



Education Resources

School planning consultative groups for Education Resources staff

(A) Rationale

- (1) Education Resources' stated policy for the management of its schools is that head teachers should 'seek to proceed by consensus arrived achieved through participation and consultation approaches'. In addition Annex C of the Teachers' Agreement indicates that there will at some point after August 2006 be 'a joint evaluation/audit of working arrangements at local level to assess the wider cultural climate in schools'. To this end schools which have not already done so should establish a School Planning Consultative Group. The planning process in schools currently embraces all aspects of the work of the school including new developments and initiatives, ongoing maintenance and consolidation of work, resource and financial management, workload issues and staff support. A School Planning Consultative Group ensures that appropriate consultation takes place on all aspects of a school's work.
- (2) It is clearly acknowledged that it is the responsibility of the head teacher to take decisions, manage and deliver all aspects of service within the school planning process. However, it is also acknowledged that staff need to be informed and consulted about major issues which are likely to affect their work. Setting up a School Planning Consultative Group in each school is therefore intended to:
 - be a genuinely collegiate creative process in which all staff in the school are represented
 - encourage staff involvement in informing the decision-making process at school level;
 - result in a feeling of ownership and involvement for all staff;
 - integrate, as appropriate, all other school processes including curriculum development, CPD, staff development and review, DSM, absence cover and workload management.
- (3) It is recommended that schools which have not already done so should establish a School Planning Consultative Group with a remit, membership and operational guidelines as set out in the remainder of this paper. In larger schools a single group removes the need for other school-based groups dealing with DSM, absence cover and School Development Planning although it is recognised that sub-groups may need to be established to deal with specific aspects of school planning.

- (4) Where required under the Working Time Arrangements agreement the School Planning Consultative Group will establish a sub-committee consisting solely of the teacher members of the Group to carry out the remit as defined by Section 2 of that Policy.

(B) Remit

The remit of the School Planning Consultative Group is as follows:

- (1) to be consulted on the development of the draft school plan;
- (2) to consider the human, material and financial resources and support available to take the school plan forward;
- (3) to receive regular information about the progress of the plan throughout the year;
- (4) to be consulted on any significant revisions to the plan and their financial and workload implications;
- (5) to receive regular information about the general operation of the devolved school budget;
- (6) to be consulted on any significant changes in relation to the devolved school budget, in particular the virement of money between budget heads and the carry forward of surpluses or deficits to the next financial year;
- (7) to consider workload issues arising from the development planning process;
- (8) to consider any issues arising from any other whole school or departmental group which have implications for school planning.

(C) Membership

The head teacher should decide on the final composition of the group. A recommended model for the composition of the School Planning Consultative Group is outlined below:

- the head teacher
- a senior management team member (where appropriate)
- 2 elected teaching staff representatives
- other staff representatives, as appropriate, taking account of
 - specific responsibility of individual staff members within the school,
 - expertise of individual staff members in particular areas of the planning and financial process,
 - the outcome of staff development and review.

As a guide to the size of the School Planning Consultative Group the following should be considered. Representation should encompass both teaching and support staff.

Total number of teachers	Number of staff representatives
1-5	Whole staff
6-19	3
20-39	4
40-59	5
60-79	6
80-99	7
100+	8

(D) Guidelines on the operation of the school planning consultative group

- (1) A written remit for the Group should be established in consultation with all staff. The remit and details of the Group's operational arrangements should be circulated to all staff.
- (2) The composition of the group should be reviewed on an annual basis or by agreement at a whole staff meeting.
- (3) Arrangements will be made at school level for teacher representatives to be elected by teaching members of staff.
- (4) Head teachers should give consideration to the desirability of a balance between the different levels of teaching staff, as appropriate.
- (5) The Chairperson should be nominated by the head teacher.
- (6) The Group meet at least once per term. Additional meetings may be called by the head teacher or the Chairperson.
- (7) Meetings of the group should be minuted and the minutes circulated to all staff.
- (8) The timing of meetings will be by agreement between the head teacher and other members of the group at suitable times of the normal school day/week.
- (9) The head teacher should ensure that the group is consulted and receives regular information as per its remit.
- (10) According to their size and the individual circumstances, schools may decide to set up sub-groups of the Planning Group to address specific issues or else add other remits such as CPD, Quality Management, curriculum and assessment and absence cover. Sub-groups should have clear written remits which are circulated to all staff. In large schools sub-groups may be necessary in order for the consultative mechanism to operate effectively.
- (11) The relationship between the Planning Group, any sub-groups and all other whole school groups including the Senior Management Team should be made clear to all staff.
- (12) Arrangements should be made to ensure that new and cover staff are made aware of the remits of all groups.

(E) Other issues

- (1) Staff representatives may require initial training to assist their participation and this may be a recurring need.
- (2) In order to be capable of functioning effectively in this consultative process, those involved require to have access in advance to all relevant information; and this, together with the processes to be involved, may require detailed local definition.
- (3) While recognising that some staff may not wish to participate in consultative processes, ways should be sought of ensuring that all staff feel encouraged to do so, to make contributions to deliberations but also to be assisted in understanding how and why priorities are selected.

(F) Variation

This Policy may only be varied following consultation with, and agreement of all staff. Any variation must be submitted to the JNCC for approval.

(G) Monitoring

The JNCC will discuss early in the session how to monitor the implementation of the agreement as part of an overall audit on collegiality. Arrangements may include the issuing of questionnaires and visits to schools by JNCC members to interview management and staff.