

Worcestershire County Council Directorate of Children, Families and Communities

Policy on instigated a review on Small Schools in Worcestershire 2018

Document Details:

Status: .1.0

Date: March 2018

Document

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Background

The education environment is changing quickly, for example as more schools become academies and funding mechanisms change. The latter change in particular could make small schools particularly vulnerable. This strategy identifies the small schools in Worcestershire, sets out the context and reasons for their potential vulnerability, and within a policy context offers a strategic direction for the County Council.

Context

In 2003 a review was undertaken by Worcestershire County Council to determine a local definition for a small school. The output was a series of thresholds or triggers per phase for further investigation. This was within an overall policy position related to quality of educational provision and pupil attainment determined by the school's ability to deliver the curriculum with an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff.

Each year in the autumn term the pupil data collection, or census, is scrutinised to identify any school below or near the thresholds to then undertake a more detailed examination of the school.

Thresholds for a small School Review First and Primary Schools

- Any school which is unable to employ a minimum of 3 teachers not necessarily on a full time basis.
- A First school with fewer than 50 pupils.
- A Primary school with fewer than 70 pupils. (For both b) and c) the NOR is taken from the first School Census in the academic year.)
- A school whose numbers are expected to fall below that level within the following five years.

For information and tracking the following are also included;

- First School with fewer than 80 pupils
- Primary Schools with fewer than 100 pupils

Middle Schools

- Less than 2 forms of entry in any year group.

High Schools

- Less than 3 forms of entry in any year group.

High Schools with a Sixth Form

- i) Where a High school has less than 160 pupils in the sixth for
- ii) Middle Phase





Trust or stand-alone.



In respect of sponsored academies, the council's policy remains that each school below floor standards and / or in an Ofsted category will be considered on an individual basis.

Strategy

Worcestershire has a responsibility to secure sufficient school places and for the education provision to be of a good standard for the pupils. To meet that good standard is a balance of financial security, good leadership and management, well qualified and competent staff.

To meet these statutory duties in the context of small schools the recommended strategy is to:

- a) Be more proactive in approaching schools individually or collectively in the areas of the county with high numbers of small schools to promote more collaborative working either as federations within the maintained sector or Multi Academy Trusts in the academy sector. Ideally, schools collaborating should, where possible, be in the same pyramid or area and the same phase of education.
- b) Encourage collaboration around the pyramid structure because:
 - i) It links small schools with bigger schools for greater financial security;
 - ii) Is in line with current DfE thinking about local support networks;
 - iii) Encourages joint planning within a pyramid for

