



Small and Rural Schools Strategy

June 2020

Small and Rural Schools Strategy - A Framework

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Introduction

South Gloucestershire has a blend of diverse schools that serve communities in Thornbury and Filton in the west, Cotswolds in the East, Wickwar in the North and Hanham in the South. Within these communities sit a number of small and rural schools who all have an important role to play providing local educational provision for our rural communities so that every child and young person can access high-quality local school provision.

In line with government guidance, South Gloucestershire is committed to developing innovative solutions to enable small and rural schools and communities to continue to thrive and flourish. By working with governing bodies and senior leaders of all schools, regardless of their legal status, the Local authority aims to encourage a partnership approach to sustain schools and thus support the delivery of educational excellence. We want every young person regardless of location, attainment and background, the opportunity to succeed within our Local Authority borders and beyond. Importantly, there is a service-wide consensus that the future delivery of small and rural school education will need to be different. It is our aim for all pupils to be able to access high quality education and this will only be sustainable when an establishment is financially viable.

The proposed Small and Rural Schools Strategy sets out the Council's approach and commitment to ensuring the sustainability of our small and rural schools. Developed in collaboration with our partners in education, including importantly our diocesan partners, this proposed strategy provides details of the policy and principles which guide and underpin proposals for school organisational change to ensure the long-term viability of our mixed economy of small urban and rural schools in South Gloucestershire.

What is the Small and Rural Schools Strategy?

In order to respond to the very specific pressures faced by small and rural schools, this proposed strategy provides a range of creative opportunities for school leaders, governing boards and trusts to consider in order to sustain the provision of sufficient, quality school places and schools of viable size that continue to serve the diverse needs of vibrant rural and urban communities. In the same way that the School Improvement Plan achieves a balance of support and challenge, this proposed strategy provides very specific advice and guidance [in respect of leadership, governance, school improvement, finance and recruitment and retention] that will prompt and challenge schools to form robust models of school organisation tailored to the needs of individual schools, regardless of their legal status. Essentially, the Council will work with all schools to broker innovative solutions based on a collective responsibility to meet the needs of the children and young people in South Gloucestershire. It is intended to assist all headteachers, senior leadership teams, governing bodies and Trusts to formulate a strategic plan.

Objectives and measures of success

The principle objectives of the plan, which are of equal importance, are as follows:

- Improve the trajectory of Ofsted outcomes with the aspiration that all small and rural schools are at least 'Good' and an increasing number 'Outstanding' under the new Inspection framework
- Raise standards, improve school outcomes with attention to student mental health and well-being across all small and rural schools and for all children particularly those that are vulnerable
- Ensure value for money and sustainable use of available resources

- Eliminate the number of small and rural 'schools in financial difficulty', with no LA maintained schools operating with a budget deficit other than for a very short-term period of time (2 years maximum).

Without the first two bullet points, you would be unable to achieve the last two and vice versa.

Small and Rural Schools in South Gloucestershire

Historically, the definition of what constitutes a small school has varied greatly. Also, although very commonly, the smaller schools are those serving the rural communities some are in urban and sub urban locations.

In January 2020, there were 94 primary schools in SGC, educating 23,230 pupils aged between five and 15. Of these, there are a total of 24 schools with fewer than 200 children on roll. These account for 12% of the total primary school age population in South Gloucestershire with a total 4570 children on roll. Of the 24 small and rural schools in South Gloucestershire, 13 are designated as rural in the DfE's list of schools with a rural designation. Details of small schools and schools designated as rural by the DfE are provided below.

Small schools: The definition of small schools varies. The DfE now refers to small schools as having fewer than 210 pupils on roll. However South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) locally draws a distinction between the size of very small schools and small schools as follows:

- Very small schools – schools with fewer than 50 children on roll (2 schools)
- Small schools 100 – schools with fewer than 100 children on roll (6 schools)
- Small schools 200 – schools with fewer than 200 children on roll (16 schools)

Rural Schools: The DfE has for many years has been particularly concerned about schools serving rural communities. In considering the DfE's list of schools with designated rural status, (under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools [England] Order 2019 as at December 2019) there are 16 rural maintained primary schools in South Gloucestershire – see Appendix 1 for schools listed. The Order designates certain primary schools, in England, as rural primary schools for the purposes of section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that when either a local authority or governing body of certain schools formulates proposals for the discontinuance of a rural primary school it has regard to specific factors. These factors include the likely effect of discontinuance on the local community and any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school. Before publishing proposals for discontinuance, the local authority or governing body must consult certain persons, including parents and, where the local authority is a county council, any district and parish councils. The Department for Education (DfE) uses the Office for National Statistics' rural and urban area classification to identify rural schools as being located in towns and fringe areas, villages or hamlets and isolated dwellings.

The Challenges faced by Small and Rural Schools

Schools are expected to achieve good outcomes for their pupils, put effective governance in place and manage their financial affairs efficiently and demonstrate sustainability. Small schools face particular financial challenges and when operating alone are unable to benefit from economies of scale in the way in which larger school can. Pressures faced by small schools are intensified with the implementation of national changes to school finance and the inspection framework. The Council considers a Small and Rural Schools Strategy is necessary to help schools respond to these pressures as part of a proactive approach. The challenges faced by small schools come under the following headings:

- Leadership and governance
- School Improvement
- Finance, recruitment and retention

Leadership and governance

- More than 25% of schools did not appoint a substantive headteacher nationally in the year 2018-2019. In South Gloucestershire rates of recruitment align with this and there are examples of schools that went out to advert on three occasions before appointing a new headteacher, many have gone out to advert at twice.
- The number of Headship applicants in a one form entry school in South Gloucestershire according to our own data is between 4-5 for the last twelve months, with some schools receiving either 0 or only one application.
- In South Gloucestershire in the past two academic years there have been 5 headteachers appointed that have subsequently left the school within eighteen months. With the exception of one, all have previously been in schools with fewer than 200 pupils on roll.
- Effective leadership is central to school improvement as leaders set the strategic direction for the school through the vision that is constructed with the governing board.
- Leadership does not necessarily need to rest with a single stand-alone headteacher, there is increasing evidence that leadership of a school may be better served when the school is connected to a partnership, federation or MAT. The infrastructure of the organisation then provides for wider leadership, opportunity for succession and sustainability.
- From looking at models nationally, it is apparent that small schools do not need to operate with a single headteacher. There are examples in places such as Lincolnshire and Herefordshire of where strategic leadership is developed at a federation or Trust level and day to day leadership is then operated at school level. This model often involves the small school having a Head of School who is more operational in role but who has a strong infrastructure behind them.
- Governing Boards are also facing a recruitment problem and there have been examples locally of where vacancies have been hard to fill. For a school to be effective there is a need for governors to be strategic and have the right experience and skills set to hold leaders to account. A full complement of governors is vital to this.
- In the same way that some small schools are finding it difficult to recruit high quality headteachers, there is evidence that this is paralleled at a governance level with some boards. Although the board may have a full complement of members, there are often cases of the board not having the right skills set required for highly effective governance. Under models such as federations and MATs this allows for governance to be strengthened with a pooling of collective expertise to support school improvement.

School Improvement

- Of the 8 schools with fewer than 100 pupils on roll there has been a change in terms of both Ofsted ratings and the level of priority for support from the Local Authority. Two schools are currently 'Outstanding' under Ofsted and remain exempt at this point from Inspection, 5 are currently on Good judgement and 1 is currently Requires Improvement. 39% of maintained schools are currently a Priority 1 or 2 for support from the Local Authority. In terms of the 8 small schools with fewer than 100 on roll, 50% are currently a Priority 1 or 2, which is above the Local Authority average.
- Ofsted reports include salient points on the potential challenges faced by small schools in establishing and maintaining necessary structures and systems. For example, recent reports include the need for development in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Another key area has been the effectiveness of governance and the extent to which they are discharging their duties and being effective in holding school leaders to account.
- Where partnerships and federations have been formed though, or where there is currently a MAT infrastructure subject leadership is being shared and distributed across one of more school and this is leading to greater capacity. The Ofsted framework that came into effect from 1st September 2019 placed at its heart the quality of education and curriculum. This relies on subject leaders really knowing their subjects and the progression of skills exceptionally well. This is more challenging for leaders who are responsible for multiple subjects as is the case in stand-alone small schools.
- School improvement also has as a central tenant: Inclusion and Safeguarding and although schools generally do well, there are sometimes challenges with stand-alone primary schools related to sufficiency of expertise and succession. The Designated Safeguarding

Lead (DSL) role in schools is vital and in a small school is often undertaken by the Headteacher. In the case of a three-class school, for example, this might require all teaching staff to be DSL trained to cover a key area of responsibility creating challenges with capacity. In comparison, a larger organisation such as a MAT or federation the role of the DSL can be more widely shared and/or distributed.

Finance, Recruitment and Retention

- Of the 8 schools with fewer than 100 pupils, 4 (50%) are currently operating with a deficit budget and are therefore classified as 'Schools in Financial Difficulty' (SIFD) as defined by the Local Authority. The Local Authority averages for maintained schools are that currently 28% are SIFD. Of the total number of SIFD schools, 78% currently have numbers on roll less than 1 form of entry (210). There is therefore a correlation between the size of school and the relative financial security.
- The infrastructure of a stand-alone small school, financially, can be challenging. In partnerships, federations and MATs there can be more opportunities for central functions to be developed, shared staffing, bulk purchasing and collective bargaining power.
- In recent years, schools with less than 1 form of entry have found it more challenging to recruit a substantive Head teacher and governing boards have looked at other options to secure leadership and this has been positive. The two most recent Head teacher resignations in schools with less than 100 on roll have both resulted in partnership arrangements with other local schools; supported by the Local Authority. In both instances has created both stability and greater capacity.
- It is more difficult for small schools to sustain improvement with any turnover of senior staff members, as there is often limited capacity to support succession, with leadership often resting with one or two key personnel and vulnerable if a leader leaves the school, especially if this then involves expensive interim arrangements and/or uncertainty as to when vacancies can be filled.
- Recruiting and sustaining a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) is also a national issue that is often a challenge for a small school. It is increasingly difficult in the context of a small school to retain a SENCo with a high level of teaching commitment but also to enable them to discharge their responsibilities with the requisite time that they need.
- Recruiting teachers to small stand-alone primary schools in isolated areas has become more difficult for several reasons. Staff in small schools typically have a lot of responsibility, will typically be teaching mixed age group classes and will not have some of the release time that can be afforded in larger establishments.
- Small schools often have less opportunities for staff professional development, shared learning and career development unless part of a MAT, partnership or federation. Opportunities for high quality input can also be more challenging due to the cost of consultants or brokered services. If they are part of a MAT or federation there will be greater opportunities for progression and to take on different opportunities within a larger establishment, this then leads to improved recruitment and retention.

Guiding Principles

Set out below are the guiding principles that will be applied in agreeing the most appropriate model of organisation/proposal for small and rural schools seeking change. Central to the Local Authority's approach is that any changes are based on improving schools and raising standards.

- Prioritise the needs of children.
- Support the work, well-being and development of headteachers and staff.
- Assume collective responsibility to work together to raise standards.
- Work supportively with communities to develop understanding of the need for change
- Respect for the school's autonomy to make decisions about how to continue to improve outcomes for the children and young people.
- Value the important role that rural church schools play in their local community.

South Gloucestershire Local Authority believes that:

- Parental preference is a key consideration and ability to access a school place close to home within the local community is an important factor.
- Securing the sustainability of schools is best achieved working in partnership.
- Solutions and partnerships should not be limited to maintained schools supporting maintained schools and academies supporting academies exclusively. Schools should work together as part of an effective mixed economy of schools whereby the need and focus for change dictates the best provider placed to help deliver the change.
- Good financial health as essential for achieving educational excellence.
- School ethos, vision and values are a key determinate of school to school compatibility
- The quality of education is of paramount importance and closure of small schools which are no longer viable is a last resort.

Who is responsible for delivering the Strategy?

The responsibility for delivering the strategy rests with South Gloucestershire education community of schools and diocesan partners working together with the Council. Diocesan Boards of Education are an important partner since many of our rural schools are faith schools.

Working in partnership with Diocesan Boards, the Local Authority will:

- Consult and engage Diocesan Boards at an early stage and understand their preferred model of MATs, federations or other forms of working together.
- Commit to helping small schools find the best MAT solution which retains their church school ethos, in line with its own Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) Academy Strategy. The Diocese's consent is required for any church school seeking to become an academy.
- Respect that Diocesan Boards have advisory rights in relation to the appointment of headteachers and thus are able to advise governors, alongside the Local Authority.

The Council will deliver the strategy by undertaking to provide information advice and guidance in respect of leadership and governance, school improvement and finance, recruitment and retention as follows:

- Offer advice to schools and governing boards about what to do when a school senior and or middle leadership, administration posts becomes vacant: encouraging small schools to consider the most appropriate arrangements. Specifically, advise Governing Boards to satisfy themselves that their plans to recruit a head teacher, senior/middle leaders and administrators are affordable and sustainable
- Provide data and information to help broker partnerships and encourage the coming together of schools for training and sharing best practice

- Support Executive Headship and Governance
- Provide effective oversight arrangements that give early warning of problems through School Improvement activities and other activities and statutory functions delivered by the LA.
- Provide information to schools and Governing Boards on collaborative ways of working and models of organisation including working with or in a MAT. Encourage schools to consider their options both for the short and long term
- Encourage larger schools to offer support and collaborate with smaller rural schools as part of a development of a strong family of schools
- Support federation, collaboration and MAT arrangements. Undertake to work with schools in a federation or collaboration with a view to identifying success factors and supporting headteachers in addressing any difficulties. Look at the potential for small schools to join MATs as an option to provide sustainable long-term leadership as an alternative.
- Work with school leaders to develop the mechanisms that need to be developed in order to encourage and support schools to work together more effectively.
- Continue to link decisions about capital investment in the school estate with raising standards, supporting curriculum intent and implementation, remodelling schools to support inclusion and intervention, address security and safeguarding issues in schools, support class organisation models.
- Ensure there is effective financial management of the school.

Additionally, the Council will:

- Continue to link school organisation proposals with capital investment decisions. Emerging proposals for the organisation and provision of places are closely linked to investment plans set out in the Schools Capital Programme. This includes school premises issues where accommodation seriously impacts upon learning.
- Work with South Gloucestershire's service departments including:
 - The Planning Department to provide a joined-up approach to housing delivery and new housing development to promote the sustainability of rural areas through sharing of data and information about the sufficiency of school places.
 - Integrated Transport to ensure there is continued access to isolated and rural locations to enable fair access and ensure the needs of vulnerable groups are met.
 - Highways: Where possible address hazardous road networks and continue to seek improvements to work towards safe walking routes from home to school.
- Help schools understand the criteria used to determine the sustainability of individual schools of varying sizes.
- Monitor the implementation of this strategy and review annually.

Policy

Schools with fewer than 50 children on roll

There are currently two primary schools with fewer than 50 children on roll as follows:

School*	PAN	Projected NOR 2021	Net Capacity Sept 2019	Surplus/ Deficit	Legal Status
Tortworth	14	38	105	67	VC
Oldbury on Severn	11	44	77	33	VC

*Both have Rural Schools designated status

1. Maintained schools receive a bi-annual due diligence review by the Local Authority that looks at the following aspects of the provision:
 - School Improvement
 - Finance and Personnel
 - Buildings and premises
2. If the headteacher position becomes vacant, there is a presumption against appointing a new substantive headteacher to the school. Governors will be required to look at other models of leadership including joining a Multi-Academy Trust, partnership with a local maintained school (Primary, Special or Secondary) or Federation (with partnership as a potential prelude to this). There is also the option of a Service Level Agreement with a MAT which provides leadership but where the school retains their existing legal status remains as 'Maintained'.
3. The Local Authority will NOT support the decision of a governing body that recruits a stand-alone substantive headteacher due to the financial and educational risks involved. There is the potential that the Local Authority will invoke the following policy if there become risks to the quality of education as a result: If the governing board move towards the recruitment of a substantive Head, they need to demonstrate that the structure they are proposing is sustainable for the subsequent 3 years financially, that the Ofsted judgement of the school is not at risk and that standards will be maintained.
If any senior or middle leadership role becomes vacant in the school, the Governing Boards and the headteacher are asked to liaise with the Local Authority in relation to potential shared roles at either a local, cluster or hub level. It is also possible that this tier of leadership is brokered from a larger establishment.
4. Where there are vacancies in terms of finance or site management, the Governing Board and headteacher are asked to work with the Local Authority in looking at localised options including operating finance and administration from a larger Primary, Secondary or Multi-Academy Trust.
5. All schools with a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 15 or under should consider with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) team from the Local Authority whether there is capacity to lower age range and consider an integrated EYFS Nursery and Reception. This will be dependent on facilities, local pre-school providers and capacity within the area.
6. Where schools are not engaging with the local authority to support a financially and educationally sustainable model the local authority would need to trigger intervention to assess the longer term viability of a school.
Examples of these triggers are as follows:
 - The bi-annual review demonstrates serious weaknesses in school performance, safeguarding and infrastructure that place the school vulnerable in terms of the quality of education
 - The school has been in a deficit budget for more than three years
 - The school's first preference and offers data are exceptionally low i.e. well below the Planned Admission Number (PAN)
 - The Area Health Authority data indicate that demand from pre-school age children is insufficient to sustain demand equal to PAN
 - The school draws less than 50% of children on roll who are resident within 2 miles from home to school (direct line distance)

- The school is judged by Ofsted to be Inadequate or Requires Improvement

Schools with 50- 100 children on roll

There are currently six primary schools with fewer than 100 children on roll as follows:

School Name*	PAN	Projected NOR 2021	Net Capacity Sept 2018	Surplus/ Deficit	Partnership/Legal Status
Hawkesbury	15	97	105	8	VC Iron Acton
Horton	8	73	56	-17	VA St John's Mead
Old Sodbury	15	99	105	6	VC
St Andrew's, Cromhall	10	67	70	3	VC
Iron Acton	15	106	84	-22	VC Hawkesbury
Rangeworthy	10	90	100	10	VC

*All have Designated Rural Status

1. If the headteacher position becomes vacant, there is a presumption against appointing a new substantive Head to the school. Governors will be required to look at other models of leadership including joining a Multi-Academy Trust, partnership with a local maintained school (Primary, Special or Secondary) or Federation (with partnership as a potential prelude to this). There is also the option of a Service Level Agreement with a MAT which provides leadership but where the school remains maintained.
2. If the governing board move towards the recruitment of a substantive headteacher, they need to demonstrate that the structure they are proposing is sustainable for the subsequent 3 years financially, that the Ofsted judgement of the school is not at risk and that standards will be maintained. This will take the form of a formal strategic plan.
3. If any senior or middle leadership role becomes vacant in the school then governors and the headteacher are asked to liaise with the Local Authority in relation to potential shared roles at either a local, cluster or hub level. It is also possible that this tier of leadership is brokered from a larger establishment.
4. Where there are vacancies in terms of finance or site management, the governors and Head teacher are asked to work with the Local Authority in looking at localised options including operating finance and administration from a larger Primary, Secondary or Multi-Academy Trust.
5. All schools with a PAN of 15 should consider with the EYFS team from the Local Authority whether there is capacity to lower age range and consider an integrated Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery and Reception. This will be dependent on facilities, local pre-school providers and capacity within the area.

Schools with 100- 200 children on roll

There are currently 23 primary schools with fewer than 200 children on roll as follows:

	PAN	NOR 2019	Net Capacity Sept 2019	Surplus/ Deficit	% Surplus
Severn Beach Primary	30	124	210	86	41.0
Gillingstool Primary	30	165	210	45	21.4
Christ the King Primary	30	175	210	35	16.7
Charfield Primary	30	196	210	14	6.7
Olveston Primary*	30	185	210	25	11.9
North Road Primary	15	106	105	-1	-1.0
Trinity Primary*	20	144	140	-4	-2.9
Tyndale Primary	30	174	210	36	17.1
Manor Primary	30	198	210	12	5.7
Frenchay Primary	20	152	138	-14	-10.1
Hambrook Primary	30	195	210	15	7.1
St Michael's, Winterbourne	30	184	210	26	12.4
Little Stoke Primary	30	199	210	11	5.2
Coniston Primary	30	182	210	28	13.3
Cadbury Heath Primary	30	199	210	11	5.2
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary	30	190	210	20	9.5
Courtney Primary	30	175	210	35	16.7
Pucklechurch Primary*	30	166	315	149	47.3
St Augustine's Primary	30	177	210	33	15.7
Cherry Garden Primary	30	188	210	22	10.5
The Meadows Primary	30	156	210	54	25.7
Marshfield Primary*	26	161	180	19	10.6
Wick Primary*	30	194	210	16	7.6

*Schools with Designated Rural Status. Note there are 3 schools with Designated Rural status that do not fit within one of the three small schools categories. They are highlighted at Appendix 1.

1. If the headteacher position becomes vacant then at the first governing body meeting that discusses headteacher recruitment due consideration should be given to partnerships, Federation and whether there is any traction in joining a Multi-Academy Trust. Where the school is deemed strong and with capacity, the Local Authority may also look with governors at where the school could potentially provide strategic leadership to others.
2. If the governing board move towards the recruitment of a substantive headteacher they need to demonstrate that the structure they are proposing is sustainable for the subsequent 3 years financially, that the Ofsted judgement of the school is not at risk and that standards will be maintained, this will take the form of a discussion rather than a formal plan. Governors need to have demonstrated that they have considered all options for both the school and community moving forwards.
3. The LA, working with the Governing Board will review the PAN and seek to adjust this to achieve a relevant number that promotes sustainability and appropriate class organisation.

All other schools i.e. more than 200 children on roll

1. There is a presumption that schools with over 200 pupils are viable in terms of leadership but the Local Authority will always look at approaching schools, no matter what their designation is, in supporting other schools within the system. Governors are asked to be open-minded to the potential role that schools have in supporting system wide improvement. Where leadership and governance is strong we see a role for supporting all students and where there is capacity that this can be shared.
2. We will approach maintained schools and Multi-Academy Trusts to provide strategic leadership for either the short or long term. We will always be mindful though of ethos alignment and geography when making any approaches and ultimately this is a decision for individual governing boards.

Potential opportunities – School Organisation Change

The Local Authority together with Governing Bodies should consider whether there are innovative solutions which will enable small schools to be sustained.

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of small schools moving towards partnerships, federations and in joining Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). The Local Authority is generally supportive of this approach and the benefits delivered through effective collaboration between schools and diocesan boards. In fact, the Local Authority has provided additional support for those schools taking this path, including providing governors with support around models for leadership, a new Executive Head network and a specific mentoring programme for those leaders that take on more than one school. We have also invested as a Council in a new Senior Leadership Professional Support Package (SLEAPS) that focuses on the well-being of our leaders, succession planning and sustainable appointments.

Further, we have seen the development of a collaborative hub model for school improvement with our maintained schools and cross phase collaboration for Special Educational Needs.

There are a number of options for small schools to consider. There is a danger that structural change is seen as a deficit model rather than a positive and constructive way to deliver high quality education. The following list provides guidance on the types of models of leadership that could be operated when a substantive Head resigns:

- Partnership of two or more schools with an Executive Head (Primary Only)
- Partnership of two or more schools with an Executive Head (Cross-phase)
- Federation of two or more schools with an Executive Head (Primary Only)
- Federation of two or more schools with an Executive Head (Cross-phase)
- Service Level Agreement between small school and larger school to provide strategic leadership
- School joins or becomes affiliated to a Multi-Academy Trust

These are just a sample of ideas that could be explored by governors and heads as they consider how to respond to the challenges at a ground level:

- Creating a SLA with a MAT/maintained school to provide some core functions that are easier to deliver centrally: finance, personnel, Safeguarding, SENCo, specialist subject delivery
- Shared appointments of key personnel including Business Managers, Site Managers and SENCos
- Development of shared subject leadership across a number of small schools, or out sourced from a larger school to smaller schools

- Development of shared resources and SLAs across a number of small schools to provide better value for money

Case Studies

Set out below are examples, locally and elsewhere, of how small schools have successfully adapted to the change in the current educational landscape and where governing bodies and Local Authorities have been forward thinking in their strategy.

Partnerships and Federations in South Gloucestershire: There is some direct evidence within South Gloucestershire that partnerships and Federations founded in the past two years have actually led directly to school improvement; whether through outcomes or through Ofsted Inspections. The model works well where governors have undertaken detailed due diligence support by the Local Authority but most importantly have looked at the vision for collaboration and how this directly relates to their communities and the quality of education offer.

Herefordshire (Thinking differently about Small Schools): If we look through the lens of Herefordshire Local Authority (which has a relatively high percentage of small schools) we can see some different options that could be explored by our small schools in South Gloucestershire.

The Hereford Marches Federation of Academies (HMFA) model of schools is an innovative one and combines schools of different designation under one body with an attached school improvement arm. The HMFA model has schools that come under the umbrella of a MAT, stand-alone academies and maintained schools. The premise is one of strong leadership and management that then allows schools to operate effectively with shared resource. Schools of various designations share an Executive Head, SENCo, Safeguarding Officer, a localised school improvement offer alongside core business functions that operate centrally. The HMFA has a track record of school improvement with small schools achieving 'Outstanding' judgements under the structures that exist.

Another example, within the same county, Herefordshire is the Federation of Whitchurch CE Primary School and Weston-Under-Penyard CE Primary School, this federation has extended its offer through the establishment of a teaching school that focuses in part on supporting and developing small schools.

Further west in the County there has been the establishment of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Fairfield Secondary School and Longtown Community Primary School where SEND, music, finance and Executive Leadership are provided by the Secondary School. This cross-phase approach also has traction in sustaining both rural Primary and Secondary schools, it provides opportunities as well for specialist teachers to contribute to the primary sector.

Links to other Strategies and Stakeholders

- School Improvement Strategy
- Inclusion Strategy
- Commissioning of Places Strategy
- Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
- Schools Capital Programme
- Recruitment and retention strategy
- Wellbeing in leadership
- Executive Headteacher network
- Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD)
- Schools Forum
- Local School Standards Board

Implementation

SGC to work with schools in the following priority order/tranches:

- Tranche 1 - Schools with fewer than 50 children on roll
- Tranche 2 - Schools with fewer than 100 children on roll
- Tranche 3 - Schools with fewer than 200 children on roll
- Tranche 4 – Schools with more than 200 children on roll

Meet with headteachers and Governing Boards of schools ensuring schools have time to gather data, information and research, talk through options and that all parties are open about the opportunities to implement effective school organisation change. It is important that all partners are realistic about timescales for action and change including a thorough consideration of the timescales and implications for resources, staffing and class organisation and structure.

Monitoring

Review and monitor the impact of the strategy in terms of the following:

- Raise standards and improve school outcomes: attainment and progress for all children including vulnerable groups of children compared with national
- Improve the trajectory of Ofsted Outcomes: more schools achieving good or outstanding
- Reduce the number of schools in financial difficulty: fewer schools operating with a budget deficit.
- Provide updates of progress through meetings with headteachers and Governing Boards and through the Schools Forum and School Capital Group.

DfE List of Designated Rural Schools

This is the latest list of South Gloucestershire maintained primary schools that the Secretary of State has designated as rural under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2019 (as at December 2019).

There are 16 schools with designated rural school status.

Establishment Name	Type of Establishment	Urban/Rural
Alexander Hosea Primary*	Community school	Rural town/fringe
St Helen's Church of England Primary*	Voluntary controlled	Rural town/fringe
Hawkesbury Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Iron Acton Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Marshfield Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Oldbury on Severn Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Olveston Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Pucklechurch Church of England VC Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural town/fringe
Rangeworthy Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Old Sodbury Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Wick Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural town and fringe
Tortworth VC Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural hamlet/isolated dwellings
St Andrew's Church of England, Cromhall	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Trinity Church of England Primary	Voluntary controlled	Rural village
Horton Church of England VA Primary	Voluntary aided	Rural hamlet/isolated dwellings
St Peter's Anglican / Methodist VC Primary*	Voluntary controlled	Rural village

**These schools are not considered small under the LA small school categories i.e. have numbers on roll that are greater than 200.*

VC is Voluntary Controlled