



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL
Education, Arts & Libraries

Achieving Excellence

A vision for learning
in Devon



A consultation document
June 2004

Responses by **28 September 2004** to
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There is a response form and a glossary of items at the end of the document.

A VISION FOR LEARNING IN DEVON

INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to introduce our Vision for Learning Consultation Document. This document is the fruit of much work and discussion over the past six months which I have found thoroughly absorbing and enjoyable.

What has struck me most is that while there may not be unanimity of view about detail there does seem to be a sense of common purpose among the education community in Devon about the general direction we should take in the next decade. This document attempts to capture that sense of common purpose and this will be translated into action through our Single Plan for Children and Young People which we will publish in April 2005.

I make no apology for repeating some of the messages I gave when the discussion on the Vision was launched. In particular I want Devon County Council to be a top Local Education Authority, renowned as an exciting place to teach and learn. And I want us to have the highest aspirations for what our learners can achieve through education, not just academically but in terms of their broader development.

Schools are, of course, central to this agenda but schools working in isolation can only achieve so much. I would like Devon to be known as a county in which schools work together, with the County Council and with other partners to provide the best possible learning experiences for all young people (and older learners). This will be particularly important in our work with parents. Engaging parents and carers seems to me fundamental to helping young people achieve more. Almost all parents want their children to do well, but many lack the confidence and knowledge to provide the encouragement and support to help their children succeed in school. Charles Desforges' recent research for the DfES shows clearly that the most important determinant of a child's success is not social class but the extent to which parents take an active interest in their education.

If the environment in the home is critical to the success of young people then so is the wider environment. Young people have a major stake in ensuring that the depleted resources of the planet are used in a sustainable way; and that the outstanding natural environment of Devon is protected and enhanced.

Encouraging this interest and active involvement in safeguarding the environment will be a strong feature of learning in the County.

There is much that already puts Devon at the forefront. The Devon Pathfinder Children's Trust chaired by Professor Ted Wragg is one of the most ambitious examples nationally of bringing together services to support vulnerable youngsters. The

development of the Trust and the way it works with schools will be at the heart of our work in the coming years.

Our reorganisation of the school system in Exeter has also gained national recognition for combining collaborative work on raising standards with the physical transformation of many of the city's schools. Much of what we have learned in Exeter can be applied across the County.

Our support for remodelling the school workforce is regarded amongst the best, such that we were one of six Local Authorities selected as a test-bed for assessing the costs of implementing Planning Preparation and Assessment for teachers.

In launching a review of School Meals in the early Autumn we stole a march on the national debate on health promotion and again the DfES are keen to see how our proposals might inform national policies. These are just a few examples of the many initiatives at LEA and school level.

I know many people have picked up on a phrase I used last year: 'Devon daring to be different'. I hope this document shows the boldness to back up this rhetorical flourish. It is above all the result of a lot of people who know a lot about education, thinking deeply about how we can meet the challenges facing us and what we can do together which will really make a difference to learners in this county.

Phil Norrey
Director of Education, Arts and Libraries

How the preparatory work was undertaken

Work on a Vision for Learning in Devon started on 14 November 2003 at a full-day meeting of the Schools Forum, where heads, governors, County Council members and officers and other partners held a series of workshops to explore the national and local context and start to identify what was important for them. We already have a great deal of feedback on how education is perceived by parents and the wider community through MORI surveys and consultation associated with producing the corporate plan 2003-08, and from contributing to the development of the Community Strategy for Devon. This was fed into the context of the discussions.

An initial report was published* and its key themes taken forward to a launch event in the Great Hall of Exeter University on 6 January 2004, to which all schools were invited.

A Discussion Document* then provided the starting point for a series of six Director's Conferences for Heads and Governors and also six occasions where the Director held either 'twilight' or Saturday meetings specifically for Governors to facilitate their involvement. The document and the questions it raised on principle and practice were frequently taken back for further school-based discussion. Response sheets were returned over the weeks following: in all, over 250 were collected and analysed*.

The responses from the Director's Conferences were published in March*. The further responses from Governors did not alter the principles which received greatest emphasis, but did raise further points, one of which was, understandably, the importance of nurturing and supporting the role of Governors.

A questionnaire for parents in the February edition of the Primary Times* stimulated a wealth of feedback: 540 responses were received. Parents were asked to place in rank order three suggestions for each of twelve significant areas. They were also asked if there was one key thing they would like to see in a Vision for Learning in Devon, and 471 responses put forward views. These were broadly in line with what heads and governors told us, and it is apparent that parents are conscious of how much emphasis nationally is put on testing. They also expressed concern over class sizes and the need for a high quality learning environment.

A separate review of school meals was instigated early in the year, with Devon leading the field on a debate which subsequently gathered pace nationally. It is increasingly accepted that diet has an effect on children's ability and inclination to learn, and concerns over lack of exercise have also been a focus of attention. The strength of feeling on this issue was impressive: a questionnaire to parents and (separately) to children evoked 2,598 responses from adults and 10,266 from children. The Review Group is reporting in July 2004 but its interim findings have helped to shape this document. A further 98 responses on barriers to learning came through an interactive website set up for young people in partnership with Project Cosmic.

The statement below is drawn from the things that heads, governors, staff, parents and young people have told us are most important to them.

The principles that must underpin our Vision

Devon schools and Devon County Council believe that:

1. Only excellence is good enough;
2. we should have high expectations for each individual learner;
3. the needs of learners, not providers, must be central to all planning;
4. we need a positive 'can-do' culture which embraces change, values staff, and supports innovative thinking and classroom excellence;
5. there should be a broad curriculum which produces independent motivated learners who can benefit from a wide range of opportunities;
6. we should invest in early years to address inequalities as soon as possible;
7. schools can only do their best for all pupils if they collaborate with each other and with other agencies;
8. there is great benefit from active participation by parents/carers as educators and as learners;
9. the County Council as LEA should be an advocate for learners and of schools, whilst providing appropriate leadership and challenge;
10. we should seek to raise the aspirations of communities.

The values which will underpin delivery

Devon County Council has agreed the values which will underpin its services. These are fundamental to both the way this vision is being developed and how it will be implemented:

- *people and community centred:* Devon is listening to its schools and wants to address the needs of their pupils, staff, Governors and managers. Governors are important representatives, who can engage local communities, and a vision shared by them and the County Council will be a powerful tool for raising everyone's aspirations and achievements;
- *working together:* the vision will develop greater understanding of the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the County Council, schools and other partners, including its Diocesan colleagues. It will promote contributions based on different strengths and knowledge, and promote collaboration across learning communities. Strong clusters of local schools will be empowered to influence and support community strategies;
- *valuing people:* the County Council is committed to equal opportunities; schools share that commitment but often find it difficult to reconcile a range of aptitude amongst pupils with an overall drive for higher standards. The vision will support joint efforts (including an important contribution from the expertise in special schools) which will demonstrate in Devon what has been found elsewhere: that a truly inclusive school is also a high-performing school. This vision is about every single person achieving his or her best. Schools will be able to develop their role in valuing diversity and supporting young people to grow up respecting and accepting other individuals and other cultures;
- *improving and innovating:* Devon has good schools with committed and competent staff. Nevertheless, as nationally, it has been hard to find a way to raise standards further. There is a consensus that more of the same won't do, and that the County and its schools are ready to push back the boundaries and where appropriate stand side by side in radical action. Communities of learning will share and extend their own best practice, and leaders in schools will be able to develop safe territory to question and challenge one another, on a confident professional basis.

*All documentation can be found on:

www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningplansand_priorities/vision_for_learning.htm

CONTENT OF KEY NOTES

- 1. Opportunity and achievement for every child**
- 2. Entitlements for learners and those supporting them**
- 3. Building capacity in schools to collaborate and to learn from each other**
- 4. Giving children the best possible start**
- 5. Fostering innovation**
- 6. Promoting discussion on patterns of school provision in Devon**
- 7. A close partnership with Health**
- 8. Giving the best possible support to learning**

1. KEY NOTE: **Opportunity and achievement for every child**

DCC objectives:

a prosperous Devon, a healthy and caring Devon, promoting achievement through learning in Devon

CONTEXT

Consultation responses say that if we are serious about having high expectations for *all* learners we must take the time to look at *each* learner. Feedback overwhelmingly indicates that schools want fewer externally imposed measures and more recognition for a well-rounded approach. Parents are naturally concerned about their children's progress against the established measures, but also want them to enjoy learning and to develop as individuals.

It is recognised that schools feel a tension between welcoming all comers and being valued in the main for their academic achievement. There is also a strong belief that higher achievement is promoted through a broader curriculum. Devon wants a different way of measuring a school's success.

The 14-19 curriculum will put a new emphasis on appropriate pathways; and encouraging children to develop their particular talents from an earlier stage will help them to choose the right direction. A wide range of extension activities can also, as one Governor wrote, give children a 'hobby for life' and an increase in self-esteem. There are many partners who can support this, including adult learning, youth services and libraries. Extended schools will have a significant role. We also want children to have fun while learning to achieve.

HEADLINE

HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH EQUITY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon County Council and its schools will commit themselves to valuing the uniqueness of every child; no child should feel a failure, because everyone will be encouraged and enabled to discover his or her particular strengths, and motivated to develop them as fully as possible.

ACTION

Devon County Council will

- 1.1 seek realignment between Social Services, Health and Education, and where appropriate other agencies, to meet the needs of vulnerable or troubled young people in a co-ordinated and cost-effective way through the Children's Trust;
- 1.2 through all its schools and partners give a consistent message to communities that engaging in learning is relevant and worthwhile; and especially, engage parents in their children's learning;
- 1.3 develop ICT to facilitate personal learning plans and keep young people engaged in learning beyond the physical boundaries of a school;
- 1.4 invest in ways to support schools locally so that they can help young people to manage difficult and troubling behaviour;
- 1.5 promote a collective responsibility across the County Council and Academic Councils to provide inclusive local schools for local children, recognising that this presents challenges;
- 1.6 promote the pursuit of excellence by developing an approach to school improvement based on a better all-round understanding of what a school is achieving for all pupils;
- 1.7 ensure that gifted and talented pupils can be stretched towards their potential;
- 1.8 invest in work with parents which values their role as educators, and raises greater awareness of the part they can play in taking responsibility for their children as learners and citizens; helping them to develop the confidence and resilience they need to support their children in the challenges they face;
- 1.9 ensure there are creative opportunities in each learning community to extend children's artistic and musical appreciation and abilities;
- 1.10 promote a wide range of sporting activities and dance;
- 1.11 extend learning opportunities in the broadest sense through extended learning communities which can use both schools and other buildings (such as libraries) to discover the joy of learning.

2. KEY NOTE: Entitlements for learners and those supporting them

DCC Objectives: all the objectives will be covered in the promises agreed

CONTEXT

Many influences may conspire to make an educational experience potentially very different for children from different backgrounds or living in different areas. Where children live and what is available locally can also result in health inequalities and a better or worse start in life. Vulnerable young people, including those from black and minority ethnic groups, may need particular support.

There is a specific focus for all partners in the Community Strategy on improving outcomes for children and young people looked after by the County Council and this will be one area addressed through the Children's Trust. Children need to feel that their efforts at school are supported and valued by their parents and carers and to be involved in planning which promotes achievement.

HEADLINE

"THE DEVON PROMISE"

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The County Council and schools will consult with parents and other agencies to establish an entitlement relating to groups of children and young people in order to generate consistency. It will pay particular attention to equal opportunities and social inclusion, seeking to overcome barriers to entitlement. Further entitlement statements will apply to parents, staff and Governors.

Some entitlements will pick up strategic developments currently being prepared by partners: for example, the 14-19 strategy under development with the Learning and Skills Council; and discussions already initiated on the future of adult and community learning, and the role of extended schools.

The aim is to engage with a range of partners to sign up to the Devon Promise. It would also be possible to engage other educational providers in discussion on extending entitlements, for example for those leaving higher education

ACTION

Devon County Council will

- 2.1 consult on entitlements which could develop in the groupings proposed below. These will then be published as **The Devon Promise** which will make clear that:
- 2.2 by the age of seven children should have
- 2.3 by the age of fourteen young people should have
- 2.4 by the age of 19 young people should have
- 2.5 adult learners should have
- 2.6 staff teaching in Devon's schools should have
- 2.7 parents of children in Devon's schools should have
- 2.8 Governors serving in Devon's schools should have

3. KEY NOTE: Building capacity in schools to collaborate and to learn from each other

DCC objectives: achieving a prosperous Devon, creating safer and stronger communities, promoting achievement through learning, improving travel and communication.

CONTEXT

Academic Councils have operated in Devon since the 1970s, originally introduced to aid transition to a secondary school from its feeder primaries. Exeter has a number of 'cluster' groups with a single Executive; Barnstaple's two have recently merged. Other areas with more than one secondary already operate as one Council. In other parts of the country similar systems are being tested out but Devon has a head start, which also provides the potential for development in two ways: building capacity of groups of schools to support each other in excellence of teaching and learning; and sharing with the LEA the lead in addressing some of the difficult issues in a way which allows local solutions to emerge. This will accord with the Devon Strategic Partnership's policy of subsidiarity which encourages action to be taken at the lowest appropriate level. It will be important, however, not to see this as a mechanism which does no more than shift the problem.

Almost all respondents wanted to develop the role of Academic Councils and rename them. Local Learning Communities is a name which has recurred and it is used in this document. There can, of course, be other communities of learning such as networks of schools of similar size or interest. Many respondents commented that they miss some of the 'old-style contact' of LEAs with schools. Each Local Learning Community could provide a mechanism for developing a new relationship.

HEADLINE

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon will support its networks of Academic Councils, rebranded as Local Learning Communities, building on best practice and supporting the weakest to develop by learning from others. A shared and main objective of assessing pupils' learning will be to identify need and inform effective teaching and learning strategies. Devon will also seek to develop and consolidate other communities of learning in discussion with Head and Governors. It will review core funding for Local Learning Communities, and the responsibilities shared with them, year on year.

ACTION

Devon County Council will

- 3.1 explore the potential for schools to be evaluated within the wider context of a Local Learning Community (LLC);
- 3.2 designate an appropriate named officer to be a single contact point for schools in each LLC; s/he will not replace lines of direct contact on single issues but will act as the schools' advocate and troubleshooter for individual schools on complex issues; the same officer will attend LLC meetings, if required, so that mutual trust and understanding is developed;
- 3.3 discuss with LLCs through their Chairs the sorts of responsibilities which might transfer to local management by agreement, developing a Compact to set out undertakings on each side;
- 3.4 take advice from Head teachers and Devon Association of Governors on how other interest groups can be developed and supported so that they are empowered to identify and exchange best practice;
- 3.5 as part of its ICT strategy seek electronic means to support LLCs and other communities of learning;
- 3.6 wherever possible seek to alter the emphasis on structures so that support and curriculum enhancement services can operate across LLCs in identifiable and coterminous areas;
- 3.7 promote a range of pilots which can be supported, monitored and evaluated to engender best and transferable practice;
- 3.8 encourage LLCs to engage with Local Strategic Partnerships so that the achievement, health and well-being of children and young people is supported by a wider context of community planning;
- 3.9 use LLCs as consultative groups where appropriate (e.g. in school place planning).

4. KEY NOTE: Giving children the best possible start

DCC objectives: Achieving a prosperous Devon, promoting achievement through learning, promoting a healthy and caring Devon

CONTEXT 'Early Years' in this context means the earliest years of influence, pre-natal to 7 years: the birth to three years framework; the Foundation Stage; and completing the transition to school. The emphasis will be on learning not schooling, on integrated provision, on structured play and on collaboration with parents and carers.

HEADLINE Devon will declare itself an
EARLY YEARS INVESTMENT AREA

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon will build on good practice from across the County and beyond, including Sure Start schemes and the developing Children's Centres. It has a mixed economy of provision in which all partners will be valued for their contribution. The best interests of parents/carers and children will, however, be central to strategies, and available research evidence relevant to cognitive, social and emotional development will be applied.

All provision must be of highest quality; integrated early education and childcare will be expanded; alternatives to the current 'Cluster Groups' of practitioners will be considered; Nursery Units will be gradually replaced by Foundation Stage Units, which correspond to the Foundation Stage curriculum. There will be a focus on working with parents to ensure they are able to recognise their potential both as first educators and as learners in their own right. Radical solutions will be sought to achieving coherence across sectors, and to early intervention in localities facing the greatest challenge.

Targeted initiatives for vulnerable children and families will be developed through the Children's Trust, but there will also be a general drive towards universal entitlement so that each child starts a journey towards developing his or her full potential.

ACTION

Devon County Council will:

- 4.1 plan and implement early intervention strategies for vulnerable children and families through the Children's Trust;
- 4.2 develop and over time introduce Foundation Stage Units for ages 3-6, with due regard to Key Stage I impact;
- 4.3 plan all new and significantly remodelled schools to incorporate such a Unit, where practicable;
- 4.4 plan, promote and implement Cross Sector Partnerships where this is the viable solution to coherence across voluntary and maintained providers working in the same Unit;
- 4.5 establish an "Investors in Little People" fund to support necessary capital alterations through a match funding arrangement;
- 4.6 appoint a specialist Foundation Stage Adviser;
- 4.7 explore flexibilities which would allow children to benefit from a phased start to school/pre-school; and to make transitions from play-based learning when they are ready; review admissions policies with a view to such flexibility;
- 4.8 develop an entitlement for 0-7 year olds including 'real life' experiences such as Forest School;
- 4.9 develop a Parent/Carer Entitlement in liaison with representative groups and other agencies, to include pre-natal support, induction to school and family learning opportunities;
- 4.10 explore how a full Reggio Emilia-style approach (which harnesses the fullest community involvement in supporting the children's development) might be used in locations working to address serious and protracted difficulties;
- 4.11 liaise with headteachers and practitioners on how to maximise benefits from two Early Excellence Centres, such as
 - workshops to share best leadership practice, especially for integrated provision and links with communities ;
 - outreach to pre-schools;
 - evaluation and research.
- 4.12 publish Healthy Start guidelines including minimum standards for outdoor play space.

5. KEY NOTE: **Fostering innovation**

DCC objectives: achieving a prosperous Devon, promoting a healthy and caring Devon, promoting achievement through learning, ensuring the Council is a well-managed authority.

CONTEXT

Devon schools want to attract the best available recruits, and also to benefit from the skills and knowledge of established staff. It is recognised that the pursuit of excellence is heavily dependent on the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers; they are central to this Vision.

Devon is currently holding its own in a national context of teacher recruitment difficulties. However, there will be changes over the coming years as pupil numbers decline and the staff group as a whole gets older. This suggests that existing teachers may need opportunities to upskill and possibly retrain; and the culture in Devon must be attractive to new teachers. Consultation feedback has suggested that promoting a creative culture, and becoming well-known as a forward-thinking environment is the most likely route to success in attracting and sustaining excellent staff.

Devon will also want to build on innovative best practice in Local Authorities, which will include the promotion of shared leadership and empowerment of the learning communities so that we can explore different ways to deliver services.

HEADLINE

Devon will establish an **INNOVATION CENTRE** as the hub of its support for professional excellence.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon will value the contribution teachers and learning support staff make to raising achievement. It will seek ways to share best practice, promote creative thinking, and support career development. Both new recruits and established staff should be able to benefit. Attention will be given to extending opportunities for Heads and deputies to learn from and support each other.

ACTION

Devon County Council will:

- 5.1 recognise and promote the benefits to professional development of teachers and teaching assistants from participation in action research;
- 5.2 establish an Innovation Centre for schools, other educational staff, and multi-agency teams;
- 5.3 build on the success of projects which promote innovation, such as the Classroom of the Future;
- 5.4 seek a university or universities as Partner(s) in Excellence for review, research and experiment in specific areas;
- 5.5 recognise schools which have developed transferable best practice, perhaps through an Innovation Award;
- 5.6 promote debate and exchange of ideas within and across learning communities by continuing financial support, and by support for enhanced communications;
- 5.7 explore the feasibility of 'refresher time', shadowing and secondments for teachers and school managers;
- 5.8 recognising the age profile of Devon teachers, support them at the end of their teaching careers so that they finish on a high note;
- 5.9 continue at the cutting edge of Workforce Remodelling, standing alongside schools in lobbying for more resources if we can demonstrate that this is needed;
- 5.10 establish a framework of support for Devon Deputy Head Teachers to experience acting headships and develop skills relevant to the changing nature of schools in the 21st Century;
- 5.11 develop 'lead learner' groups for Heads to undertake action research and co-operative planning;
- 5.12 extend opportunities for Heads and Governors to build leadership capacity in management of change;
- 5.13 utilise the extensive networks of officers, members, heads, governors and other colleagues to ensure innovative work in Devon is recognised nationally;
- 5.14 seek active exchange of ideas, and in some cases staff, with neighbouring authorities; promoting joint initiatives where this leads to enriched experience or economies of scale;
- 5.15 recognise and promote the benefits that awareness of international best practice can bring, for example through exchanges;
- 5.16 celebrate success, and applaud learning which emerges from making mistakes.

6. KEY NOTE: promoting discussion on patterns of school provision in Devon

DCC objectives: promoting achievement through learning, ensuring the Council is a well-managed authority.

CONTEXT There is currently a presumption against closing small schools and unless compelling evidence is made available this presumption will remain in place.

However, driving up the standard of education each pupil receives is the priority and we must be sure that all schools can contribute to this objective. Strategically, in a climate where schools are competing for significantly fewer pupils we must assess the viability of small schools against the priority of providing higher standards of education for our children and the other relevant policies of the County Council including those for sustainable local communities.

Falling rolls are already leading to growing levels of redundancy in primary schools and small secondary schools. The key factor may not be the size of schools alone, but the number of them which are available to fewer pupils in any locality. This issue can affect urban communities as well as schools in more rural areas.

Opinion on the future of small schools is divided but there is no difference of opinion when it comes to trying to achieve the highest possible standard of education for our children, who have the one chance for a decent education. We must not fail them by backing away from a debate which needs to take place.

HEADLINE MANAGING THE CHALLENGE

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon County Council will encourage much more debate about falling school rolls and the effect this may have on standards of education, especially in small schools. We will be keen to hear from parents, staff, governors and indeed the children, together with the views of other people and organisations in the community. All views will be subject to very careful evaluation and scrutiny. Unless there is compelling evidence to show pupils are not able to receive excellence in the standard of education we all desire for them then Devon County Council will not change its presumption against closure of small schools.

ACTION

Devon County Council will:

- 6.1 produce information on school standards and the wider contribution of schools to the community to inform the process;
- 6.2 produce a range of options for each area for the planning of school places over the next ten years;
- 6.3 develop examples of how different structures may operate (e.g. federation) and encourage pilot working to test out the options;
- 6.4 consider how broadband and other ICT solutions may be able to help sustain small schools in economic and community terms;
- 6.5 prepare and publish a report on how resources are used in small schools to help inform the debate and also disseminate examples of good practice;
- 6.6 carry out widespread consultation on any proposals for change and work with the schools concerned to explore the best options for the children in the area.

7. KEY NOTE: A close partnership with Health

DCC objectives: creating safer and stronger communities, promoting a healthy and caring Devon, improving travel and communication, promoting achievement through learning, ensuring the County Council is a well-managed authority.

CONTEXT

There is renewed interest in an old concept: healthy minds in healthy bodies. It is recognised that diet and exercise are important to children both for their immediate capacity as learners and also to make them healthy adults and informed parents. Devon has a good record in promoting Healthy Schools and school Green Travel Plans, and will continue to encourage all children to have healthy lifestyles.

Where the context suggests targeted support this can now be taken forward more effectively because of the establishment of the Children's Trust: cross-agency effort will be applied to keeping children healthy and safe, and to ensuring they have good quality, stable homes; or have support if they are not able to live with their families.

It is also timely to revisit DCC's role in supporting schools on Health and Safety issues and how a client support service can best operate, particularly as DCC will be working alongside schools to build their capacity in purchasing and procurement. There is currently a plethora of initiatives but a fragmented strategy.

HEADLINE

HEALTHY CHILDREN, HEALTHY SCHOOLS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Devon will develop further its working relationships with Health into a coherent strategic approach.

ACTION

Devon County Council will

- 7.1 jointly fund with Health a post to support groups of schools in extending young people's (and their families') interest in healthy lifestyles; and make this post pivotal to strategic links across the Directorate and beyond;
- 7.2 bring together key people into a Health, Safety and Wellbeing section, which can present to Governors a continuum of advice and support from essential duties to desirable outcomes;
- 7.3 remain committed to support for healthy eating with attention given to the report of the Review Group on School Meals;
- 7.4 work with Heads and Governors to produce a model policy on vending machines and other consumables brought into or sold in schools; this could be as part of a whole school healthy eating policy;
- 7.5 promote options for daily exercise, including walking or cycling to school, using School Travel Plans, identifying and celebrating good practice;
- 7.6 work with schools, the Youth Service and voluntary groups to promote awareness of and positive approaches to mental health, sexual health, preventing pregnancy and preventing substance abuse, within a framework of relationships and ethics;
- 7.7 work with partners and through community strategies to reduce accidents in the home and on the roads by an educational input to raising awareness;
- 7.8 work through the Children's Trust towards the goal of children and young people living at home, being in school, and keeping out of trouble;
- 7.9 build on the experience of SureStart schemes to extend multi-agency approaches to pre-natal and early years through the Children's Trust;
- 7.10 promote a programme of healthy living through adult and community learning so that communities provide positive role models to children;
- 7.11 look at the contribution education programmes can make to the wellbeing of vulnerable adults.

8. KEY NOTE: Giving the best possible support to learning

DCC objectives: promoting achievement through learning; ensuring the County Council is a well-managed authority.

CONTEXT Consultees had plenty to say on the role of a Local Education Authority, including a dislike for the name. The County Council has statutory duties as 'an LEA', but perhaps in its relationship with learners it can take a different guise. We are open to suggestions! Schools want clear and consistent messages, leadership on difficult issues even when this is unpopular with some, and a climate of trust and open debate. They want mentors, not monitors; and an LEA which is challenging but stands alongside them in adversity.

HEADLINE THE LOCAL EDUCATION CHAMPION

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The LEA will work openly with schools, listening and responding. It will perform its statutory duties without negativity or pomposity. Schools as well as LEAs have both rights and responsibilities: we will work together to achieve a comfortable balance. The County Council will seek to build capacity in schools so it can enable school-led reform.

But this is not just about schools. Raising achievement will not result from schools working in isolation. There is a wider context of raising community aspiration. This will require the commitment of a number of agencies working in partnership. The County Council will be the champion also of earliest learning, of youth services, extended educational opportunities and adult and community learning.

ACTION

Devon County Council as LEA will:

- 8.1 hold to the vision agreed with its schools, seeking a way through barriers and set-backs;
- 8.2 provide a model of good practice in seeking its own learning communities of other LEAs and Partners in Excellence;
- 8.3 ensure schools know who to contact on key areas of interest;
- 8.4 communicate progress on strategic development regularly in brief and clear formats;
- 8.5 promote better educational outcomes for children and young people in public care;
- 8.6 build schools' capacity to procure Best Value services and work with them to extend choice;
- 8.7 through their Local Learning Community link officers ensure responsiveness and attention to local issues;
- 8.8 help schools to engage in and influence community strategies;
- 8.9 work with nominated Governors and Headteachers to extend understanding of finance, premises and other issues to promote capacity to influence strategies;
- 8.10 listen to the voices of children and young people, engaging them in planning services;
- 8.11 respond to the support and training needs identified by Governors;
- 8.12 keep abreast of technological change and use it to good effect in administrative and curricular support;
- 8.13 collaborate with a wide range of partners to identify and reduce barriers to learning;
- 8.14 give a lead on difficult issues, in a consultative style, with clarity over what course of action is then decided on, and why;
- 8.15 interpret national policy and legislative change into local implications.

EXPLANATION OF REFERENCES IN THE TEXT

You may not be familiar with all the initiatives and organisations mentioned. A brief explanation is given below for your interest and information.

- Academic Councils:** A structure which brings groups of schools together in defined areas based on secondary catchment areas. DCC currently devolves £103,000 to support Academic Councils. They are not coterminous with the majority of other structures (e.g. District Councils, Primary Care Trusts) or forms of educational delivery; many do, however, relate naturally to market or coastal towns.
- ACL:** DCC's Adult and Community Learning service. It is funded entirely by the LSC and income from fees. It works through Community Colleges and other providers and premises, delivering programmes of accredited courses (leading to qualifications) and a broader adult learning programme. The LSC is likely over the next few years to expect its funding to be targeted mainly on accreditation. A major role of ACL is in adult basic skills.
- Action Research:** teachers and other staff engage in this approach to teaching and learning by analysing their own classroom practice and then determining how to experiment with modifications. They monitor the impact of change and decide what further steps to take. It is therefore ongoing and practice-based.
- Change Management:** there are several major policy shifts which have management implications for Headteachers and Governors, not least in managing change. Extended schools and the Children's Trust could radically alter the way schools operate and how they are viewed by their communities. Heads of Early Excellence Centres nationally have noted how challenging it is to manage different sorts of staff groups and a different way of working with other agencies. Workforce remodelling is also part of change management.
- Children's Trust:** The establishment of Children's Trusts is proposed in the Children Bill. Devon is a Pathfinder. The Children Bill is primarily about ensuring that the needs of vulnerable children are met by joint and coherent efforts across agencies. Local authorities are required to look at a Children's Services approach which in particular brings together Education and Children's Social Services. The Children's Trust is the umbrella for this work and can also ensure other key agencies are involved.

Classroom of the Future:

Devon was one of only 11 LEAs asked to consider how a classroom for the 21st Century might look, including ICT solutions in rural areas. It designed and built three showcase projects in Chulmleigh, Winkleigh and Witheridge.

Communities of Learning:

Any grouping which is working collaboratively to extend its own capacity for innovation and development in a particular area of shared interest. This is not limited to LLCs (below), which share a common geography and an interest in local learners.

Community Strategy:

The Devon Strategic Partnership, chaired by The Right Reverend Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter, brings representatives of key stakeholders together to produce a Strategy which adds value to what they can achieve by themselves. There are also local Partnerships and local plans.

Cross-sector Partnerships:

Early Years places (for 3 and 4 year olds) can be in school Nursery Units, or provided by voluntary or private sector groups. DCC funds all provision for recognised and accredited providers. A cross sector partnership pairs a school with another sector (usually a voluntary pre-school group) to give greater continuity in the Foundation Stage (3-6 years).

Early Excellence Centres:

Centres badged by the DFES as providing excellent early years practice rooted in partnership with other sectors and agencies, and particularly with parents and the wider community. Devon's centres are in Exeter (the Chestnut Avenue Centre), and Torrington (the Bluecoat Centre, which was invited by the DfES to model a rural outreach programme).

Extended Schools:

The law changed recently to enable Governors to develop a range of services in school in response to the needs of communities. Many schools are already 'extended' as they host adult and family learning, childcare and after school clubs. There is no single model, and no one funding stream simply for 'being an Extended school'. The funding follows the activities. Local authorities have been given funding for two years to develop an infrastructure to support this initiative.

Forest School: the Forest School movement aims to give pre-school and older children a real experience of an outdoor environment in which they can play and socialise. Some Nursery schools which incorporate this give groups of children a whole term in the 'Forest school' whatever the weather. Their increase in self-confidence and in some cases self-management is notable. DCC's Wembworthy Centre, in the middle of Eggesford Forest, offers a 'forest school experience' on adjacent land as a day visit.

Foundation Stage: This is the earliest phase of learning for which a curriculum (with Early Learning Goals) has been identified. It covers ages 3-6 so starts in pre-school and spans into the age of compulsory full-time schooling (the term after a child's fifth birthday).

Foundation Stage Units: This proposal would recognise the desirability of continuity across the Foundation Stage. Only 41 schools in Devon have Nursery Units, but many more could develop coherence by cross-sector partnerships with a pre-school.

Lead Learner Groups: groups of Head teachers working collaboratively to focus on and develop an expectation of leadership. The groups fulfil several functions: peer support for learning; sharing knowledge; and generating new knowledge.

Local Education Authority (LEA): Devon County Council is the LEA. This is one of the 'hats' a local authority may wear as part of its statutory duties. Shire counties like Devon are all LEAs; so are some Metropolitan Borough Councils and Unitary Authorities (like Plymouth and Torbay). As well as being the LEA Devon County Council is, for example, the Authority for Planning and for Social Services.

LLCs: Local Learning Communities. This generic term has been used for ease of reference. It is anticipated that clusters of schools will replace the 'local' with their own chosen designation.

Local Learning Communities: A suggested rebranding for 'Academic Councils': a cluster of schools, including one or more secondaries with associated primary schools, which can work collaboratively to focus on assessment, achievement and, where appropriate, intervention, to support each child in the area; and put the schooling of children in a wider context of community development.

LSC: The Learning and Skills Council, which funds all post-16 learning (some through DCC to schools) and adult learning (some through DCC). Further Education Colleges are funded directly by the LSC, but universities and other Higher Education providers are not.

Project Cosmic: Project Cosmic is a funded UK online centre providing ICT training in East Devon. It started as part of a youth project, and now has a cyber café, multi-media suite and computer training room.

Reggio Emilia: This is an educational approach (originating in Italy) which harnesses the impact of a wide range of stimuli (for example, from the arts and the environment) and involvement of members of the community in early years development. Devon was one of a small number of areas which secured the major Reggio Emilia exhibition in March/April 2000. Some Devon schools are exploring some aspects of the model.

Schools Forum: Each Local Education Authority has a Schools Forum where funding issues (in particular the funding formula) are discussed. Devon has extended the Forum's role so that a wider range of issues is discussed. Over 50% of a Schools Forum membership must be Head teachers and Governors; other partners (e.g. the LSC, Higher Education, the Diocesan Boards) are also represented.

Sure Start: Devon has four Sure Start schemes in Exeter; Ilfracombe, Combe Martin and Berrynarbor; Dawlish and Teignmouth; and Bideford. Selected parts of the country were invited to submit proposals for these long-term funded initiatives which bring partners together to provide services for 0-4 year olds and their families, and help them to thrive at school. Devon also has three 'mini' Sure Starts.

Workforce Remodelling: (sometimes called Workforce Transformation) is a requirement of schools and LEAs. It enhances the role of teaching assistants and has removed a number of routine tasks from teachers so that they can focus on their main role. From September 2005 teachers must have 10% non-contact time. This is not just about teachers though: it is an opportunity to review the whole way a school is staffed and how those staff contribute.

Do you have an example of good practice?

This is an opportunity to identify and share things you are already doing. If you have a model up and running which illustrates any of the Action Points please attach a brief description to your response form so that it can be considered for inclusion in the final published Vision.

RESPONSE FORM

From (name of school)

The Action Points relevant to each KEY NOTE are indicated below. Please tick one box for each Action Point to indicate your views, adding at the bottom any supplementary comments you would like to make.

KEY NOTE 1: Opportunity and achievement for every child

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
1.1				
1.2				
1.3				
1.4				
1.5				
1.6				
1.7				
1.8				
1.9				
1.10				
1.11				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 2: Entitlements for learners and those supporting them

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
2.1				
2.2				
2.3				
2.4				
2.5				
2.6				
2.7				
2.8				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 3: Building capacity in schools to collaborate and to learn from other

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
3.1				
3.2				
3.3				
3.4				
3.5				
3.6				
3.7				
3.8				
3.9				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 4: Giving children the best possible start

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
4.1				
4.2				
4.3				
4.4				
4.5				
4.6				
4.7				
4.8				
4.9				
4.10				
4.11				
4.12				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 5: Fostering innovation

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
5.1				
5.2				
5.3				
5.4				
5.5				
5.6				
5.7				
5.8				
5.9				
5.10				
5.11				
5.12				
5.13				
5.14				
5.15				
5.16				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 6: Promoting discussion on patterns of school provision in Devon

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
6.1				
6.2				
6.3				
6.4				
6.5				
6.6				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 7: A close partnership with Health

	strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
7.1				
7.2				
7.3				
7.4				
7.5				
7.6				
7.7				
7.8				
7.9				
7.10				
7.11				

Further comments:

KEY NOTE 8: Giving the best possible support to learning

	Strongly support	support	undecided	do not support
8.1				
8.2				
8.3				
8.4				
8.5				
8.6				
8.7				
8.8				
8.9				
8.10				
8.11				
8.12				
8.13				
8.14				
8.15				

Further comments: