



Consultation on Proposed 14-19 Education provision on the Isle of Wight

You are invited to make a response to the questions in section 11. You are asked to read the complete document first so that you may gain the whole picture and understand the reasons for this proposal.

This document is available at the Council's education website eduwight.com.

Your response to the questions (see section 11) should be sent to:

Chris Mathews
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Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1UD

or by e-mail to chris.mathews@iow.gov.uk by no later than 5pm on Friday 30 March 2007.

The response will be summarised and presented to elected members prior to their discussion of the proposal at Full Council on 18 April 2007. This report will be available on the website at the same time.

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1. Context – why this proposal?

The Joint Area Review of May 2006 judged the educational performance of the Island as inadequate. Their judgement included the following:

“Children are prepared well for school and attainment at age 7 is good. In all other key stages standards and attainment are inadequate...”

Joint Area Review Report 2006

In particular the under-performance at Key Stage 3 and GCSE is of concern.

Gaps between IOW Average and National Average

Year	KS3 Maths	KS3 English	GCSE 5 or more A*-C grades
2002	-3.3%	-10.8%	-7.5%
2003	-3.3%	-3.9%	-8.6%
2004	-3%	-6%	-9.7%
2005	-3.7%	-9%	-11.3%
2006	-2.9%	-7.2%	-11.3%

This table shows that pupils who took GCSEs last summer were 11.3% below national average. Those same pupils who took Key Stage 3 tests in 2004 were 3% below in maths and 6% below in English.

The inspectors made particular comments about the 14-19 provision

“Progress in addressing several weaknesses identified in the 14-19 area-wide inspection has been very slow. The current post 16 curriculum offer does not meet the agreed learner entitlement of allowing young people to work towards a combination of vocational and academic qualifications.”

Joint Area Review Report 2006

This builds upon a previous inspection, which leads to a report in January 2004, which said:

“Currently, no explicit strategy for 14 to 19 education and training exists with agreed success measures. Not enough consideration has been given to the appropriate balance of academic and vocational provision.... Work-related learning in schools is not sufficiently developed. There is no comprehensive directory of learning opportunities for pupils beyond Key Stage 4.”

The strategy for 14-19 education and training was described as unsatisfactory
Area Wide Inspection report 2004

This is the reason why this proposal relates to change in 14-19 educational provision rather than wholesale re-organisation.

2. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Challenge and response

The LSC in recognising the continuing under-performance brought forward its own proposal in July 2006. This envisaged the centring of all post 16 provision at one Sixth Form College as part of the IOW College Corporation. The Council responded by asking the Policy Commission for School Standards to draft a response to the LSC proposal, which the Council's Cabinet could consider. The LSC also conducted its own consultation. The Policy Commission gathered evidence and opinion during the autumn term and came to the conclusion that there was no appetite for a single Sixth Form College. The LSC's consultation reached a similar conclusion.

3. What this proposal is not about and why

This proposal is not about wholesale change to the education system on the Island. This is for a number of reasons. The current high performance of the primary sector would suggest that 'if it is not broke then there is no need to fix it'; a disruption to this high performing phase may negatively affect achievement.

Distance between IOW Average and National Average

Year	KS1 Writing	KS1 Maths	KS2 Writing	KS2 Maths
2002	+3%	+2%	-9.2%	-2%
2003	0	+1%	-10.1%	-6.2%
2004	+1%	+2%	-6%	-4.3%
2005	+7%	+8%	-7%	-6.1%
2006	+9%	+8%	+4%	-1.8%

The figures in bold refer to the same cohort of pupils, showing that in Writing at Key Stage 2 the same pupils had moved further ahead of the national average but had slipped in maths. Overall there is a clear improvement trend in both key stages.

A re-organisation of the primary sector would most likely lead to the loss of rural / village provision and all evidence suggests that this will have an adverse effect on the wider community. This is especially in the light of the focus on early learning, family support and wider extended schools learning within the Primary phase. There would also be a high capital cost linked to such a vast rebuilding programme because funding is limited.

4. The Policy Commission's Recommendation

In considering rejecting the LSC's proposal, the Policy Commission, from the public consultation also concluded that a 'no change option' was not appropriate. In collecting evidence and options the Policy Commission identified a number of common strands in the responses. These were:

The history of poor collaboration between post 16 providers in the past

The desire to keep learning and schooling as close to communities as possible

The need to keep strong role models and to extend further the involvement of 6th formers in primary schools

A need to maximise the professional development/experience to recruit and retain teachers of high calibre

The need to retain expertise and specialisms in high schools to support developments in middle schools

The present 3 tiers, with some modification, mirrors the national 14-19 agenda

This is a seminal moment to be innovative and prepare for the future rather than adjust for what has happened in the past

The proposal now being consulted upon was recommended to the Council's Cabinet and members decided to consult further on this proposal and the three models of delivery.

5. The Proposal

THE THREE OPTIONS

OPTION ONE

6th Form provision delivered by High Schools and the College as one institution governed by one body. This would involve a single corporation replacing the college and the schools operating at three or four sites across the Island. This would be modelled on a similar set up currently seen at Oxbridge. However – there may be some technical difficulties with this model, as it potentially does not meet the principle of choice and diversity.

OPTION TWO

6th Form provision will be delivered at 3 or 4 sites across the Island in a Trust Foundation under a single Governing Body. The College would remain separate. This will involve bringing together the current 5 high school provision under one leadership – or ‘Super Head’. The ‘Trust’ as it has been labelled can be sponsored by both public and private sectors and will offer different provision on different sites. This might mean the current 5 high schools reducing to 3 or 4 sites with each site offering the basic curriculum plus a number of specialist subjects. Students would be able to access their local learning site for support, guidance and the basic curriculum. Collectively the ‘Trust’ could offer the International Baccalaureate, something, which no single school will be able to do. A single group of trustees will oversee the running of the system with a principal and heads of learning for each site. Each site will be able to develop a local management committee, which may consist of parents, students and local community representatives.

OPTION THREE

As Option Two but with each establishment retaining its own Governing Body responsible for provision. This is effectively a weaker version of the ‘Trust’. It would be a Federation between separate 14-19 institutions with each site retaining some decision-making powers. However, this may not achieve the desired collaboration or provide an effective and diverse curriculum offer.

6. The Yr9 question

Accompanying the proposed change to the high schools is the proposal to extend middle schools to include Y9 – this arose out of the Policy Commission’s public consultation. There are a number of reasons for this.

Accountability – There has been insufficient progress across high and middle schools to apply a consistent approach to the testing of pupils at Key Stage 3. This has led to further inconsistency of provision in Y9 at high schools. The proposed revisions to the KS3 curriculum (announced by the Secretary of State, Alan Johnson) include the Y7, 8 and 9 pupils having access, where appropriate, to work placements, and other learning environments. It also outlines a focus on developing independent learners in preparation for the new 14-19 curriculum. We believe that these changes will be set in a more stable environment for young people if their out-of school learning experiences are co-ordinated by a school staff member, which knows the pupils well – i.e. for over 4 years.

Independent Advice and Guidance – This is an essential part of KS3, particularly in Yr8 and Yr9. We intend that KS3 pupils will be given ‘tasters’ of the new 14-19 learning pathways by staff from the 14-19 learning centres. They will need to make choices earlier than before in order for the planning for the new 14-19 learning pathways to be effective. This will enable pupils to make informed choices but in the context of a school staff member who has worked with them for four or more years rather than one who may have only spent two terms with them.

Much has been made of the age gap between a Y5 child typically 10 years of age and Y9 typically 14 years of age. This is a narrower age gap in the traditional 11-18 school and the same as an 11-16 school.

7. Locality (Vertical) Clusters

There is nothing in this proposal which will have an adverse affect on allowing pupils to go through the education system from primary and middle schools, up to the 14-19 Learning Centre in their local area. There are examples where staff from high schools work in and support staff in middle and primary schools. This will be able to continue and we believe can be re-enforced by this proposal by making this high school expertise available across the Island and not just in locality clusters.

We believe that the most successful phase (i.e. primary) should be given more opportunity to provide leadership in teaching and learning across all phases than is currently the practice.

The authority has invested in the development of clusters to the tune of £97,000 for each cluster in 2006/7. This is continuing funding which will be embedded in school budgets from 2007/8 onwards. Over the last 4 yrs clusters have been given £2.5m for collaboration, co-operation and learning progression between primary, middle and high schools in the community (vertical federation) and we need to understand what this money has achieved. We also believe that this additional funding should be subject to scrutiny by the Schools' Forum in terms of improved outcomes for children and young people. The Forum is beginning to develop this evaluative role. The Council will support this by agreeing with clusters some improvement measures and targets. For example these will be around educational achievement, attendance, support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and frequency of permanent and fixed term exclusions.

An exciting development in some communities within localities has been the request by some middle and primary schools to explore the notion of federation between primary and middle. We will welcome any further suggestions of this nature.

8. Recruitment and Retention

Good quality teachers in high schools have nothing to fear from this proposal. There will be continued opportunity to work with pupils at post 16 level. For some staff there will be an opportunity to seek advancement in providing senior curriculum leadership in middle schools. Whilst others who are equally ambitious, may after a few years in the new system, find that they will be able to secure senior positions off Island (should they wish to do so) in the growing number of 14-19 institutions being developed by some local authorities to work alongside their existing 11-16 and 11-18 schools.

9. Outstanding issues

Whenever a proposal is brought forward there will always be a number of variables or uncertainties, which at the time cannot be assessed. With this proposal there are two clear outstanding issues.

The first is that the LSC is still keen to expand provision at IOW College which will include courses on offer at the Island's high schools. The size and extent of this expansion is as yet unknown but will be the subject of negotiation between the Council and the LSC once the outcome of this consultation is known.

Secondly, the Secretary of State has indicated some possible changes to the post 16 provision, which may or may not mean the raising of the school leaving age. However, the 14-19 learning centres may have a future responsibility for providing support to those learners who are in part-time or full-time employment with training. The centres may also have a responsibility for those who are not in education, employment or training at all. Both these issues have an implication for the number and size of the proposed 14-19 learning centres.

10. Next Steps

The consultation period will last until 30 March 2007. Your response to the questions should be sent to:

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or by e-mail to chris.mathews@iow.gov.uk

Full Council at its meeting on 18 April 2007 will consider the responses and make a decision.

Whatever proposal is adopted, an implementation plan and discussion with stakeholders will take place during the summer term. The Implementation Plan would then be published in September 2007. If school organisation changes are required then the necessary statutory process will begin from October 2007. It is important to note that the statutory regulations with regard to school organisation will be changed as from May 2007. A local authority now needs to hold a 'competition' for all new schools. The 14-19 learning centres will be deemed 'new schools'.

In order to retain the focus on raising standards a joint DfES/Council project has already begun. Following the May 2006 inspection the DfES recognised the need to invest in raising the quality of leadership in middle and high schools. They therefore granted the Council an additional £1.3m which is to be spent on working with all middle and high schools, particularly those schools of concern, to improve curriculum leadership. This project is being jointly led by the Council's Head of School Improvement and an external adviser.

11. Consultation Questions

You are invited to respond to the following questions:

Thinking about the three options and the proposed change to Y9:

1. *What opportunities does this create for children, young people, teaching professionals, the wider community?*
2. *What issues should the council consider if it chooses to implement this option?*
3. *What ideas/thoughts do you have about how the council could tackle these issues?*
4. *What do you generally think of this option and what do you think will be achieved by implementing it?*

Plus

5. *Are there any other issues, concerns or points you would like to make?*
6. *Are there any other considerations around the three options that you would like the council to take note of?*

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Appendix A

Post-14 Consultation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Will the public get a chance to shape these plans?

Between the cabinet decision on 6 February and the meeting of Full Council on the 18th April, there will be a full consultation period across the Island. Following the council decision, the full implementation plan, after further discussion with schools and unions, will be published by September 2007.

2. Why is this set up being described as 'unique' and what makes it unique?

There are three authorities with Primary, Middle and High School three tier system across a significant proportion of their schools. There are many Authorities where three tier can be found in some areas for example in Northumberland, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Kent, Kirklees and Hertfordshire. The Island is therefore unique in being able to establish one learning community in line with its position of being both a Unitary and County Council authority. These factors also enable the Island to maintain learning as close to communities as possible. The present government policy on 11-13 (Key Stage 3) and 14-19 closely matches the current structure of learning on the Isle of Wight. With responsibility and accountability for the whole of Key Stage 3 in Middle Schools and the collaboration achieved at post 14, an innovative structure will support our commitment to achieve significant improvement in attainment for the Island's young people.

3. How confident is IW Council that these changes will make a noticeable difference to things like exam results?

The council is extremely excited by the options that have arisen through the council's previous consultation process, which has brought together the thinking of individuals, institutions and associations. The council is confident that the option chosen will lead to choice and diversity within a wide curriculum offer, clear progression pathways and innovative learning and teaching approaches which will benefit the young people and the Island as a whole. While there can be no guarantees the Council would not be seeking views on a proposal that it believed would not make a positive difference.

4. How do you think this will impact on raising standards here?

Standards have to be raised irrespective of the system for learning. However, the proposed system improves capacity at Key Stage 3 and gives the 14-19 a defined agenda and an opportunity for coherence and clarity within a single collegiate institution. The Council is confident that this move can be managed effectively for the benefit of young people. In being both bold and innovative the Council believes that this will make learning and provision for young people unique in the Country and attract high quality staff.

5. How much will all of this cost?

If the Council approves the proposal then this will be one of the key tasks officers will be charged to undertake during the summer. This will include consultation with schools and other key partners. This proposal is about levering in further funding and making better use of existing resources to provide teaching centres fit for the 21st century.

6. How confident is IW Council on securing funding for these plans?

The council has secured £30.5 million of DfES funding with regard to the One School Pathfinder at Cowes. The funding strands for the remainder of the development will be dependant on how the individual institutions are best utilised. There are currently interests from local industry in an academy, which would lever in further Government funding. The Learning and Skills Council, while disappointed at the council decision in relation to sixth form provision on the college site, have indicated they will support the option chosen by the council. Unlike the previous 2 tier plan, further funding can be secured from the council's normal capital provision and the eventual provision of the DfES Building Schools for the Future initiative.

7. What will happen to the £26m on offer from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)?

The authority is in discussion with the Learning and Skills Council. Funding will be secured but the level of funding will be closely linked to the development of the curriculum offer across the learning centres, the College and the work based learning providers.

8. Will this have an impact on Council Tax rates?

These proposals will not increase Council Taxes. For the 2007/2008 financial year the Council introduced one of the lowest Council Tax increases anywhere in England.

9. When does this all start?

The proposal, if agreed, would come into effect in September 2009. However, some preliminary work may start in September 2008 if we are successful in our bid to begin a Specialised Diploma in Media Arts. This bid is a consortium bid amongst all the post 16 providers on the Isle of Wight.

10. What about Admissions?

Admission arrangements post 14 will need to be further developed subject to the Council's decision. However, whilst students might take courses at more than one institution it is probable that parents will be asked to express a preference for admission to a local 14-19 learning centre, the Trust or the Isle of Wight College depending on which model is preferred.

Admissions from 2008 will be based on a model of equal preference, which is a statutory requirement of the 2006 Education Act.

Equal preference

Parents will be able to list up to three schools on the application form. These must be placed in rank order with the school they most want their child to attend as number one. All preferences will first be considered without reference to ranking against our published oversubscription criteria. Once this has been completed a child will be allocated a place at the school, which has places available and is ranked highest by parents on the application form provided. Where a school is oversubscribed the published oversubscription criteria will be applied to those schools with more applicants than places and children with the highest priority for places up to the admissions number will be offered places.

11. What does it mean about uniform?

With young people post 14 possibly learning at more than one centre, it may be more appropriate to determine a 'dress code' rather than insisting on uniforms e.g. for young men this could be a 'jacket and tie' dress code. These are operational matters where the leadership of the post 14 provision would make decisions about in the best interests of learners and their families.

12. How will pupils get from one learning centre to another, especially if they cannot drive – and how will they afford this?

Pupils may not need to travel extensively. In some cases specialist staff will move between sites and there will also be extensive use of ICT enabling students to access learning materials from their 'home learning site'. As a result of the 2006 Education Act, the authority has to publish a travel plan for all school provision. Transport between the learning centres will be an integral part of this travel plan, which will be in place for September 2008.

13. How will the learning centres ensure that their policies and the resources for learning are consistent across the Island?

Careful consideration will be given so that policies and procedures are developed consistently across learning institutions. However, the requirement of government policy and the Local Authority for collaboration in the provision of learning opportunities will be a key driver to discussions. We believe that by organising post 14 under single governance and leadership, whilst delivering from a number of learning centres, will secure consistency in policies and effective distribution of resources.

14. Which high schools will close, if any?

This is dependant upon the final option that is chosen and strategic decisions, particularly the intentions of the Learning and Skills Council regarding potential post 16 expansion. The final decision about the number of post 14 learning sites will be based upon the most effective use of resources as well as maintaining the principle of retaining learning as close to communities as possible. However, the development of a trust with single governance would in effect 'technically' close all the high schools and re-open some on the same site under different governance arrangements. Decisions about which sites will be learning centres will be the responsibility of revised governance and leadership.

15. How will middle schools be modified to allow for hundreds of pupils staying on until Year 9 and who will pay for it?

We will be looking to develop the provision in Middle Schools where teachers are already experienced in teaching Key Stage 3 – a significant proportion of young people already take Key Stage 3 national tests at the end of Yr8. The Government has recently announced some changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum and we will be working with middle schools to respond positively to these changes. Funding for all schools is based on a formula agreed by the School's Forum and is determined mostly by pupil numbers. Increases in pupil numbers by the addition of a further year will bring in additional funding to schools. We will be working with Middle Schools to address any additional needs that they may have for specialist facilities.

16. How can Yr9 pupils in Middle Schools prepare for KS4, which takes place in Learning Centres?

Transition from one phase to another phase requires careful planning. From 2008 the Connexions service becomes part of the Local Authority and the work of this service will be directed at young people in Years 7 – 9, helping them to start thinking about progression in learning after Key Stage 3. In the time from the end of Key Stage 3 tests, taken early in May, to the start of Key Stage 4, in September, the learning centres and the IOW College, in partnership with Middle Schools, will develop a range of taster courses, introductory visits to build upon the information, advice and guidance that the Connexions service will have been undertaking during Key Stage 3. We believe that this will provide an appropriate preparation and induction for young people entering Key Stage 4. We will also be prepared for some young people starting parts of their Key Stage 4 learning pathways while still in Middle Schools – something that is already happening currently in some schools.

17. Will this not impact on overcrowding in middle schools?

In terms of current provision, there is only one middle school where the site cannot expand. With regard to all other middle schools, there is an excess of capacity, although individual schools may have reached their current admission numbers. However, currently there are reducing numbers entering primary schools (as a result of lower birth rates on the Island) and by 2009 this will be impacting on our middle schools.

18. Should I be concerned that my child will be mixing with much older pupils in middle schools under these proposals?

Young children being in the company of older pupils cause some parents concern. In the majority of schools reception pupils have managed contacts with Yr6 pupils (typical Primary School in a two tier system) while Yr7 pupils are in regular contact with Yr 11 and/or Yr13 pupils. Schools are very experienced at ensuring the safety of young children from older children and in the majority of cases these are very positive role models for younger children. In the original research and fact-finding undertaken by the Policy Commission many people (parents, schools, students) cited the positive benefits of sixth formers being involved with our Primary Schools. Middle Schools will ensure that arrangements at break time and lunch and during movement between lessons younger pupils will not have negative experiences from seeing and being with older pupils.

19. What has been the general reaction from high and middle school staff so far?

Mixed. The consultation period will provide the Council with opportunities to hear the views of staff. This along with the views of parents, carers and young people, as well as the business community and the views of the wider community will inform the Council in its decision making. The Council believes that it has been elected to make a difference and this proposal is seen as providing an opportunity for major improvements in standards with the minimum of disruption.

20. What about children with special education needs?

The post 14 proposals will enable the 'Trust' and College with the support of work based learning providers to widen the curriculum offer, including increasing the vocational offer and also match more closely the needs of individual learners. The provision potentially will be stronger and enable pupils to progress according the standards they have attained rather than the age they have reached. This more personalised approach will benefit all pupils including those with specialised individual needs.

21. What is the implication for Primary Schools?

There is no direct implication for Primary Schools within these proposals. However, while standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are good we will work with Primary and Middle Schools to improve further standards at Key Stage 2.

22. If the high schools are being reduced by one year group, what happens to the employment of staff? What impact will this have on staff levels in schools across the Island?

We are to retain the same number of year groups across the Island's schools. We are proposing year 9 becomes the final year of middle schools. This would ensure that accountability for standards at the end of Key Stage 3 is within one institutional phase of learning – Middle Schools. The local authority will be working closely with teachers' unions on the small degree of staffing changes this may generate. We will also be working with the unions on the issue of teachers working in more than one learning centre. There will also be consideration to ensure appropriate expertise in the 14-19 and the 9-13 phases of learning. The authority believes these discussions will innovate and energise our thinking about learning and standards in Key Stage 3 and enable us to target our resources about information, advice and guidance at those important years when young people are thinking about their Key Stage 4 options.

23. What about protection of allowance, appropriate employment and differential redundancy system?

Continuing dialogue with appropriate professional associations and unions will be part of the project brief. It will be important to ensure, if at all possible, that no effective members of staff are adversely treated in the establishment of the new provision.