

# Herefordshire Schools Capital Investment Strategy





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# Introduction

We want every child in Herefordshire to have a great start in life and as part of this we want our schools to be great places for learning and working. If our children grow up having received the best education possible, we know this will give them the best chance to be successful adults. It also provides local employers and businesses with a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which will help Herefordshire to continue to flourish.

We are proud of the work our schools do and the results they achieve, however we still have challenges ahead of us. With the economic situation as it is (although funding for the day to day running costs of schools has been protected), increasing pay bills and changing numbers of children, it means our schools need to find ways to reduce their costs. At the same time they need to continue to improve the quality of their work and the results they deliver, so need to be set up to run in the most cost effective way.

As the number of Herefordshire households with children continues to grow and planned economic and housing developments progress, we need to ensure we have enough high quality school places available. There are already more than enough places across the county for the foreseeable future, we just need to ensure they're in the right locations.

Along with sufficient school places, we also need to ensure that our school buildings are fit to deliver a modern curriculum. We know that a number of our schools need improving; some are facing expensive repair bills, some are in buildings which are now tired and outdated, whilst some are designed in a way best suited to the past.

This is why we're taking steps now to improve, not only the council's school estate, but also those run by academies, trustees and the Diocese. We aim to secure approximately £100million of investment over the next 20 years and the Herefordshire Schools Capital Investment Strategy will help guide school developments for the first five years of our 20 year plan. Whilst there is still work to be completed on the precise changes to be made, we're confident that successful investment in our schools will make them more sustainable in the longer term, allow them to keep pace with changing needs and deliver high quality education to the county's children.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Lester".

**Councillor Jonathan Lester**  
Cabinet member for young people  
and children's wellbeing



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Davidson".

**Jo Davidson**  
Director for children's wellbeing

29 January 2016

## Why we need a strategy

The standard of education in Herefordshire is good. In 2015, 88% of primary aged pupils attended an Ofsted rated Good or Outstanding school (compared to 82% nationally and 80% across the West Midlands), whilst 83% of secondary aged pupils attended a Good or Outstanding school (compared to 70% nationally and 71% across the West Midlands).

As a county, we also have sufficient school places both now and in the future, but we need to ensure that our school buildings are also adequate enough to deliver a modern curriculum and we know that a number require improvement.

The Herefordshire Schools Capital Investment Strategy, which is informed by a set of widely consulted on principles, will be applied to a detailed understanding of each of our schools to provide clear options for improvement. In some cases, the improvement options will be very straight forward and relatively easy to apply, whilst for others there will be more challenging issues to consider.

The strategy will cover all schools, including academies, trust and faith schools, not just those run by the council. It's important to ensure that the buildings being used provide high quality learning environments to support the county's wider education and business ambitions.

This is an overview of our strategy, the full strategic version is available on the council's website at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schools-capital-investment-strategy](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schools-capital-investment-strategy).



# Setting the scene in Herefordshire

Herefordshire is a rural county located in the south West Midlands area of England, which borders Wales. The city of Hereford is located in the middle of the county and is the centre for most of the county's facilities, although we have five principal market towns: Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

Herefordshire covers 2,180 square kilometres (842 square miles) and as a predominantly rural county has the fourth lowest population density in England. There are just over 186,000 residents, of which 53% live in what are classified as rural areas.

In 2011, there were 31,400 children aged 16 years or younger, a figure which had been declining across the county throughout the whole of the previous decade, despite rising numbers of births and people moving into Herefordshire. However, this number rose to 31,700 in 2013 and this gradual rise is predicted to continue until 2023.



## In 2015, we had:

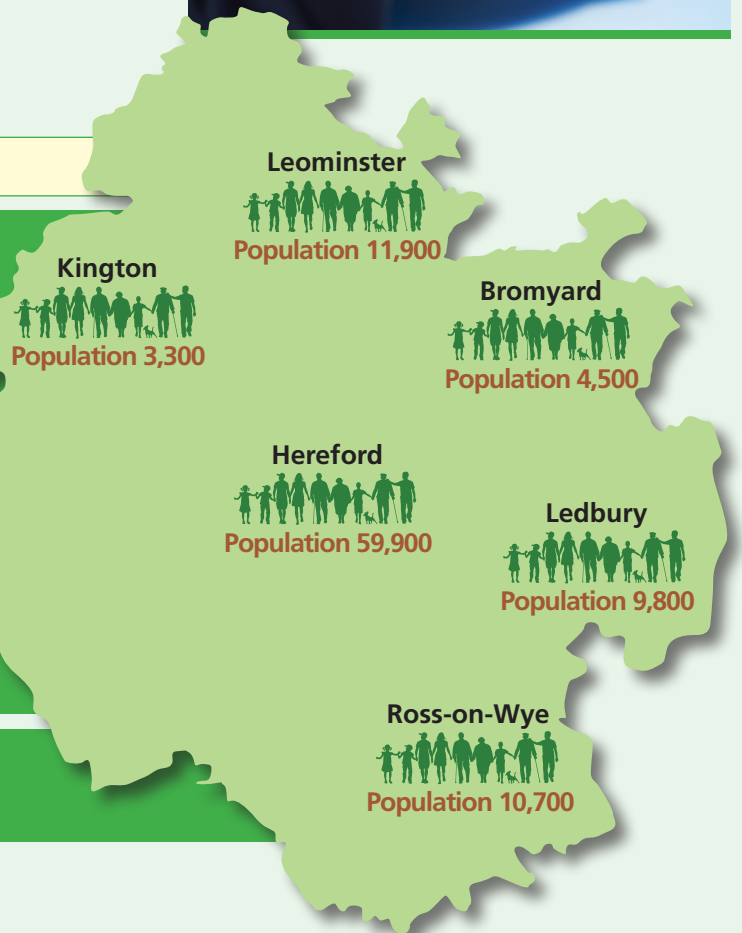
22,999 pupils in community, faith, free and trust schools and academies

78 primary schools with 14,000 places; 11% of which are surplus

15 secondary schools with 10,000 places; 14% of which are surplus

17 Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' schools and 67 'Good' schools (those which have been inspected)

50.5% of pupils attending their local catchment school



## Our schools

We have a variety of different schools in Herefordshire with differing governance arrangements.

**Community schools** are schools that are owned, funded and maintained by the council and which are non-denominational. The council employs the staff, owns the land and buildings and decides which admissions criteria to use.

**Voluntary aided schools** are mainly religious or faith schools, although anyone can apply for a place. The governing body employs the staff and determines the admissions arrangements, while the school buildings are normally owned by a charitable foundation, which is often a religious organisation. The school governing body contributes to building and maintenance costs.

**Voluntary controlled schools** are similar to voluntary aided schools, but are run by the council. As with community schools, the council employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria, but the school land and buildings are normally owned by a charity / religious organisation, which also appoint some of the governing body members.

**Foundation schools** are where the governing body employs the staff and has responsibility for the admissions arrangements. The school land and buildings are usually owned by the governing body or a charitable foundation.

**Trust schools** are a type of foundation school which has formed a charitable trust with an outside partner. A decision to become a trust school is taken by the governing body with parental consultation.

**Academies** are independently managed, all ability schools set up by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups in partnership with the government's Department for Children, Schools and Families and the council. The partnership funds the school land and buildings with the government covering the running costs.

**Free schools** are funded by the government and not run by the council. They have more control over how they do things, including setting their own staff pay and conditions and changing the length of the school day and terms.





In Herefordshire, we have...

Type of school	Voluntary aided schools	Voluntary controlled schools	Academies	Community schools	Trust schools	Free schools
Primary schools	20	12	17	26	2	1
Secondary schools	2	-	9	3	-	1
Special schools	-	-	2	2	-	-
Pupil referral units	-	-	-	1 (across two sites)	-	-
All through schools	-	-	1	-	-	-



## Our strategic approach

Herefordshire's Schools Capital Investment Strategy will take the following six stage approach:

- 1) Have a set of principles that underpin and guide processes and decision making
- 2) Ensure there is a thorough detailed understanding of all the issues, including:
  - The condition and future maintenance demands of schools
  - The extent to which schools comply with modern standards
  - Patterns of attendance at schools and parental preference
  - The likely future demand for school places
  - Funding models and national funding formulas
- 3) Apply the principles to the understanding to determine the priority issues which need to be addressed across the county
- 4) Develop the best way to address the priority issues in line with the principles through consultation and discussion of the proposed options
- 5) Plan and obtain formal approval for detailed and financially costed options which adhere to the principles and represent best value
- 6) Implement the selected options



## Our principles



Under the Education Act 1996, Section 14(1), a local council has a legal duty to ensure there are enough school places for the children in its area. In Herefordshire, we want to do this in a way that supports the delivery of high quality education and contributes to the attractiveness of the county as a place to live and work.

This strategy sets out our approach to delivering our lawful duty and is underpinned by 11 principles; developed and revised with elected councillors, head teachers, governors and other responsible organisations along with members of the public through an online consultation.

Our principles are:

- 1) High quality learning environments are more likely to deliver the best outcomes for all children and young people
- 2) A high quality learning environment is one where:
  - The building is in good condition with an affordable and planned programme of maintenance
  - The building has the right number of suitable places
  - The building supports the delivery of a suitable curriculum and learning
  - There is sufficient suitable outdoor space including playing fields and all weather surfaces
  - Children are not taught in temporary classrooms
  - The building is energy efficient
  - The school has full disabled access
  - The school meets all health and safety requirements
- 3) There will be a range of different size schools across the county to support future population trends. It is anticipated that most parents will choose their local catchment school, but we support parental choice and aim for 95% of parents to get their first choice school. There will be an appropriate number of faith school places and there'll be no preference as to whether or not schools are academies
- 4) We will support high quality popular schools to expand and judgements about quality and popularity will be based on different factors, including Ofsted ratings of Outstanding and Good

- 5) There will be no preferred size or organisation of schools and opportunities to consolidate through the development of all through schools and nursery provision will be encouraged
- 6) All schools should plan five years ahead. As there's a risk regarding the continuity of education for smaller schools, those with less than 105 enrolled pupils, particularly those which are stand alone, will need to have a detailed five year plan setting out arrangements for continuity
- 7) As a whole across Herefordshire, there should be no more than 10% surplus school places. This margin is designed to reflect population variations and trends over time
- 8) We will be increasingly responsible towards the environment and will expect all schools to work towards achieving a displayed energy certificate rating of C or above and a silver eco schools rating along with reducing energy consumption
- 9) We will promote non vehicular access routes to schools and aim to have schools conveniently located near community assets
- 10) Any financial investment must represent best value for investors and could come from a variety of sources, including:
  - Specific grants and one off government schemes
  - The planned release of sites to sell and reinvest
  - External funding such as from The Education Funding Agency, the Diocese and section 106 agreements with housing developers
- 11) We will carry out detailed consultation on any changes or investment proposals



## Applying our principles



To apply these principles to our schools and relevant school issues, we will consider:

- 1) Any school buildings which are not compliant and the significance of:
  - Increasing or re-modelling specific spaces
  - Replacing temporary buildings with permanent ones
  - Changing the planned number of children being admitted
  - Changing the use of a building to minimise maintenance costs
- 2) The locations which do not meet the recommended size or are unlikely to meet future size requirements. To mitigate against this, we could:
  - Acquire additional suitable land
  - Relocate the school
  - Consolidate with another local school
  - Sell off surplus land for alternative investment

- 3) The size of our schools, in terms of:
  - Small schools with less than 105 enrolled pupils will need detailed five year plans, especially relating to the school building and site
  - All schools need to plan to be financially viable and consider opportunities to maximise resources through shared arrangements with other schools
- 4) Disability access to our schools, ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate children with disabilities
- 5) The energy efficiency of our schools and ensure that this is a priority when making any changes
- 6) How we deliver change, ensuring we fully consult on all proposals and include clear timelines and decisions
- 7) The maintenance requirements to address current ongoing issues and ensure that all schools have a five year maintenance plan in place



## Our current position

In order to successfully deliver the Schools Capital Investment Strategy, we have been developing a partnership approach between the council, head teachers, governors, councillors, parents / carers, young people and communities.

We are considering ideas, options and possible solutions to establish the best way forward and create a clear development plan. The plan will capture the initial thinking and include detailed next steps as to how we can address any school issues across the county, in line with our strategy principles. The plan will also focus on opportunities for external funding and the financial implications of our 20 year school development plan.







[www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)