

YOUR SCHOOL + YOUR COMMUNITY

Summary Reports for Governors' Conference 17-18th Oct. 2003

The reports below cover all the presentations given at the conference and are intended to summarise the key elements. Accompanying papers were distributed to all those present at the conference. Anyone who did not attend but would like copies of the papers should contact Jane Lucas at jlucas@devon.gov.uk. Thanks to Roger Adcock, Mike Billington, Debbie Clapshaw, Ivan Godfrey, Simon Goodenough and Martin Weiler for the summaries below.

Phil Norrey

After dinner, Phil Norrey, Director of Education, Arts & Libraries, set the tone for a stimulating and extended debate over the next 9 months about the future of the Education service in Devon. He quoted Professor Tim Brighouse: "It is not the job of a leader to *give* the vision but to *hold* the vision." However, PN provided a few challenging prompts for the debate. He stressed the importance of creating a sense of enjoyment, excitement and fun in education, of distinctive ideas within a coherent plan, of daring to be different, and of informed professionalism. He suggested that we should:

- Put the learner and the learning process at the centre of holistic thinking. Regard especially the difficult interfaces in the early years and between primary and secondary school.
- Consider outcomes for young people and what we want to achieve for them; avoid obsession with milestones.
- Address aspirations within the community, which should be part of the vision, because education can make such a huge difference to all in the community.
- Put an accent on partnership, horizontal and vertical; ensure a strong academic council base; look at support services, that they overcome the barriers between health, social services and education professionals; engage with higher education.
- Aspire to innovation; there are no patterns or blueprints.

Through the vision that we develop, PN hoped that we would put Devon firmly on the national map, so that people visit our schools to see what we are doing.

Ted Wragg

The common theme to a talk illustrated by plenty of personal experiences was a note of optimism about the future. We rarely look ahead, said TW, but the Education Commission on which he sat had had a marvellous discussion about the present *and* the future. He quoted Alvin Toffler: "All education is a vision of the future." We should look forward to what the world is going to be like. In doing so we should look at the whole community and beyond the 4.00 p.m. school day to pre-school, adult education and community activities. Governors are an important group of volunteers that share their experiences and actually turn up and do things.

TW suggested that we are all born with a switch in our brain: if it's ON, you can learn; if it's OFF, that's bad news. A lot of learning is about the way you feel. People who don't believe they're clever spend their lives believing they can't learn but 'you're never too old to learn until they screw the lid down on you'. People in their 80s and 90s can recall events at school because one teacher turned their switch ON. Motivation consists of the time in which to do things and being aroused to take an interest in them. Without motivation, opportunities are passed over. One child might be absorbed for a full 30 minutes while another concentrates for only 5 of those minutes. Multiply the difference between those two children by the number of lessons over 5 years and count the opportunities won and lost. Imagine if we lost a whole generation to the OFF switch!

Fortunately, even the laid-back children have enormous drive. Consider the millions of people who watch David Attenborough, Horizon or The Sky at Night. People still want to learn, though they may be no great scholars. TW remembered Charles Worrall, the headteacher of a village school and creator of the I-Spy Books, who died at 106 and who, even at 104, still retained his curiosity about such things as the new National Curriculum. With increasingly extended life-spans, that age may soon become the norm for the children for whom we are responsible now. Those children could have 80 years with their minds switched OFF but if you can switch them ON you will be doing them the greatest service in your power.

They will need all the skills and knowledge they can get to cope with the changes that are happening in their jobs and family lives. On the one hand, they will require formal qualifications, the 'credentials spiral' that demands ever more

skills for every job. On the other hand, there is increasing emphasis on personal qualities, 'people willing to learn, with drive, etc.' This is because of changes in employment patterns. In parallel with what happened to agriculture in the 19th Century, so industries like shipbuilding, steel and coal have given way to hospitality, care and communications industries. For example, there are more people currently employed in the Asian food industry in this country than in shipbuilding, steel and coal combined. 'People' jobs have replaced manufacturing jobs, and require 'people' skills: care of the young, the elderly and the sick; communications in public relations, customer relations, call centres, and the media. These changes are forced on us through changing circumstances; for example, in Victorian times 6% of the population was over 60, now 20% of the population is over 60.

This balance of formal qualifications and personal qualities means it's important that children become well-rounded human beings and keep their minds open. The pattern of work is changing, too. 'Portfolio' working consists of stitching together 2 or 3 different jobs at the same time. This is a difficult task, requiring skills in each job, satisfying 2 or 3 employers, with a fluctuating income that is hard to manage. Young people need to be flexible.

Aspiration, expressed by Philip Norrey, is important. TW returned to his theme about the importance of good teachers being able to turn ON the switch of motivation, and the number of older people who have persuaded themselves they could never do things that a 4-year-old could learn in 5 minutes. Creative teaching is essential. We have been through a period in which central government has told schools what to do, all in exactly the same way, such as the Literacy and Numeracy hours. The concept that 'London knows best' inhibits creativity. There are thousands of ways of teaching. It is absolutely vital that everyone (including government) encourages people to have a go, try out and swap new ideas, get excited, so that children will get excited, too. Ingenuity and inventiveness must be used to produce many different solutions that, when put together, produce something very powerful. In fact, this country is doing quite well now in international league tables, and if there were to be a measure for imagination we would come top of the league table, with our recent Nobel prize winners, fashion and arts leaders, inventors and others. We must not lose our precious individualism. Education is the most important thing for the future of this world. We must pass on the best we can achieve and build on that.

Ann Holt

Ann Holt led us through some of the latest government thinking in relation to raising standards in schools through community links. She suggested that to avoid initiative overload, governors needed to help headteachers say 'no' occasionally, and to be careful and wise about what they took on. She quoted Tim Brighouse: "If you're going to be a leader, you've got to suffer from unwarranted optimism." The government minister, David Milliband, put governors at the heart of the 'diamond of reform' with 4 key points for government strategy: leadership, teaching and learning (the core purpose of the school), the 'extended' agenda, and structures. AH outlined what this strategy meant for governors. The hard copy of her power-point presentation is available and gives a full summary. Here are just a few of the points she amplified:

- The principle of subsidiarity, taking decisions closest to the point of impact.
- There are major decisions to be made, once the money reaches schools, such as, how much of a school's budget can you use for extended schools?
- Governing bodies have more room "to innovate in ways that will give them the opportunity to respond to the much wider brief of connecting school improvement with community regeneration" (David Bell, HMCI).
- Governing bodies should become the leaders of the learning community, and the school should be a community resource.
- Governing bodies should be role models for young people, and are the single largest demonstration of democracy and citizenship; they demonstrate the importance of volunteers. AH meant to encourage governors when she said, "I don't despise people who are retired being school governors."
- Governing bodies must ensure they represent all the stakeholders in the school.
- We live in a bidding culture; there are plenty of opportunities for schools to find additional funds; "it's the street-wise schools that are successful," said AH.
- Comprehensive schools face two major difficulties: generally they are too big, and mixed ability teaching is very hard.
- "If you're going to be an extended school, you'll need more staff."
- Nothing is written in stone with regard to the school of the future.

In sum, AH painted a future full of opportunities for schools to become agents for change in the community, with governing bodies taking a strong, strategic and collaborative lead.

In a brief question time, one governor noted the other side of the picture: government's determination to have its cake and eat it; the concentration on the narrow results of SATS is totally alien to the philosophy expounded by AH and unnecessary to educational success. AH admitted some tension in government on this issue. The Education Select

Committee has said publicly that 'targets are becoming counter-productive'. SATS will have no place in the new 14-19 curriculum; SATS and league tables will disappear within 5 or 6 years. Schools need to have the courage to be subversive locally.

A second governor suggested that another contradiction is the removal of Community Education from the orbit of the school. A third governor agreed and said that in Chumleigh this had had a detrimental effect. Councillor Saxon Spence said the Council was not responsible for this; the action had been influenced by the Learning and Skills Council. AH added that governors should watch the 14-19 curriculum; the situation was likely to change yet again because "the level of collaboration needed is colossal".

Workshop 1 The Role of the Churches in the Context of Extended Schools

The session was led by Mike Simmonds (Head of CARE) and Ann Holt (Bible Society). It dealt with what it means to be Christian in education and the Christian resources available. The starting point was Archbishop Rowan Williams' observation that the church school is itself a religious community where "it is assumed that what is of consuming and urgent interest is.....a range of concerns about common humanity expressed in actions and relations and worship." The Church has put schools at the centre of mission, but with emphasis on witness rather than conversion. This dovetailed with the secular expression of David Bell HMCI about "connecting school improvement with community regeneration". In the context of what makes a Christian school distinctive it was said that Church schools were not to be ashamed of having an overt ethic and faith position. It was important that everyone knew where they stood in attending a Church school. There followed an extended discussion on what makes a Church school distinctive, which meant that there was no time for some of the more practical issues relating to extended schools except for reference to the Stapleton Centre, Bristol, on-line for resources. The rest was covered by presentation notes. This very interesting session could have gone for the rest of the afternoon!

Workshop 2 The school at the heart of the community: the principles of extended schools

Vicky Rollason, who has the brief for extended schools in the LEA, reflected on an initial group 'brainstorm' on the topic. She said that it had confirmed the wide range of issues involved and that there was not a single way of defining an extended school. All sorts of initiatives could extend a school and most, if not all, schools already have elements of extension. So it is not a new concept in itself. What is new is the power of Governors, following the 2002 Act, in relation to the provision of community education.

Vicky stressed the importance of linkages with other local organisations. One key way to do this was by involvement with Local Strategic Partnerships. There was a role for school governors in this.

Whatever initiatives were taken it was vital that teaching and learning remained at the centre of the school. An increase in the level of achievement of children would be a real measure of the success of an extended school.

Childcare

The group then considered a specific example of extension. Fran Butler (Early Years, LEA) led a discussion on the provision of childcare. Any schools that are interested should contact Fran for guidance.

It was pointed out that the provision of childcare facilities can help with the recruitment and retention of staff and assist with government initiatives to encourage teenage parents back into education.

Next Steps

In conclusion governors were encouraged to consider extending their school. The best starting point is to carry out a review. There is a lot of help on hand – for example the DfES leaflet "An introduction to extended schools" and discussion with your local County Community Strategy Officers.

Handouts:

- i) An Introduction to extended schools (DfES)
- ii) Extended Schools – Principles
- iii) Extended schools – Local Contacts
- iv) The power to provide community facilities
- v) Extended schools co-ordinator draft job description
- vi) Grant 412: Extended Schools
- vii) Examples of childcare in Devon Schools
- viii) Examples of community facilities
- ix) Guidelines for setting up childcare in schools

- x) Definitions
- xi) Zero 14 plus information pack

Workshop 3 A Day in the Life of an Extended School - Delaware Extended Primary School, Drakewalls, Cornwall (194 on roll)

Delaware is based on a large site, a former secondary school site and is quite isolated, not really attached to a community. They have a large and diverse catchment area. Many of the parents work in Plymouth and have a need for childcare early in the morning. Other parents have no transport and are quite isolated. The school felt it had a lot of space to share.

The headteacher was quite new in post when the opportunity came along to become involved in the Pathfinder project. It was timely for the new head together with staff and governors to develop a new mission statement which then became instrumental in driving the school forward. The statement reflects the breadth of learning needs within the community and the intention to develop a culture of lifelong learning:

“We believe that every individual should be valued, enjoy their learning and, without fear of failure, strive to achieve their best”.

The timescale was very tight:

Nov 02 – Delaware notified of success in becoming part of the Pathfinder project. They are awarded £50,000.

Dec 02 – Co-ordinator appointed. (This person was already working for the Kids Club on the site).

Aug 03 – funding ceases

Sept 03 – Project evaluated.

The school already had a Kids Club on the site which ran separately from the school, but offered childcare before and after the school day. The local Pre-school had also expressed an interest to move on to the school site if this was possible. In addition there was already an outdoor education centre in Delaware. Links were made quickly with this centre, but the local community being so spread out were quite difficult to make contact with. The school needed to gauge what sort of activities the community wanted to take part in. They initiated a postal questionnaire with limited response. (If they had had more time they would have arranged meetings as well).

In order to create a learning environment the school concentrated on:

- Childcare – pulling together different strands
- Establishing a breakfast club
- Adult education provision, including promoting effective parenting, keep-fit, computing, yoga etc.
- Family learning – children and adults learning together
- Links with other agencies

The school also established closer links with their 4 neighbouring primary schools, and the Outdoor Education Centre also put on activities during the half-term and school holidays. The school encouraged parents to visit during the day to find out how learning takes place in the 21st century.

Responsibility of governors:

- Financing an extended school – monitoring the finances, keeping the two budgets separate.
- Having the strategic overview
- Consultation – meeting the requirement to consult
- Communication and marketing
- Support of staff

Where next?:

- The Pathfinder Project is finished, but the school has been given a child care grant to continue to employ the co-ordinator for 15 hours per week.
- The Breakfast club and the child care is now self-financing
- Beginning to make links with health and social services

What has been learnt?

- Employing staff – more needed obviously, and not always that easy to find given the part-time nature of many of the jobs
- Use of the building – it is now occupied between 7am and 10pm, cleaning is an issue
- Access to the building – many more people have access and there are more keyholders
- Childcare v education, different bodies oversee the two!
- Communication – almost like running two separate schools on one site with separate staff.

The Chair of Governors, Neil Richards is also an organic farmer and left the workshop with ‘food for thought’:
“we don’t want to grow the perfect parsnip, we just want to create the environment in which the perfect parsnip would like to grow”.

Workshop 4 Funding Opportunities for Extended Schools

The workshop was led by Steve Keable from Devon County Council and was supported by a useful handout entitled ‘Fundraising Guide’.

The session started with SK giving details of the DCC Information Officer – Kate Osmond who is contactable at County Hall on 01392 382076. SK raised several useful points at the start of the session.

- ‘Devon Funding News’ – circulated to
400 schools
200 public venues
170 community groups
also available via – www.fundingnews.org.uk
- ‘Guides to Major Trusts – ISBN details in the handout
- Over 200,000 registered charities nationally, of which there are 135,000 currently active, generating bet. 13 and 30 million pounds. This excludes Lottery, Govt. Grants and Company Giving.

The session was then opened to the group for questions and concerns.

- ‘Bids can take a long time to write and it is annoying to learn that the criteria has changed by the time you have finished’ ‘Problems over getting funds for sustainability not just for new initiatives’
SK There is some money coming next year that could be targeted this way. But it isn’t likely to be much. Consider sustainability through local funding – through fees etc.
- ‘Help in writing bids’
SK There is limited help available from ‘Playlines’, also from Kate Osmond at DCC. The DCC team draws down approx. 12 million pounds annually in external funding. The workshop handout should also prove useful.
- ‘Some get it, other don’t’
SK This is often down to the skills of individual governing bodies. He emphasised using the right language in bids to reflect and meet the required criteria. Think small initially and build incrementally.
- ‘Clashes between the audit done by the school and that by another agency in order to properly identify any need’
SK Use sound information [Multiple Index of Deprivation is a very useful source]. Evaluate why bids are rejected. Consider the wider context.
- ‘Who can bid for what? Some funders are unable to give to statutory bodies [i.e. schools]’
SK Consider setting up a registered charity. Consider using a ‘Friends’ organisation.

SK concluded the session with some additional comments.

- Look at what you want and why.
- Get passion and emotion behind some of the more logical comments in your bid.
- Don’t forget exit strategies.
- Consider funding for volunteer programmes as well.
- The bidding culture will remain a fact of life. DCC run a 2-day course on Funding.

The DAG Project - Inclusion

Margaret Hosford (Chair of Governors, Ladysmith Middle School) opened the session by explaining that DAG was in the process of producing a booklet with the help of LEA professionals drawing together good exemplars of work practice supporting pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs and undertaken in Devon schools. This was a different but critical focus on the work of schools extending into the community. As a blind child she had been forced at the age of 6 to go to a school over 100 miles from her home. Society now accepts that children with physical disabilities can and should be taught within mainstream education : the next challenge is to ensure that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are similarly catered for.

Andy Hamlyn (South Dartmoor Community College) gave a number of illustrations of his experiences working with ‘difficult’ pupils in this area. He emphasised the following points:

- it is essential that relevant staff have the support of the Senior Management Team and governors
- teachers have to be enthusiasts for children and at no stage undervalue or devalue them
- it is important NOT to lower expectations in order to retain pupils - but it is also crucial to be flexible and create individual packages for individual pupils within which high expectations can be made
- pupils with difficulties need to be identified from Year 7 so that potential problems can be pre-empted

- the principal task is to help pupils to learn how to change poor behaviour

Mollie Marlow (Willowbrook School, Exeter) explained how she had worked with others in support of primary pupils demonstrating severe behavioural and emotional problems. She emphasised:

- the importance of schools having a ' good behaviour ' policy
- the need to focus on positive behaviour (' catching a pupil doing something good ')
- the value of a School Council in promoting shared approaches and understanding
- the role of peer mediators (' squabble squads ' in her school) who help children find their own solutions
- the key task of involving parents at an early stage and, in some cases, giving them very practical advice on how to handle and support their children

Andy and Mollie were then joined by **Jenny Bates** (Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist) in a very lively discussion session from which the following points emerged:

- **there ' has to be a way ' of integrating these children into society ... the alternative is despair**
- children who are passive / disengaged (often a sign of potential future problems) need to be identified and ways found for providing the right context for them to succeed
- early intervention / early years support units / nursery units developing use of language - all pre-empt later problems
- a strong behavioural and discipline plan within a school, strong classroom management skills and positive relations with parents are a prerequisite for success
- governors can play a role by seeking to ensure that staff are given appropriate training in managing behaviour

The well-received session concluded with the hope that the booklet (to be published in Spring 2004) would provide a starting point for debate amongst governors and a practical support to schools in addressing an issue of key importance to all schools. The presenters were thanked warmly for their enthusiastic and positive contributions.

Ingrid Fisher - Plenary Session

In drawing the conference together Ingrid highlighted the following points:

- an inspiring Key Note address which underlined how teaching and learning styles will change, looked afresh at what is not much changed from nineteenth century institutions ... and outlined a role for the LEA!
- county support for school is consistent with its overall aims: to support schools in developing what is right for them; important that individual schools develop their own ethos - this came out strongly in Church Schools workshop
- the importance of offering children a spiritual dimension, and Ann Holt suggested in some ways school was taking over this role from church
- the funding workshop gave some practical tips, especially in research of funding routes through www.fundingnews.org.uk
- rather than seeking funding for an " extended school ", schools are advised to look at the elements they wish to extend - several workshops stressed that there are many possible models
- in several sessions there were comments about the economic contribution schools could be providing for their families and communities eg childcare or out of school clubs, so that parents can work and children are better off and learn better as wellbeing improves
- the childcare presentation stressed that learning and training had to be accessible and flexible: schools can help, maybe by providing venues - for example, NVQs delivered locally
- much of the focus on exclusion/inclusion related to supporting a young person to find their own solutions and looking at a child in the context of family and community
- the benefits of early interventions had been identified - schools working with other agencies can help here : a flexible curriculum can help others
- the Cornwall example highlighted that you can have a "village school" even with no village! The school is still extending its services and has a very good take-up. Its mission statement encouraged risk-taking by pupils - a recognition of "constructive failure"
- the importance of consultation and communication and ensuring that school and community identify common interests and understand what is happening (the two-way process brings the greatest benefits)

Ingrid thanked Governors for their commitment and in particular for being willing to leave behind the day-to-day detail and practicalities and engage in some forward vision; if we lose that capacity our schools will be the poorer

In conclusion she thanked the behind-the-scenes support staff and in particular DGS/DAG teams, Jane Lucas and Judy Burgess.