



Enabling world-class education



Bedfordshire
county council

ORGANISING FOR EXCELLENCE

Bedfordshire Review of School Structures

Project Outline – January 2006



Project Background

Schools within Bedfordshire are organising in three tiers:

- **146 Lower Schools** – which take pupils from the age of 4 to 9 (Reception through to year 4)
- **40 Middle Schools** – which take pupils from the age of 9 to 13 (years 5 to 8)
- **17 Upper Schools** – which take pupils from the age of 13 to 19 (years 9 to 13). All Upper Schools have Sixth Form provision.

Bedfordshire County Council is reviewing the structure of schools to agree the best organisational structure of the next generation of pupils. The County Council considers this to be the right time to review the structure of school for the following reasons:

Pupil Achievement: In 2005 pupil achievement within Bedfordshire schools was above the national average at age 7, but performance at GCSEs (5+ A*-C grades) was over 3% below the national average. The Council has to consider whether structure is a factor in this performance.

National Curriculum: The current structure means that pupils change school during Key Stages 2 and 3. We must consider whether this affects standards.

National Trends: Over 97% of pupils in England change to a secondary school at 11. Most councils who adopted a three-tier structure have changed or are changing. The Council is considering whether we should continue to operate a system that is different to national patterns.

Opportunities to Shape the Future: Our school structures need to suit future generations of pupils and to ensure that we grasp opportunities offered by Government 'Building Schools for the Future' funding.

Demographics Mean Some Change is Inevitable: Population change means that some parts of the county have surplus school places and in other areas more pupil places are required.

Teacher Recruitment: It may become harder to attract headteachers and teachers into Bedfordshire if almost all other councils run a different system.

Internal Pressure: A number of groups within the County, including some schools, have indicated they would welcome a review

These reasons are explained in more detail within the Consultation Discussion Paper.

Four S is managing the consultation on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council. Four S is an educational consultancy with experience of reviews similar to this. Four S bring educational expertise and impartiality to this consultation. Four S does not have a view about the correct future structure for Bedfordshire to adopt. The Council is keeping an open mind to all possible future options during the consultation period.

The Consultation Process

What is the consultation considering?

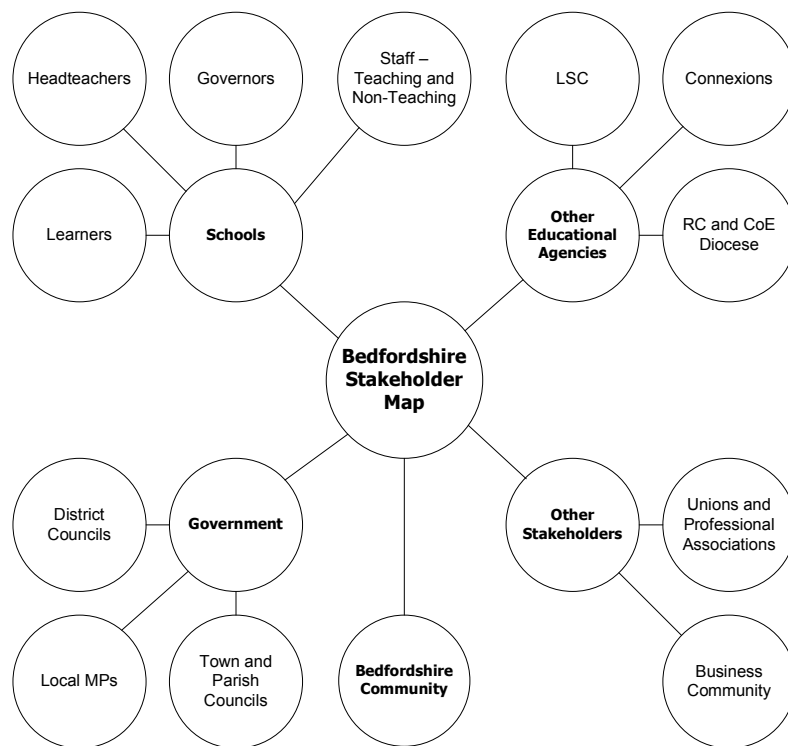
The consultation is focussing upon two main themes:

- **Stage 1** – Reflection – analysis of the current system – what are its strengths and weaknesses? What are the opportunities and threats? What are the barriers to raising pupil achievement (and why does pupil achievement drop after age 7)? Is the three-tier system an important factor in explaining pupil achievement?
- **Stage 2** – the Way Forward - this stage uses the evidence gathered in stage 1 in order to develop options for the future to address the issues already identified. What structure (including the current three-tier system) is most likely to overcome the barriers identified in stage 1? Does that structure have any associated positive and negative aspects? Is there consensus around a particular way forward?

For some stakeholders, such as headteachers and governors, these two stages are undertaken separately.

Who are the stakeholders?

The following diagram outlines the main stakeholders in this process:

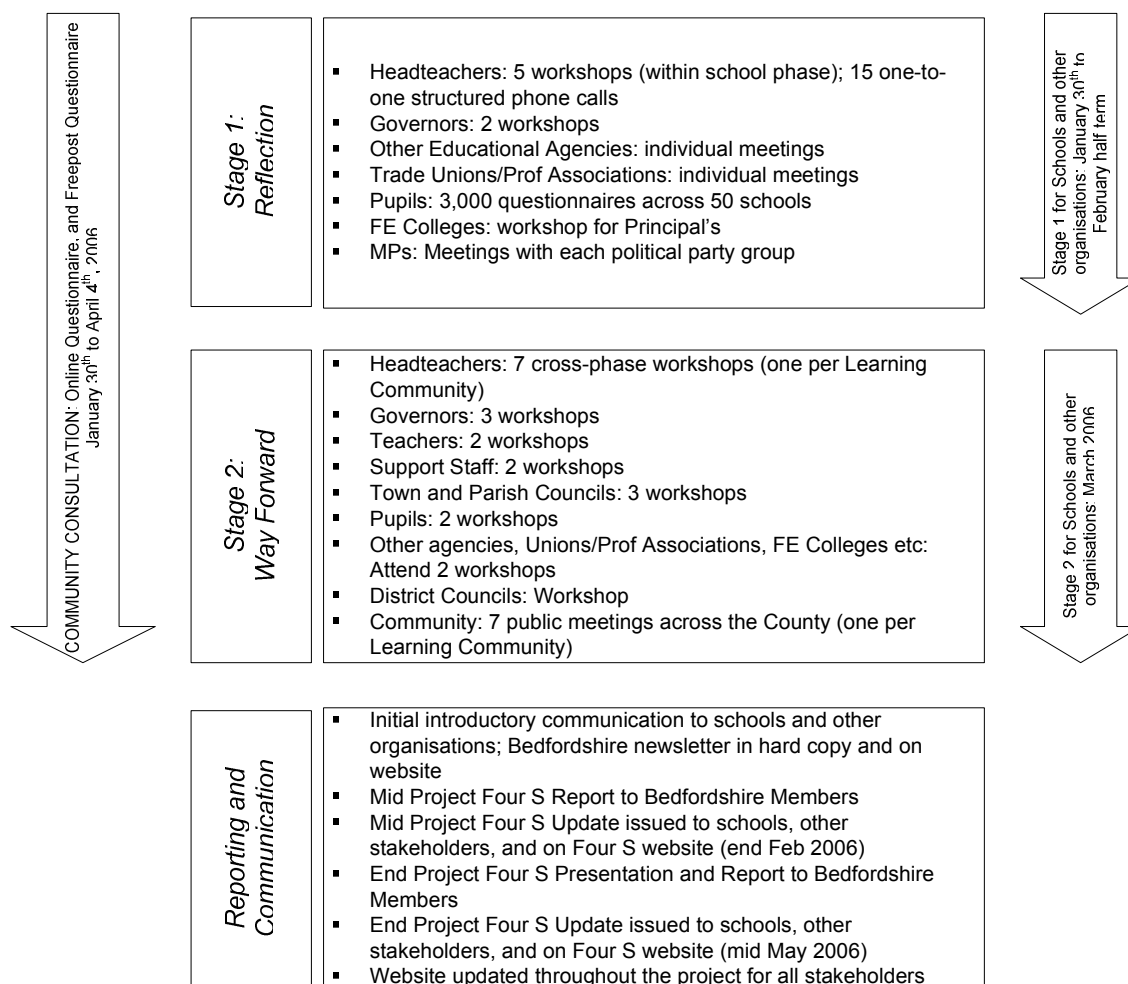


How are they all being consulted?

The consultation is using a variety of methods to enable as many people as possible to take part. This methodology includes:

- **Online Questionnaire** – this can be completed by anyone. This questionnaire includes 'dynamic responses' so that different types of respondent (i.e. teachers and parents) answer questions that are specifically targeted at their circumstance and knowledge.
- **Freepost Questionnaire** – 75,000 copies of a Freepost questionnaire will be distributed, including over 60,000 copies for parents that will be distributed through schools.
- **Workshops** for headteachers, governors, teachers, support staff, and pupils
- **Meetings and workshops** with other educational organisations, including Diocesan Boards of Education, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, Trade Unions, and Professional Associations
- **Public Meetings** across the County to enable parents and residents to be consulted in person

The consultation project is summarised in the diagram below:



Outline Timetable

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Launch of public consultation▪ w/c 30 Jan – beginning of stage 1 workshops
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stage 1 engagement concludes during February half term▪ Stage 1 report and presentation to Bedfordshire Officer Task Group and Member Working Group after February half term▪ Mid Project Update issued to schools, other organisations, and posted to the Four S website
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stage 2 engagement with stakeholders▪ Seven Public Meetings
April 4 th , 2006	Public Consultation concludes at the end of term
May	Final Four S report and presentation to Bedfordshire
June 27 th 2006	Bedfordshire Executive considers the Recommendations from the Member Working Group
July 13 th 2006	Bedfordshire County Council consider the Executive proposals and makes a decision