

CUMBRIA SCHOOLS FORUM – SMALL SCHOOLS WORKING GROUP

Notes of the Small Schools Working Group of the Schools Forum held on Monday 8 March 2004 at The Walnut Tree, County Hall, Kendal.

Present: Mr J Douglas, Ms S Gaston-Parry, Ms T Eyre and Mr A Hodge (LEA). Mrs N Shiels (LEA) was also present.

Apologies: Mr R Rogers

The members of the group present expressed concern at the level of attendance.

A Hodge opened the meeting. He explained that there were no reports as there had not been any outstanding issues from the previous working group. It was intended that the initial meeting of the new group would discuss the remit and any areas of work that might be considered at future meetings.

1. <u>Election of Chair</u>	<u>Action</u>
Mr J Douglas was elected as Chair of the Working Group.	
2. <u>Notes</u>	
The notes of the meeting of the School Size Working Group held on 19 September 2003 were agreed as an accurate record.	
3. <u>Matters Arising</u>	
There were no matters arising.	
4. <u>Remit of the Group</u>	
The suggested remit of the group was to look at the financial viability of schools with regard to possible minimum size of school, federation issues, travelling distance and time, provision of appropriate education etc.	
In discussing the suggested remit the group considered the following:-	
– <u>Duplication of Work</u> – SEN/Social Deprivation. In the broadest sense there could be rural deprivation if rural schools were to close.	
– <u>Collaboration</u> – at secondary level there were a number of federations/collaborations already working, eg Rural Academy, South Lakes Federation and North Copeland Learning Zone. The Rural Academy were beginning to “share” staff and were looking at the possibility of “moving” children. A number of officers and some schools had previously done some work on federation and there were concerns about duplication of effort and how to draw different sources of information together.	
– <u>Name of Group</u> – the new group had been called the Small Schools Working Group, however, the members present all agreed that it should be known as the School Size Working Group.	

5. Future Areas of Work

Action

A number of areas for further consideration were identified.

The starting point for any work would be to determine the current position of schools in Cumbria in terms of budgets and current numbers of surplus places. Taking account of this information other areas would include (in no particular order):-

- Federation – what is federation, experience in Cumbria and other LEAs, legislation, differences in operating in different sectors, ie primary, secondary etc. Would this Working Group be able to help/advise schools that may be considering a simple collaboration? Drawing together good practice and work that has already been done.
- Small Schools – what is the definition of a small school? How do small schools fit into Building Schools for the Future? Is there a correlation between school size and budget deficit/surplus?
- Surplus Places – projections and defining issues relating to surplus places. Re-categorising areas of premises.
- Staffing Issues – summary of operation of schools with less than 50 pupils including numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff and percentage of heads teaching time. Also, effect of Workload Agreement on Small Schools.
- Budget/Formula Issues – eg costly statements can distort budgets.
- Criteria – factors that may be considered in determining the future of a school could include educational, transport, effect on the community, different age groups being taught together, geographical information as well as pupil numbers.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the School Size Working Group would be held on Wednesday 4 May 2004 at 9.30am. Possible venues for the meeting would be investigated including Broughton Craggs and West Lakes.

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Nicola Shiels
Education Directorate
5 April 2004