

Responses from Icknield Community College to questions from School Organisation & Planning on its Sixth Form Feasibility Analysis

- Your plans to recruit 35 Y12 pupils in 2015 and 45 in 2016 seem realistic. Across the county last year, the Y11 to Y12 transfer rate was 55%. This is a slightly crude measure, as it just looks at totals, and not at specific children – so some sixth formers may have appeared from outside the Oxon state sector. However, it would be reasonable to assume a 50% staying on rate.

We are confident of achieving these numbers. In 2015-16 this would involve retaining 28% of our current cohort. In 2016-17 we have projected to retain 40% of the current cohort. In 2017-18 we have projected to retain 47% of the cohort. Each of these is below the 50% that your data suggests would be reasonable.
- However, your assumption that all Y12 will continue into Y13 may need to be revised – across the county last year, the transfer rate was 81%. This may change with the revisions to AS/A levels, but you should still ensure your finances will work with a degree of Y13 leakage.

With significant A-level reform and the re-introduction of 2 year A-Level courses (in most subjects) in 2015-6, we expect the transfer rate from Year 12 to 13 to be higher than 81%. That said, our feasibility analysis demonstrates that there is capacity in our budget to cope with 19% leakage in 2016-17.
- Your longer term target of a total of 120 6th form students therefore looks a little high, but not excessively so – you should test your finances against a total of 100-110 as well.

Without major capital building planned, our projected costs have been based on the extra recruitment being the most significant cost. Beyond that, the costs entail building up a wider range of resources to aid study. The feasibility analysis shows that this spending can be flexible, depending on the numbers of students we are attracting.
- Your plan to offer 17 courses in year 1 and 18 in year 2 looks very ambitious. Assuming the pupil numbers given, and that each student takes 3 courses, this suggests average group sizes of 6 or 7, which would usually be considered financially challenging. You might need to be ready to prune the offer if take up for any subject is particularly low. Do you have a minimum group size cut-off?

We will offer 17 subjects, but with student numbers expected to be only low in the first two years, we do not expect all of these to run. However, we have based our staffing budget for 2015-6 on being able to offer 17 A-Levels and are confident that we can do this. The concept of a minimum group size cut-off is one we are considering long and hard. In the first instance, we need to get students to choose our Sixth Form in order to gather momentum. If we discover that the absence of a particular subject is a deal-breaker for a student it may mean that some classes run with very small class sizes. That said, we may timetable them in a slightly more creative way if the teacher to student ratio is very low. However, we are fully prepared to not run courses if we deem it inappropriate to do so. These decisions may, in the first year, need to be more bespoke than they ordinarily will be in subsequent years.
- I note that you have considered the impact on class sizes, option numbers and contact ratios elsewhere in the school. These seem reasonable, but it is, of course,

up to the school's judgement that these changes will be acceptable. I wonder what level of staff consultation there has been on these aspects? Have these implications also been made clear to parents?

Our sixth form ideas have been shared with our staff regularly. They are behind them and support the changes. Key staff, for example leaders in Science, have been involved in discussions about potential changes in Key Stage 4 contact time. Within our sixth form public meeting we discussed the choices the school will need to make with regard to Y7-11 with parents.

- The “Net Capacity” method of assessing school accommodation indicates that your accommodation would be slightly undersized with the addition of a sixth form of the size proposed. If all years were full, a 120 place sixth form would suggest a Y7-11 admission number of only 131; with a 90 place sixth form this would be 137. I appreciate that not all year groups may be full, but you have to plan for that eventuality. The school needs to be sure they would be happy with 140 children in each of Years 7-11 and a full sixth form – i.e. 820 pupils (or 790 with the smaller sixth form) compared to the top of your current net capacity range of 773. We can endeavour to secure developer contributions towards school expansion, but cannot guarantee we will be successful. We can support the school in securing other resources, but I do need to reinforce the point that the county council is not in a position to offer funding towards additional accommodation.

We are aware that adding a sixth form will add pressure to our use of space, but have plans to tackle this. In the short term, we know that we are not fully subscribed, and are unlikely to be in the next four years based on having existing year groups below full capacity. We currently enjoy a situation where most teachers have their own teaching space. Our staff are aware that this luxury will not be able to continue. Our analysis has shown that we have sufficient teaching spaces for the plans we have drawn up. In the longer term, we are also working actively with our Neighbourhood Action Group, a subset of the Watlington Parish Council, on their Neighbourhood Action Plan. We have discussed the possibility of using 106 funding to pay for new buildings to expand the school to the North.