross phase” approach are supported.

7.2 3 to 11

- There remains the long-held preference for all-through primary schools as opposed to separate infant and junior schools. This is based on the belief that they generally offer better continuity of education, more financial efficiency and greater organisational and educational flexibility.

8.0 Extended Schools (Services)

- 8.1 There is confusion about extended schools delivering services for children and their families. The Children’s Services agenda is about extending the services, with schools being a possible delivery point or platform for this.
- 8.2 The ‘Extended Schools’ agenda is primarily concerned with the raising of standards within schools, hence the current levels of funding and the reason that all schools will be ‘extended schools’ by 2010. Evidence has shown that extended services provided in partnership with schools raises levels of attendance, behaviour and attainment. Schools are also seen as one of the key delivery mechanisms through which the Every Child Matters outcomes will be achieved.

8.3 Within Cumbria the Extended Schools agenda is being rolled out by clusters of schools working collaboratively to provide access to childcare, family learning and support, a rich and varied menu of activities for students and swift and easy referral to other services. This will be achieved either by schools directly delivering a service, signposting to other providers, or working in partnership with other agencies. Within this cluster, model schools and other locality venues become local bases for extended services.

School Organisation Project Team
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SUPPORT WITHIN S.I.T. FOR CLUSTERS, NETWORKS COLLABORATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS – POSITION STATEMENT

1.0 Principles: the local authority believes firmly in the value of professional colleagues in schools working together in pursuit of improved professional practice and greater achievement for children and young people. It sees its role in supporting this way of working as central to its own organisation and practice. Furthermore, the local authority also believes that high quality collaboration is a key element in the working of strong and autonomous schools. What follows below stems from these principles and beliefs.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 The following provides a working vocabulary upon which to build our support for new ways of working:

Networks: groups that come together in response to formal opportunities to pursue specific themes and goals related to improving professional practice and pupil achievement e.g. Primary Strategy Learning Networks, Networked Learning Communities etc.

Clusters/Consortia: traditional groupings of headteachers who work together regularly on a voluntary basis for mutual support over a range of issues related to the leadership and management of their schools. Some of these have evolved from, and may contain the same membership as, current or old consortia.

Collaboratives: schools targeted and externally funded to work together in pursuit of specified themes and goals e.g. Secondary LIG Collaboratives.

Partnerships: formal arrangements between schools (and others) to work together in mutual benefit towards achieving agreed goals e.g. Excellence Cluster Partnerships.

Federations: Formally federated group of two to five schools as defined by the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2004 with a single governing body and one or more headteacher(s).