

Small Schools, Big Communities
Village Schools and Extended Services



A report for the Commission for Rural Communities

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our warmest thanks and gratitude to the head teachers, extended services staff, partner bodies and parents who contributed to the four extended services case studies. Thanks are also due to colleagues in DfE, the TDA, Continyou, the National Association of Small schools and 4 Children for their insights into the particular challenges and opportunities of delivering extended services in rural areas. Finally, we could not have undertaken this study without the support and involvement of the Commission for Rural Communities.

Glossary

ACRE	Action with Communities in Rural England
AiRS	Action in Rural Sussex
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BBUFA	Battle and Bexhill Under Fives Association
BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
BEST	Building Engagement Support and Trust project
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
C&LP	Community and Learning Partnership
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CiC	Community Interest Company
COPEs	Children's Outreach and Parents Extended Support
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities
CWI	Child Wellbeing Index
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
FCN	Fellowship of St Nicholas
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LPC	Local Partnership for Children
NASS	National Association of Small Schools
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PIC	Parent Information Contact
PSA	Parent Support Adviser
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
TDA	Training and Development Agency

Table of Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	6
2 Structure of the report	7
3 Background	8
3.1 Not all the same	8
3.2 Rural identity	9
3.3 Rural isolation	10
3.4 Low income – poor attainment	11
3.5 The extended services offer	12
3.6 Funding	14
3.7 The model of change	14
3.8 Impact of extended schools	15
3.9 The challenge of delivery in rural areas	18
3.10 Village schools	19
3.11 Evidence on village schools	20
3.12 Conclusion	21
4 Case studies	22
Driffield School Cluster	22
Gembling Primary School	23
Driffield school cluster	25
Entitlement for all	25
Twilight Bus Service	26
The student view	26
Support for village schools	28
Parenting support	29
Empowering the community	29
Sustaining village life?	30
Leek High School Cluster	33
Community and Learning Partnerships	33
Leek High Specialist Technology School	34
Only services are hard to reach	35
Community	36
The most satisfying part of the job	37
Warslow	38
Longnor	39

What students said	41
Supporting villages, supporting achievement	42
Rye College Cluster	43
Extended services	43
Rye College	44
Two village schools	46
Extended village services	48
Parenting support	49
Rye Children’s Centre	50
Adult Learning	51
Employment	52
Benefits of small schools	52
Smithdon High School Cluster	53
Docking Primary School	54
Smithdon School Cluster	55
Cluster support for village schools	58
Parenting support	59
Raising skills	59
The cluster	60
Sustaining village life?	61
Impact of closing the village school	62
5 Findings and conclusions	64
5.1 Delivering outcomes	65
5.2 In it together	66
5.3 Funding	67
5.4 Configuring aims	68
5.5 Addressing poverty and inequality	69
5.6 Constructing community	71
Annex 1 Methodology	74

1. Introduction

Extended services through schools are one of a range of initiatives introduced between 1997 and 2010 to break the link between poverty and poor educational outcomes. The vast majority of schools now provide access to a range of extended services which include: childcare; a varied menu of activities and homework clubs outside of the school day; referral to specialist agencies; parenting support; and wider community access to school facilities.

In the provision of extended services, schools have the opportunity to exercise a wider role in securing child and family well-being and to contribute more fully to the creation of economic, social and human capitals in their communities.

Schools offering access to extended services face particular challenges in delivering services in rural areas, where populations are dispersed and which include many scattered small communities. However, the provision of holiday schemes and other activities, childcare and parenting support may also offer a life line to remote villages and hamlets which suffer from poor transport links to larger towns.

In those same communities, village schools which are part of school clusters provide a venue for extended services and this may, in some circumstances, secure greater viability for schools with small and falling rolls. Across rural England, the closure of village schools is almost invariably opposed by parents and other community members. There is some indication of a slow down in the rate of closures affecting small rural schools but, with impending cuts in public expenditure, that position could change.

Through four in-depth case studies of rural extended services, in each case involving small village schools, the study set out to capture some of the experiences of those involved in delivery, together with perspectives from children, young people, families and communities. Its aim was to explore how, in a rural context, small and larger schools are working together to support young people; tackle poor educational achievement; enable families to access services; and help to transform communities.

Questions for the study were

- What are the tangible or perceived benefits for families of schools offering extended services in rural communities and, within this, the contribution made by village schools?
- What are the challenges of delivering extended services in rural areas and how are these overcome? How, if at all, does co-operation between schools, influence the viability of small schools?

- What examples exist of best/innovative practice? What are the key drivers for success? What further services would strengthen the offer?
- What do village schools offer to children and families in the form of social and community networks and access to health and other services?
- What contribution can extended services and village schools make to tackling area-based disadvantage and increasing community cohesion?
- What is the actual or potential impact for the community of the withdrawal of village schools?

2. Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the policy context and related research findings

Chapter 4 examines, through four case studies, the provision of extended services in selected rural communities

Chapter 5 summarises and discusses the main findings of the study

Annexe 1 outlines the methodology of the study

Note 1: Throughout the report, the term *parent* is used to include carers and step-parents, as well as biological parents. In addition, and except where indicated otherwise, the short description *rural* is used to denote sparsely and less sparsely populated areas and other rural classifications.

Note 2: The terms small school and village school are used throughout the report. The overwhelming majority of small schools are in rural areas.

3. Background

Approximately 2.2 million children live in rural areas, representing 36% of all children in England. The population of rural areas is increasing, relative to the country as a whole, as a result of inward migration of families with children, older people and economic migrants. While there is a reverse trend in the proportions of young people aged 15-19 moving out of rural areas, there is a specific, ongoing flow of children aged 0-14 into the countryside and as a result, attending rural schools.¹

Overall, the countryside is a good place for children. Children in rural areas enjoy higher school achievement, with more gaining good GCSE passes. Rates of absence from school are lower than for urban areas, crime rates are lower and people living in the country tend to have better health.²

However, within this overall picture there are significant inequalities of experience. A quarter of rural children are living in poverty, but rural poverty exists alongside affluence and is often hidden from view. A smaller proportion of low-income rural children receive their entitlement to free school meals than in urban areas, suggesting that rural families are less willing to identify themselves as in need.³

The proportion of houses which are non-decent is much higher in the most rural areas. On the Child Wellbeing Index (CWI), children living in rural districts have the lowest level of well-being in the housing domain. Poor housing is, in turn, associated with poorer educational outcomes, with children living in bad housing nearly twice as likely as other children to leave school without any GCSEs.⁴

Children in rural areas have to travel further to school and poor public transport prevents many from taking part in clubs or after-school activities or simply meeting up with friends. According to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), the lack of public transport and rising fuel costs for private transport significantly disadvantage the poorest children living in the countryside. More than 70% of teachers in the survey said transport problems mean children have difficulty getting to school or college.⁵

3.1 Not all the same

Rural deprivation has distinct characteristics which are not fully captured in standard measures such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Compared with urban areas, people on low

¹ CRC (2010) State of the Countryside update: Children and educational services

² CRC (2008) State of the countryside

³ CRC (2010) Ibid

⁴ Shelter, Against the Odds (2006)

www.england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/against_the_odds

⁵ <http://www.atl.org.uk/media-office/media-archive/lack-of-transport-blight-rural-lives.asp>

incomes are more likely to be working and less likely to claim benefits; people in poor health are less likely to call upon health services and so can be missed by statistical measures.⁶ The relationship between car ownership and deprivation is weaker in rural areas where car ownership is, virtually, a necessity.⁷

Many rural areas which otherwise have low scores on the IMD are classed as deprived in terms of barriers to accessing services. The working age population in rural areas tends to be better qualified than those living in urban areas, but one million people in rural areas aged between 20 and 65 have no qualifications.⁸

Sparse areas suffer greater deprivation.⁹ Cornwall has some of the most deprived areas in the country, where 1 in 5 children live in workless families. East Lindsey, one of the most rural districts in England, is in the UK bottom 10% for productivity and skills and qualifications. A study for Suffolk ACRE found that the rural share of deprivation in Suffolk was substantially larger than might be expected from the number of deprived rural areas.¹⁰

3.2 Rural identity

Social capital refers to the social networks and shared understanding which facilitate co-operation between people.¹¹ It has also been found that shared identity and collective support can improve well-being and physical and mental health.¹²

Rural communities are widely believed to have higher levels of social capital, more volunteers and a stronger sense of community.¹³ In addressing the barriers to accessing services, rural residents have, in many cases, developed cooperative and other forms of self-help to do more for themselves and for others in the community. In this respect, rural England might be the template for the aims of the coalition government to increase the involvement of local people in running their own services.

However, rural communities not only differ from each other, but may also be internally polarised in terms of income and lifestyle. The inward flow of older people and higher income families, the lack of affordable housing, deterioration of public transport and the loss of local services are all factors contributing to inequalities and contradictions within rural areas.

It has been suggested that there are two contradictory but co-existing images of rural communities. In the first, the countryside is

⁶ CRC (2008) State of the Countryside Update: Rural Analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007

⁷ Christie S.M.L., Foneaby,DL,(2003) Does car ownership reflect socio-economic disadvantage in rural areas? A cross-sectional geographical study in Wales, UK Public Health Volume 117, Issue 2

⁸ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/r59/index.shtml>

⁹ CRC (2008) State of the Countryside Update: Rural Analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007

¹⁰ OCSI (2008) Deprivation in Rural Suffolk: Highly-deprived areas and the *rural share of deprivation*

¹¹ OECD (2001) The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital

¹² Reicher S (2010) The psychology of effective communities ESRC/Scottish Government

¹³ CRC (2010) State of the countryside

characterised as a place of safety, neighbourliness, a sense of community and a place of relatively affluent lifestyles. In the second, rural areas are seen as places of crisis, of declining services and of social and economic exclusion and community fragmentation.¹⁴

In support of the latter, a number of local studies have found that particular groups of families, particularly those from Black Minority Ethnic communities, may not find rural communities supportive.¹⁵

Young people have particular difficulties in accessing social opportunities. Poor transport has been shown not only to reduce participation in activities but also to restrict their opportunities and choices in deciding what to do at the end of their compulsory schooling.^{16 17}

The image of the country as a place of crisis is also reinforced by research by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), which identified that the closure of community facilities, decline in religious affiliation, physical isolation, loss of local services and an unbalanced age and social background lead to a loss of community spirit and an increase in isolation.¹⁸

3.3 Rural isolation

A fundamental premise of the Every Child Matters framework, established by the previous government, is that all families should be able to access help and support with parenting and not have to struggle alone when challenges or crises occur in their children's lives. The coalition programme for government sets out a number of clear commitments to this principle, including continuing support for Sure Start, fiscal and legal reforms and support for families with multiple problems.

However, rural families are one of a number of groups of families less likely to make use of helping services.¹⁹ An inadequate transport infrastructure is a particular barrier for some families, but sparse populations are also more costly to serve, because of the higher costs of transport and the unit costs of employing staff in sparse areas. In such instances, the professionals helping families may also suffer from isolation, their colleagues at a distance and resources thinly spread.

More than twice as many children in rural areas are the subject of a child protection plan and the proportion of children who are in care is double that in urban areas. In 2008, a Joint Inspectors' report

¹⁴ Neal S. (2009) *Rural Identities: ethnicity and community in the contemporary English countryside*. Ashgate, Aldershot

¹⁵ Garland, J & Chakraborti, N. (2004) Willan Publishing

¹⁶ ATL (2008) Ibid

¹⁷ NFER (2010) *Barriers to participation in education and training Research Report DFE-RR009*

¹⁸ NCVO (2003) *The role of the voluntary sector in the development of social capital in rural areas*

¹⁹ Henricson, C., Katz, I., Mesie, J., Sandison, M. & Tunstill, J. (2001) *National Mapping of Services in England and Wales: A Consultation Document*. London: NFPF

concluded that access to safeguarding and preventative services was particularly difficult for rural children, young people and families.^{20 21}

Poorer families are more likely to be isolated. A study for the Scottish Executive, of the experience of poverty in rural Scotland, found that isolation was a significant aspect of living in poverty at all stages of the lifestyle. Families living in poverty in rural areas experienced lack of access to services; education, training and employment opportunities; and affordable transport and housing.²²

This was echoed in study of rural children's centres for the CRC, which found that some poorer families, lacking private transport, missed out on primary health care, continuing education, the opportunity to have social relationships, childcare and employment.²³

However, isolation also exists as a subjective state and as such has ramifications for the way people react to and interact with offers of help. In small communities, fear of stigma, past experience or a culture of self-reliance may also deter help-seeking.

3.4 Low income - poor attainment

The link between poverty and poor educational attainment is as persistent in rural communities as it is elsewhere and the better school performance in rural areas conceals inequalities of experience between children from different backgrounds and income groups. In 2009, around two-fifths of pupils in rural districts who were eligible for free school meals did not achieve basic standards in literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 2. This is similar to the results for those receiving free school meals in urban areas.

A study commissioned by Defra and undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research, found that when factors related to area deprivation and social position were controlled for, no differences remained between rural and urban attainment. However, pupils from certain minority ethnic groups tended to make slightly less progress in attainment if they lived in rural areas and pupils whose mothers had low levels of qualifications also made less progress in rural compared to urban areas. This suggests that particular types of disadvantaged pupils may be additionally disadvantaged by living in rural areas.²⁴

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers has highlighted distinctive challenges for rural schools in the form of insufficient resources to recruit and retain specialist staff, support for special educational needs, English as an additional language and pastoral support

²⁰ CRC (2010) State of the Countryside update: Children and educational services

²¹ Ofsted(2008) Safeguarding children: The third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children

²² McSorley, L.(2007) Living in poverty in rural areas: report to the Scottish Government Rural and Analysis Research and Analysis Directorate

²³ Capacity (2009) Peace and quiet disadvantage: insights from users and providers of children's centres in rural communities

²⁴ Defra (2009) Educational Attainment in Rural Areas

issues. These, ATL suggests, are issues which may impact disproportionately on pupils at risk of low attainment.²⁵

In the UK, as in other economically advanced countries, the provision of universal, well-resourced formal education is not a guarantee of a route out of poverty for the most disadvantaged young people. Schools remain socially segregated, with some of the poorest performing schools located in the most deprived areas and family background continues to be a major determinant of educational outcomes.²⁶

The relationship between poverty and low educational attainment has been the subject of extensive research and competing explanations. Factors adduced include the impact of poor physical environments e.g. bad housing or diet; dysfunctions at family level, particularly in parenting behaviours; underlying social structures such as class or race; or structural inequality in the distribution of power and resources. A comprehensive review of research in this area concluded that “policy needs to simultaneously address a whole series of factors and at different levels if it is to have any meaningful impact”.²⁷

3.5 The extended services offer

The model of extended schooling was developed in United States and first appeared in the UK in Scotland, in 1999, as the New Community School Initiative. In 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) established Full Extended Schools Demonstration Projects in three Local Authority areas to explore the benefits and issues which arose when schools offered additional services for children, their families and communities. This was followed by funding for 25 local authorities to undertake Extended Schools Pathfinder Projects, to test out a variety of approaches. In 2003, the then Government published the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, which said that the DfES would promote “full service extended schools which are open beyond school hours to provide breakfast clubs and after-school clubs and childcare, and have health and social care support services on site”.²⁸

Following on from the pathfinder projects, in 2004 government thinking moved towards all schools providing access to extended services²⁹ and in 2005 the prospectus, *Extended schooling: Access to opportunities and services to all*, was published. This set out the core offer of services and created a timeline for all schools to offer access to extended services by 2010.³⁰ Unlike Full Service Extended

²⁵ ATL (2008) Poverty and social exclusion in rural areas

²⁶ Coldron, J et al (2010) Why are English secondary schools socially segregated, *Journal of Education Policy* Vol. 25 No. 1 19-35

²⁷ Raffo, C., Dyson, A., Gunter, H., Hall, D., Jones, L., and Kalamouka, A. (2007) Education and poverty A critical review of theory, policy and practice. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

²⁸ DfES (2003) *Every Child Matters*

²⁹ DfES (2004) *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare*

³⁰ DfES (2005) *Extended schooling: Access to opportunities and services to all*.

Schools, schools were encouraged to work in clusters and would not be expected to offer all activities at each school in the cluster.

Through activities like booster classes and homework clubs, sports and hobbies the aim is to both address attainment directly and to improve pupil motivation and well-being. Links to specialist services provide help for pupils and their families to overcome particular difficulties, while access for the community to school facilities creates a potential link to adult skills development and regeneration.

A further key element is support for parenting, including outreach family support. Following a successful two-year pilot programme there are now more than 4,000 Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) located in schools. Some PSAs serve one school; others serve a cluster of schools. Funding for PSAs is weighted to reflect pupil numbers, rurality and deprivation.

Schools are not expected to provide these services alone, or necessarily to deliver them on site. The aim is to work in partnership with agencies and schools, co-locating services where appropriate or signposting. Schools are legally required to consult widely with pupils, families, their own staff and the wider community to identify priorities and needs.³¹ And, while the early Full Extended Schools had very direct encouragement to focus on disadvantaged children and families, the focus of current extended services offer is on all pupils.

Schools have been supported in meeting the requirement of extended services by the *Training and Development Agency for Schools*, (TDA) which has supported all local authorities as they work with schools and partner organisations in the development of extended services; *Continyou*, which has provided advice on the core offer; and *4 Children* which has provided support for the delivery of childcare in and around schools.³² The *Specialist Schools and Academies Trust* has also provided support materials for extended schools. All specialist schools are required to develop a community plan. Achieving specialist status releases additional annual funding, one third of which should be spent on the community element of the specialist school plan.

At the end of 2009, two thirds of schools were offering all five elements of the full core offer; almost all offered after-school activities or childcare; 8 in 10 offered before school childcare or activities and 6 in 10 offered activities in the evening, after 6pm. Two thirds of schools were opening at least one of their facilities for community access. Three-quarters of schools or more offered family-wide activities, support for parents and adult learning opportunities.³³ By June 2010, 98% of schools were offering access to extended services.³⁴

³¹ Education Act 2002 Section 28(4)

³² The TDA's role on ES will cease at the end of November 2010, ContinYou and 4Children will provide support until March 2011

³³ DfE (2010) Extended Services Evaluation: End of Year One Report DFE-RR016

³⁴ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000941/OSR16-2010.pdf>

3.6 Funding

A government investment of around £1 billion was made for the financial years 2008 -2011 to support the roll-out of extended services. However, the Coalition Government announced in June 2010 that the Department for Education's contribution to local authorities' Area Based Grant for 2010-11, which included an element for extended services, was being reduced by 24%. Extended services capital funding for the 2010-11 financial year was reduced by £25m.

Most of the funding for schools is allocated through the Dedicated Schools Grant. This is a ring-fenced grant paid to local authorities. Local authorities then allocate this to schools using a local funding formula. A number of rural local authorities include a rural weighting in their local funding formula.

Schools may also access funding for extended services from other sources, including charities, the National Lottery and private sponsors and can fund services by sharing costs with other schools and through partnerships with other agencies. Fees may be charged for childcare, community access to school facilities and out-of-hours activities like sport, music and drama.

Funding for the period 2008-2011 has included £215 million to enable schools to do more to support disadvantaged children and young people and to allow them to access a full range of activities in extended schools. This included funding for an initial pathfinder, trialled in 18 local authorities. The guidance for the pathfinder explicitly mentioned use of this funding to subsidise transport to and from activities in rural areas. The full roll-out of the Extended Schools Disadvantage funding has been in 2010-2011, with the £167 million allocated for this period being distributed to all local authorities, to enable them to decide which of their schools would receive this funding.

Looking to the future, the coalition government has set out its intention to introduce a pupil premium to provide additional funding, from outside school budgets, for disadvantaged children. Funding for the premium, which is timed to come in September 2011, will benefit disadvantaged pupils from Reception to Year 11. Schools will be able to decide how to use the premium to support the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and may use it for additional or extended activities such as homework clubs or support for parental engagement in learning.

To recognise differences already in the system for funding deprivation, it is intended that the size of the premium will vary between areas, making more money available for lower funded authorities and, over time, ensuring that the same overall level of funding will be available for deprived children, irrespective of where they live, subject to an Area Cost Adjustment.

The Government has consulted on its proposals for the premium. However, the consultation, which is now closed, made no reference

to specifically rural factors and the indicators of deprivation which were under consideration were free school meals, receipt of tax credits or commercial packages like *Mosaic* and *Acorn*, which are based on postcode classifications. A formula based on take-up of free school meals or tax credits might disadvantage rural areas, because of the lower take-up of benefits in the countryside.

The Comprehensive Spending Review has provided a small 0.1% increase in the funding which goes directly to schools, which includes the pupil premium, but other parts the education budget will be cut.

3.7 The model of change

The current extended services model has some similarities with the community schooling tradition, which dates back to the 1930's and before that, to the late nineteenth century, when the idea of *Schools for the People* – combining infant, primary and secondary education with adult learning, entertainment and recreation – was first mooted.

However, whereas the village colleges of the 1930's sought to synthesise education and community, creating a new community institution, in which all the elements of village life - libraries, interest groups, clubs, adult classes and schooling - would combine as *the training ground for the art of living... the place in which life is lived, the environment of a genuine corporate life*,³⁵ the extended schools model is less ambitious.

Today, schools offering access to extended services are taking an approach which includes the broader welfare of children and young people and any specific problems and issues which might affect school achievement. Support for parenting is part of the overall approach which is, nonetheless, primarily interventionist, designed to clear pathways to raising young people's achievement.

In these aims, the model is well buttressed by theory and evidence, for example of the effectiveness of integrated services and multi-agency working in securing better outcomes for children and families and of the part played by "good at-home parenting" which, in the primary age range is so significant it overshadows other differences associated with the quality of schools themselves.^{36 37}

Schools providing access to extended services are also charged with opening up their facilities for community use but, in this respect, the model falls short of the democratising aims of the community schooling pioneers. The plans for the 1930's village colleges envisaged the involvement of local community groups in the running

³⁵ Extract from Henry Morris (1925) *The Village College. Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educations and Social Facilities for the Countryside, with Special Reference to Cambridgeshire* (Section XIV).

³⁶ Moran P., Ghate, G. & Van der Merwe, A. (2004). What Works in Parenting Support? A Review of the International Evidence. DCSF Research Report No 574

³⁷ Desforge, C. and Abouchaar, A. (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement Parental Support and Family education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review*. Research Report No 433 DfES

of the college - much like modern concept of co-production - engaging local people in service delivery and decision making. While many schools offering access to extended services have instituted school councils and other participative structures; provide a range of learning opportunities for community members; and have a duty to consult with their communities, they remain separate institutions, for the most part professionally-led. In this sense, the extended services model is one of “reaching out” to communities as opposed to integration with the community.

3.8 Impact of extended schools

The early Extended Schools Pathfinder involved 200 schools, three-quarters of which were primary schools. Almost all projects involved schools in disadvantaged areas and an emphasis, within the Pathfinder as a whole, was on supporting community regeneration.

The evaluation found considerable variation in the extended school offer. Some schools appeared to see activities involving parents and families as part of their efforts to provide additional support for children’s learning, whereas in others there was a real attempt to bring about a transformation in attitudes and culture. The evaluators concluded that there was no consensus as to what an extended school actually meant in practice.

This lack of clarity tends to generate a range of activities that have different aims and rationales. These can be characterised in terms of two dimensions: whether their focus is on students or the community; and whether they aim to enrich a functional situation or intervene in identified problems. This in turn has implications for how community ‘needs’ are identified, with communities perceived to be disadvantaged being more likely to have their needs defined in terms of deficits by professionals.³⁸

Nevertheless, the study suggested that there were good reasons for believing that extended schools had important positive effects and that although the point of delivery for activities was the school, local authorities had a key role in providing leadership and planning local strategies which place this work in a synergistic partnership with other agencies.

The final evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative, published in 2007, found that pupil progress in full service extended schools was around double the rate of the national average between 2005 and 2006. At Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-Cs at GCSE increased by just over 5%, compared to 2.5% increase nationally over the same period.

The impacts were clearest in the case of pupils facing difficulties. Full Service Extended Schools were also having a range of other positive impacts on outcomes for pupils, including “engagement with learning,

³⁸ Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative, Second Year: Thematic Papers

family stability and enhanced life chances”. There was evidence too of positive outcomes for families and local people particularly where they were facing difficulties.

In a review of children’s centres and extended schools, Ofsted found that extended services were helping to enhance self-confidence, improve relationships, raise attainment and create better attitudes to learning. The majority of parents who participated in training or used the support services were highly satisfied with what was provided. However, there were still groups of parents who were considered hard-to-reach.³⁹

A follow-up report, by Ofsted, published in 2008, found that children, young people and families were well served by the children’s centres and schools they attended, with the lives of some vulnerable families reported to have been transformed. Breakfast clubs were having a positive impact on attendance, punctuality, pupils’ attitude to school and readiness to learn. However, settings were judged to be not doing enough to reach out to particularly disadvantaged families.⁴⁰

Case study schools had become more aware of the need to evaluate the impact of their services but very few had begun to measure these systematically and most lacked systems to gather useful information about impact. A minority of schools visited had data which showed that extended service provision had contributed to measurable gains in the attainment of individuals and groups and Ofsted found that the schools with the most effective extended services, had integrated the development of those services within their school improvement plans.

Echoing Ofsted’s 2008 findings, an evaluation by *Ipsos Mori* of the delivery of the extended school core offer found that a lack of interest in parental support services or engagement from parents was the main challenge faced by many schools. Some schools spoke of *preaching to the converted*, acknowledging that the parents who are willing to engage and who access parental support services are often those who need the help the least.⁴¹

The extended services initiative is currently being evaluated and the Department of Education (DfE) released an interim end of year one report in July 2010, based on the findings of the evaluators from surveys of schools, parents and pupils, and additional qualitative case studies.⁴²

School leaders generally held very positive views on the impact of extended services, which had helped them to engage with pupils and families, but a third indicated that they still struggled to engage disadvantaged pupils and families in extended activities.

In two thirds of schools, extended services “had had at least some influence in raising attainment”. Despite the evidence of positive

³⁹ Ofsted (2006). Extended services in schools and children’s centres, Report 2609

⁴⁰ Ofsted (2008). How well are they doing: the impact of children’s centres and extended schools

⁴¹ Ipsos Mori (2008). Testing the Delivery of the Core Offer in and around Extended Schools - Final Report

⁴² DfE (2010) Extended Services Evaluation: End of Year One Report DFE-RR016

impact more than six in ten schools agreed that offering extended services “places a significant burden on schools”. Two thirds of schools offered extended services as part of a cluster. Two thirds of schools said that the most common barrier to developing and delivering services related to funding, with more than half indicating that they were not in agreement that they had sufficient resources.

The evaluation team is also conducting a series of thematic reviews, focusing on specific initiatives, one of which considers how schools offering extended services are responding to disadvantage. The review finds that those leading extended services are aware of disadvantage within their communities, but define it differently according to their own views and local circumstances, and rely heavily on personal knowledge and contacts. A recommendation is that schools might wish to develop more structured and systematic approaches to identifying service users’ needs and perspectives and to identifying and targeting those most in need.⁴³

3.9 The challenge of delivery in rural areas

Extended service delivery in rural areas presents dilemmas similar to those faced by other rural services, including higher costs and the barriers created by distance.

A study for CRC by *4Children*, in 2005, found that in two thirds of the rural authorities surveyed, there was a wide range of services being offered through extended schools and good examples of multi-agency cooperation. However, most of the authorities lacked rural policy staff and most relied on established systems to support rural needs, with no special measures put in place. Fewer childcare services were offered in rural extended schools and inaccessibility was acknowledged to impact severely on the introduction and development of extended services.⁴⁴

In 2006, CRC reported that opportunities to access extended school services were much more limited in rural than in urban areas, with schools offering provision on fewer days each week or at more limited times.⁴⁵ Updating this in 2010, CRC noted that the percentage of rural schools which could provide the full core offer was less than for urban schools.⁴⁶

In 2006, the TDA established a Rural Pathfinder Project. Shropshire, Cheshire, Dorset and Norfolk local authorities were recruited to work through a change programme to identify a specifically rural model of extended services delivery.

Ideas and practice sharing, available on the TDA website have provided a wealth of evidence for e.g. overcoming transport and

⁴³ DfE (2010) Cummings C., Dyson, A., Jones L., Laing, K. Scott, K & Todd L. (2010) Extended Services Evaluation Reaching Disadvantaged Groups and Individuals Thematic Review DCSF-RR196

⁴⁴ *4Children* (2005) Developing Extended School Services in Rural Areas

⁴⁵ CRC (2006) *Ibid*

⁴⁶ CRC (2010) *Ibid*

access to services issues, making effective use of the community and voluntary sector and making the most of school clusters.

However, the current extended services evaluation confirms that there are continuing challenges for rural schools in meeting the terms of the full core offer and in the number and range of activities which can be offered.

Slightly more than half of rural schools are offering the full core offer compared with 71% of urban schools. Rural schools are less likely than urban ones to offer childcare, activities in the evening, parenting support and community access to school facilities. Urban schools are, on average, offering more activities than rural schools, 15 per week, compared with nine per week in rural schools. Proportionately fewer rural schools provide adult learning opportunities or signposted these.⁴⁷

3.10 Village schools

Whereas the extended services model has been at the forefront of school remodelling, village schools represent continuity with the past.

The trend, in both rural and urban areas in England has moved, inexorably, towards larger schools. In the ten years from 1995, the number of secondary schools with fewer than 1,000 pupils dropped by nearly 600, to 1,562, while the number taking in more than 1,500 rose by 124%. During the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, as rural communities became increasingly populated by retired people, commuters and second home owners, many small rural primary schools were closed.

In recognition of the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities the then Labour Government introduced a presumption against the closure of rural schools in February 1998 and in 2005 affirmed the importance of extended services in rural areas, described as providing a *unique opportunity to offer a one-stop shop for children and families*.⁴⁸

However, in 2008, the Telegraph claimed that more than a dozen counties were carrying out large-scale closures with others believed to be considering moves to close small schools.⁴⁹

In 2009, it was claimed that rural primary schools were closing at a rate of one a month. The information was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the National Housing Federation which, with the National Association for Small Schools and the ATL, predicted that up to 200 more rural primaries could close by 2014.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ DfE (2010) Extended Services Evaluation: End of year One Report Ibid

⁴⁸ DfES 2005 Extended schools: Access to opportunities and services for all; A prospectus

⁴⁹ Telegraph Labour criticised over village school closures 28th January 2008

⁵⁰ <http://www.housing.org.uk/default.aspx?tabid=232&mid=1150&ctl=Details&ArticleID=2388>

However, figures provided in response to a parliamentary question indicate that 73 rural primary schools closed between 2000 and 2008, on average less than nine each year.⁵¹

In 2010 Cornwall announced a review of small schools. Matthew Taylor, former MP for Truro and St Austell, has described the closing of a small rural school as *devastating* for children and for the community, asserting that delivering education in small village schools is fundamental to the sustainability of many smaller communities.⁵²

In 2008, 30% of maintained primary schools and 17% of secondary schools were in rural areas.⁵³ More than 2,500 primary schools in England have 100 or fewer children on the school roll and - among them - 600 have 50 pupils or fewer.⁵⁴ Since 2000, the policy of the previous government was to encourage small schools to work together or to consider federations, *to form a single strong governing body or even to appoint a single executive head teacher to run several schools. This will be important to make sure that good local schools can stay both local and viable even if they become much smaller as primary rolls fall.*⁵⁵

3.11 Evidence on village schools

Common objections to small schools relate to the relatively higher costs per pupil, the limited facilities offered by some traditional school buildings and the capacity of small schools to offer an adequately broad curriculum.

However, in 2000, Ofsted concluded that small schools were equally capable of providing an effective education and many were among the most effective in the country – with the proviso that the curriculum for under-fives was less well developed. The quality of teaching in small schools was the same as in larger schools, but there were proportionately more good teachers in small schools.⁵⁶

A review of 25 years of research studies on small schools concluded that small schools are as successful in meeting and often exceeding the government's assessment and inspection standards. The need for further research is noted, including systematic research on the classroom processes and community factors underlying the apparent superiority of small schools and how such factors might be used to break the link between poverty and attainment in rural areas. In conclusion, it offered the suggestion that small rural primary schools,

⁵¹<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090226/text/90226w0044.htm#09022676000810>

⁵² Hansard Feb 2 2010

⁵³ CRC (2008) State of the Countryside Ibid

⁵⁴ <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/tsp/primarytoolkit/action/small/>

⁵⁵ DfES 2004 Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

⁵⁶ Ofsted (2000) Small Schools: How Well Are They Doing? A report by OFSTED based on the data from inspections and national test results

their communities and clusters might offer a model to larger urban schools.⁵⁷

A review of research on small schools in the UK and US found that small schools have a particular role in providing 'voice' for particular kinds of pupils and concluded that *few other progressive forms of public spending are both good for those without a voice and popular amongst those with a loud voice.*⁵⁸

In the United States, support for small schools, has grown considerably in the past decade, particularly in the context of urban schooling. Proponents believe that the creation of small schools leads to increased student attendance, improved student attitudes and behaviour and raised achievement.⁵⁹

3.12 Conclusion

The extended services model appears to offer an evidence-based means of tackling under-achievement in schools and specifically, the link between poverty and low educational attainment. Evaluations suggest that the provision of extended services is associated with gains in attainment and greater participation in learning for pupils and positive outcomes for families. There are, however, residual questions relating to how far schools are engaging sufficiently with families most in need.

In rural areas access, cost and transport create particular challenges for the delivery of a range of services in small isolated communities.

Small village schools are in close contact with families and have a track record of providing good outcomes for children. Based in isolated communities, small schools may hold the key to engaging the most disadvantaged families but, remote from neighbouring schools and services, are also part of the challenge of delivery.

⁵⁷ Hargreaves, L.M (2009) Respect and Responsibility: Review of research on small rural schools in England. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 48 (2009) 117- 128

⁵⁸ Flecknoe M (2003) Why do parents choose small schools? A review of the literature *Improving Schools* 6(3) 54-60, cited in Hargreaves L.M (2009)

⁵⁹ Kafka J, (2008) TCR Thinking Big About Getting Small: An Ideological Genealogy of Small-School Reform

4. Case studies



Driffield School Cluster

East Riding of Yorkshire is the largest unitary council area in the country. Predominantly rural, it has a population of approximately 325,000 people, over half of whom live in dispersed rural communities. The largest town is Bridlington with 35,000 people.

Generally an affluent area, there are pockets of deprivation in places such as Bridlington, Goole and South-East Holderness. There is very little ethnic diversity and the East Riding population is becoming older as people retire into the area. Other population trends include a falling birth rate, now in recovery, the arrival of economic migrants from within the EU and outward migration by young people.

East Riding has a Rural Partnership and strategy dedicated to sustainable communities and providing access to good quality services for rural residents. Indicators for children are generally good. Achievement at ages 11 and 16 is above the national average and a high proportion of young people continue in education beyond the age of 16. As a result of the falling birth rate there are currently surplus places in secondary schools.

The Council has appointed 18 extended services coordinators, funded by the local authority but based in and line-managed by schools. In the summer of 2010, 91% of schools were described as providing access to the full range of extended services. The subsidy for disadvantaged children and young people to participate in a wide range of out-of-school activities will be rolled out across the local authority from the summer of 2010.

Gembling Primary School

Gembling is a small hamlet lying between the coastal town of Bridlington and the market town of Driffield. Set in a labyrinth of narrow country lanes, it is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with low unemployment and very low crime rates. However, Gembling and the surrounding parish of Foston on the Wolds has a population of just 263 people and is one of a number of areas in East Riding which are among the most deprived in the country for isolation, poor transport links and distances to services.

Gembling Primary School sits on the side of the road about a mile out of the village. Visibly welcoming, the school has just 38 pupils, 2 full-time and 1 part-time teacher, 3 classes and two guinea pigs, Cocoa and Cookie. A few children cycle to school and there are footpaths from nearby Foston, but most children come by car.

The school in Gembling was established in 1890. One of the governors is 70 years old and he remembers when the school reached its lowest number of 20.

Pupils do well, parents value the school and such is its reputation that some children travel from outside of the surrounding villages, from as far away as Bridlington. In its inspection of the school in 2009, Ofsted found the leadership of the head teacher, the care and welfare of the children, the achievement of children with learning disabilities and partnership with parents to be among a number of features described as outstanding.

Pupils say that they feel very safe and, because relationships between everyone are excellent, pupils are confident that there is always someone, adult or peer, on hand to help.

The importance of safety and trust is a theme which was echoed by the parents who took part in the study. One parent, brought up in a city, worried that children's trust, both in the school and the wider community, could become a risk factor as children move on to secondary school and larger social networks.

Children only see the good side, they don't see the bad side of life and perhaps the children here need to become a bit more "streetwise", they need to spread their wings.

For parents, the school was regarded as the "lifeblood of the community", at one with their close-knit way of life and insulated from the problems, as they were seen, of large towns and cities.

People are friendly, parents know the teachers names and it's an equal relationship. Parents often know the teacher for years as their children go through the school. The head teacher is approachable, like a friend, it's easy to talk to her; you feel you can say anything to her.

Gembling Primary School has recently entered a federation with a neighbouring village school, North Frodingham Primary School, with both schools now under the leadership of the head teacher, Jane Moat. They have separate governing bodies which meet together. At North Frodingham there are 62 children.

Being part of a federated arrangement has meant change for staff but now, in an emergency, staff can cover either school. Relationships are building between the schools and among children. Transition to a large secondary school is not regarded as problematic.

The head teacher Martin Green visited and met all of the children transferring up. So it's no harder for our children than any other child.

Jane believes in the value of village schools. As she puts it,

The school is the thread between and through families and the community. The thread of belonging; the school is the heart of the community.

However, she is realistic about the challenges of sustaining small schools and - in this context - membership of the extended services cluster is helpful.

Extended Schools help to protect smaller schools - through networking and lobbying - we have a bigger voice as a cluster, the little schools are heard within the cluster - there is complete equality. The secondary school connects with and gets to know the small schools.

Driffield School Cluster

This is a large cluster including 13 rural primaries, one junior school, a special school and the lead school, Driffield School, which is a Specialist Computing and Mathematics secondary school.

Driffield is a small market town of 22,000 serving the rural hinterland of the Yorkshire Wolds. It acts as a centre for employment, shopping, leisure, health and cultural activities. Qualifications and skills among the general population of Driffield are low compared to other areas. This, in turn, is reflected in the nature of employment, which is lower paid and lower skilled compared to the rest of East Riding. A further challenge is that there is virtually nothing for young people to do with their leisure time, whether in the form of clubs or cultural activities.

Driffield School began in the 1970's as a comprehensive school for 600 pupils. As a Specialist School, it now has 2000 students, making it a larger than average secondary school. The main part of the school is in the architectural style of that period, but the campus has grown to include a Technology Block, ICT block and Performing Arts Complex. The school also recently took possession of an old sports centre when a new leisure centre was built adjacent to the school site.

The school has 125 teaching staff and 120 support staff. Extended services on site include 1:1 tuition, family learning and other adult courses, an annual programme of transition activities, homework clubs, parenting support, including a full time Parent Support Adviser and parenting workshops, youth service provision, a sexual health drop-in for students, a counselling service, a full programme of after-school activities and a wide range of holiday activities. There is an open library and students can use the IT suite for homework. Standards are high, absences low and students do well. Good pastoral care and anti-bullying measures help students to feel safe.

The school works with a large number of partners, including Education Welfare Service, Connexions, Social Services, East Riding Youth Service, the Primary Care Trust, Community Police, the Special Educational Needs Support Service and Travellers' Service. The performing arts block is used to help promote community cohesion, engage with the local community and reduce the need for people to travel outside the area by hosting professional theatre, music and dance productions. Driffield School students and children from cluster primaries are able to benefit from arts workshops provided by professional performers and some students are also given the opportunity to perform with the professional companies during the evening productions.

Entitlement for all

The strap line which appears under the school name is *Making Learning Irresistible*, but it could equally be *Entitlement for All* which, according to the head teacher, Martin Green, is the embodiment of all

that the school does, including its vision for a true partnership with the community.

This vision of equal entitlement is reflected in the support offered to vulnerable students who are identified on entry and offered tailored support to achieve good outcomes. Support might include 1:1 tuition, workshops for parents - *How to be a parent of an 11 year old* or *Behaviour Management* - or referral to other services. A story book initiative has been introduced to record individual student "journeys".

A measure of the success of the school and its approach is that there is now no attainment gap between children on free school meals and more advantaged young people.

Twilight Bus Service

Inclusion and entitlement are also at the heart of a Twilight Bus Service which, on four evenings a week, in term time, provides free transport for students to most of the rural villages within the catchment area. A combination of existing commercial buses and minibus and taxi services make up the seven different routes.

The service enables students to take part in after-school activities and get home safely. It also addresses the inequalities of public transport which might otherwise prevent pupils from outlying villages from participating in the full range of activities at school. Help for the development of the service was initially provided by the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council, which also provided a small amount of financial assistance and regards this as one of their most successful partnerships. Many local parish councils support the service by making financial contributions.

The service has enabled students in years 10-13 to attend revision and coursework sessions in the run up to their exams and enabled all year groups to access after-school sports and performing arts activities, homework support and IT facilities. As a result of the bus service the proportion of rural students taking part in these activities has risen to 65%.

The student view

Among the students interviewed, all but one lived outside of Driffield. A few travelled by bike to school and one girl walked; many relied on parents or family members for lifts. The furthest distance travelled was 12 miles and the longest journey time was 45 minutes. Students also mentioned that some of the normal school buses were not very nice.

If your parents don't drive and you have to get a taxi, it costs £15.

Transport generally was discussed at length and students had lots of ideas for improving transport and getting around.

Buses at weekends that young people can use their bus pass on

Small Schools, Big Communities: Village Schools and Extended Services

*Cheaper and more frequent bus services
More party buses
TV on the school bus!*

Asked about the advantages of living in the area, freedom was mentioned by many, but the disadvantages were due to the lack of activities for young people.

You can ride a motorbike or a tractor.

There's nothing to do.

All had been happy about transferring to a bigger school as it gave them opportunities to meet new people and make more friends, although one girl said that she found it hard finding the classrooms for different lessons when she first arrived.

You get to meet different people and it helps to socialise.

Most of the students had aspirations to move out of the area – some wanted to move abroad to South Africa, Australia or Las Vegas because they had families in these places. Others wanted to move to York, London or Hull.

Some pupils had made use of the extended services including homework clubs and had also used the twilight bus service.

The young people present had not been involved in any consultation about extended school services but had lots of ideas about activities they would like. Some, like cooking, dressmaking or DIY, related to practical skills but others were focused on use for leisure.

A youth club which picks people up from local villages and takes them to a local club in the local village hall or primary school.

Being able to use the field at lunchtime and out of school hours for informal sports.

A music festival for young people.

Child "nightclubs" without alcohol – a place to hang out on Friday and Saturday night, with club music.

Courses after-school – for work experience – at school with local interesting employers.

A few of the older students stayed after the younger pupils left and discussed more private issues. Some said that for help with drug and alcohol or sexual health issues, they wouldn't seek help during school hours, because if someone is absent during a particular service session, other pupils automatically assume that's what you are doing.

There was a strong feeling that everyone knows your business at school and in small villages. Students thought it would be helpful to

have some services available as a drop-in session in the town, away from the school. They generally found it embarrassing to ask a teacher.

Support for village schools

Within the 15 mile radius which is the school catchment area, half of the students live in outlying villages and hamlets; some have previously attended very small schools. As a response to the challenge of transition, Driffield school has developed a highly imaginative Maths and IT Event for schools within the cluster, based on super heroes called “Super- Eds” who are teachers linked to school’s specialisms. The concept was developed by a graphic design company working with the Extended Services Manager, Elaine Collinson and includes characters such as *Anne Cester* (History) and *Jim Nastics* (PE).

Parents’ packs were sent home including information about the event, adult education opportunities in the Driffield area and a leaflet about Driffield School’s specialism.

89% of pupils said in evaluations that they felt more confident about coming to Driffield School as a result of attending the Maths and IT Events and looked forward to transition. The head teacher is also involved in transition, visiting feeder schools to get to know pupils.

Further support for transition is provided through events, courses and workshops for children and parents from feeder primaries. Activities offered have included science workshops, pistol shooting sessions, Christmas arts and crafts workshops and courses in first aid and digital film-making. A wide range of partners includes Hull University, St John’s Ambulance, Family Learning and media organisations.

Support for cluster schools also includes IT training for school staff and support for all schools to offer family learning and access to childcare. Some Spanish and French teaching is provided in feeder primaries.

The Extended Services Manager has been in post since 2005, from the start of extended service development in Driffield, funded from the Local Authority’s extended services in schools budget. She is a school governor and also volunteers on the school’s PTA. She lives in the area and as a parent of five children who have attended Driffield School can see issues from more than one perspective. Elaine sees extended services as enhancing the core business of schools.

Her expressed goal is to make the extended services model work in a very rural area. To this end, a large part of her day-to-day work is supporting all the schools in the cluster to take up the extended services offer. It is not always possible, due to financial restrictions and low levels of staffing, to offer the full range of extended services in every school. However, one success has been the offer of family learning, now delivered in every school throughout the cluster area.

There is a cluster-wide consultation with families on a regular basis and at the last consultation 4000 questionnaires went out which provided the baseline for the development of the services.

Future plans include an internet banking and shopping course pilot in the village of North Frodingham to develop the IT skills of parents and elderly people and to encourage use of IT. Laptop availability for use within Driffield School is being extended to parents who can use these on a drop-in basis. A new project for September 2010 is a partnership between the youth service, local police and extended services to utilise a town centre café on one night per week as a youth drop-in. There are also plans to extend the holiday activities programme to cover the whole of the holiday period.

Parenting support

Driffield School works closely with the children's centre and jointly delivers a programme of learning for parents, with back-up from other services. Making this work in a rural area is harder, because of transport issues for parents and as a result courses need to be relatively short to retain parents.

Helen Fewtrell, the Parent Support Adviser (PSA) currently has 25 families in her caseload. Some parents are referred by feeder schools. There are parents that Helen is in contact with regularly and others with whom she will have occasional contact. The cases relate mainly to issues of behaviour at home. Some families have quite complex problems, including drug and alcohol dependency, domestic violence, depression and mental health issues.

There is a close family support link with the children's centre but Helen is also involved with signposting families to the Adult Education programme. Many of the parents Helen works with have poor basic skills and lack qualifications.

Helen described these families as "hard to reach". Some are worried that social services might get involved and are afraid to ask for help. Helen goes out to the families; she meets them where they feel comfortable, in the home, the local school, a coffee shop and also at Driffield School.

Empowering the community

Within the area served by the school, much of the available employment is in agriculture or the service sector and is low paid. The Local Strategic Plan identifies critical skill shortages within East Riding and is pledged to reduce deprivation by tackling low skills and worklessness.

Martin Green believes that, although the parents tend to have few qualifications, they have high expectations for their children and generally work in support of the school and the extended services.

The school aspires to be a centre for excellence for adult and community learning, to help address skills shortages within local businesses, community groups and the adult population. The school works closely with local training providers, including the East Riding Adult Education Service and offers a full range of accredited courses including Literacy, ICT, Maths and Business Studies. In 2009, 300 adults enrolled on courses.

The offer of family learning throughout the cluster has the potential to attract parents who lack qualifications to subsequently enrol on longer courses at Driffield. For Jane Allanson, who organises the Family learning programme, the priority is to engage parents with literacy and numeracy difficulties. She regards her relationship with the Extended Services Manager as a critical success factor in reaching families. Cluster schools often recognise such families and will target them individually. However, she feels there are many others who don't come forward.

A key barrier for parents who want help with their own skills is lack of childcare alongside courses, together with lack of transport or help with transport.

Sustaining village life?

All of the multi-agency professionals interviewed were knowledgeable about the nature of rural life, the challenges of service delivery and the difficulties posed by poor transport links. All were clear about the benefits of linking with extended services. The Extended Services Manager is widely respected for her knowledge of the community and her skill in making initiatives work. Small schools were also singled out for their knowledge of individual families and capacity to engage those who might otherwise be thought of as hard to reach.

Nevertheless, there was agreement that resources were thinly spread, with lack of funding for transport, mobile units or childcare as particular challenges. All of the professionals saw the value of small local schools, but some felt that the value had to be balanced against their relatively high costs.

In Gembling, parents felt strongly that the school was an essential part of the community, the more so because of the lack of other facilities. Although the population is fairly stable, farms have shut down in recent years and - while new houses are being built - there are no starter homes to bring young families into the villages. Transport was described as very poor.

You can't rely on it and it's expensive, £4 from Frodingham to Driffield, which is only 6 miles, £6 from Frodingham to Bridlington.

The nearest supermarkets are in Driffield and Bridlington. People without transport have to rely on other people in the village. The area is described as fantastic, but Gembling is extremely rurally isolated.

If you live in Bridlington or Driffield you can walk to public transport, but along these village lanes, it's dangerous to walk, especially with a pram.

You can get to Bridlington on the bus on Tuesday – but you can't come back until Thursday!

Families have to travel to see a doctor, as there is no health service in the area, no cash machine or shop, no children's centre services, except what can be offered at the school. Since Foston pub closed, the villagers have set up a monthly pub night in the village hall. The Methodist chapel runs a youth group and there's a weekly youth club in North Frodingham.

Childcare is an issue – there are not enough childminders in the area and the nearest daycare is in Driffield. There's a playgroup in Frodingham but it doesn't offer lunch-time cover.

Parents felt that not enough money was spent on rural areas and feel there is much more support for parents in towns. They would welcome help with their children's learning, with courses available locally, especially for people who don't drive.

They also felt that having a low-income, lack of transport and living in a village made parenting more difficult – they had different issues to parents living in urban areas and felt it would help if more services were affordable and accessible in villages.

Jane Moat has a vision of the school being used for education for all. She wants to draw people in, whether it's adult education, summer schools, family learning, a breakfast club, music or any activities which could be led by local people. With extended school services there could also be evening use of facilities. She would be happy too, for the school to be used for clinics or as a drop-off point for prescriptions.

Parents welcomed the idea of the school becoming a multi-use centre with activities in the evening. They also suggested a police base. They felt there was room for more activities including basic skills, computers and leisure learning. Qualifications would be needed by some.

It would be great if it was available in the villages, especially for parents who don't drive, there's no bus service in the evening and so you have to rely on lifts.

However, for all of the parents interviewed, welcome as these additions would be, the main value of the school was in its place at the heart of the community.

If we lost the school, it would be devastating, another part of village life gone, we wouldn't take our children to school, so nowhere to meet people, we'd lose contact. Kids lose out, because their friends aren't

nearby. The school is a social base for the whole community. The school is part of the village community.

The head teacher of Gembling echoed this.

It's about tomorrow – providing for tomorrow's world. What we give as a village school is different, we're rooted in a place, a location – but we reach out. We have evacuees who came here in the war and have returned to visit. For children the village school is a family-like place. Everyone knows everyone very well, personalised learning personified. Small schools are able to meet every child's needs.



Leek High School Cluster

Staffordshire has been described as a “collection of places and spaces”. Although predominantly rural, three quarters of its population live in urban centres and there is no single dominant town. With an estimated population of 823,000 people, Staffordshire has the 8th largest population of the shire counties in England.

Staffordshire doesn't score highly on deprivation indices and receives the fifth lowest funding of any local authority in England. However, there are significant pockets of deprivation and rural isolation in the county; one in three children lives in low income families and one in six in workless households.

There are 394 schools across the eight Staffordshire districts. Falling rolls means that there is a review of school places every four years and some very small schools continue to exist as part of the county council's current policy of keeping local schools open.

Staffordshire Moorlands is in the north east of the county bordered by Derbyshire, Cheshire and Stoke-on-Trent. More than a quarter of its population lives in 34 rural parishes. The population of Staffordshire Moorlands is predicted to grow with a significant decrease in the number of young people and an increase in older age groups. A third of the district lies inside the Peak Park.

The unemployment rate in the District is the lowest in Staffordshire, although pay rates are low. GCSE achievement is higher than the England average, and teenage pregnancy rates are lower. Many communities, however, have difficulty accessing services and utilities e.g. mains gas or water.

Community and Learning Partnerships

Leek Community and Learning Partnership (C&LP) is one of six partnerships developed in the Moorlands by Staffordshire County Council to deliver the core offer for children centres and extended services in schools. The C&LP combines, integrates and develops new and existing services provided by statutory, private and voluntary agencies for children and young people aged 0-19 and their families.

Limited resources and the geography of the county have influenced the development of partnership arrangements. Rather than allocating monies to individual schools, the approach has been to develop a campus model and a funding approach which enables rural activities to be subsidised through a central budget, which benefits from surplus income generated by a specially formed Community Interest Company.

'Collaboration rather than competition' has been the driving force and by adopting a 0-19 approach to delivering services, all the resources

of the county have been brought together to achieve the council's strategic objectives.⁶⁰ The programme has cross-party support within the council and it was endorsed by the Conservative administration, in March 2010, as a vehicle to support the strategic objectives of Staffordshire's Children and Young People's Plan.

Leek High Specialist Technology School

Leek High School has been established since 1900 and occupies a prominent site in the town, which has a population of about 19,000 people. Leek is a market town and administrative centre for the District. Once famous for textiles, it still hosts a large number of clothing manufacturers and allied trades. Britannia - the former Building Society - has its headquarters based in the town and is a major local employer. Alton Towers is situated in the district and employs a large number of people from Leek and the surrounding area. The nearest railway station is Stoke-on-Trent.

Leek is a smaller than average high school, which achieved specialist technology status in September 2004. Most of the students come either from the immediate local area, which has some social and economic deprivation, or from isolated rural areas. There are 430 students and 60 staff. John Spencer has been the head teacher for 12 months. The cluster has been in place for 5 years. There are no federated schools in the cluster.

The school and cluster serve an area of 300 square kilometres, including part of Peak National Park. The main disadvantages for families are access to services, the cost of transport and lack of facilities. There is considerable rural poverty. Some children have never been on a train or visited a McDonalds. Young people have difficulties in accessing services appropriate to their age. The school has an above average proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

It's the challenge of engagement – getting access to services when you are experiencing extreme poverty and very poor housing.

The 'outstanding' curriculum is tailored to the needs of individual students and the school works particularly well with those students who may be or become disaffected from learning.

Room 21 is an award winning, multi-agency room at Leek High School for young people and parents. It began as a result of working with the Full Service Extended Schools programme (which developed into the C&LP) and since the appointment of a learning mentor has evolved as the hub of a multi-agency approach to tackling the effects of rural poverty and social exclusion.

It supports young people and parents across a range of challenging issues and circumstances, providing counselling, mentoring and small group work, specialist appointments, health advice and a wide range

⁶⁰ Staffordshire County Council: Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2011

of other support. The aim of Room 21 is to raise educational attainment. It has succeeded in its purpose and in 2009 no student left school without a qualification.

Funding for the project is prioritised in the school budget and joint funding from the PCT and the C&LP has been made available as a result of comprehensive needs analyses. As a result, a wide range of agencies are either based at, or work out of, Room 21 together with parent support workers, learning and transition mentors, education welfare officers, the inclusion manager, the C&LP co-ordinator and other pastoral staff.

The aim is to provide a universal service - through self-referral and open access - to parents. Staff also undertake outreach visits to young people and families who can't easily get to Leek.

As next steps, John would like to see closer links with Social Services and access to additional counselling services for bereavement and for sexual abuse. The impact of Room 21 and other extended services are evaluated through regular monitoring of achievement levels, attendance and exclusions, through commissioning impact evaluations and Ofsted inspections.

John described 'best practice' as being clear about your vision and philosophy.

As members of the community and the organisations to which we belong, we possess tremendous power to make a young person's life miserable or joyous. Together we can make a difference to young people's futures.

He also emphasised the importance of stability of service provision – and believed that it was vital to '*show them that it's not going away*'. This commitment is vital in helping to '*build confidence, trust, and self-esteem*'.

Only services are hard to reach

Barbara Hine is the District Development Officer for Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle C&LP clusters. Her responsibilities include workforce reform, the Parent Support Worker roles and links with the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). She has deep and wide ranging experience in early years and children's services and she has been involved in the development and implementation of the C&LP programme for over 5 years.

She identified the natural environment as the main advantage for children and families; but access to services such as health as the main disadvantage. There are visible pockets of disadvantage in Leek, but hidden poverty in the farming communities, where the culture is to 'sort things out' for yourself. She cited a case study of a child at school who was repeatedly absent on Fridays until it was discovered that the child's mother regularly ran out of money at the end of each week and couldn't pay her bus fare.

Low-income families are frequently caught in the benefits trap – not quite qualifying for free school meals and other entitlements – and this has meant that the management groups for each cluster have had to carefully re-examine how to target the disadvantaged subsidy for access to extended services. The introduction of parent support workers has been important in getting rid of the stigma of accessing benefits and the BECTA scheme – providing laptops for disadvantaged families – has not only been very popular but has acted as an access route for promoting other benefits, including free school meals. The take up of free school meals initiative in one school as a result of the BECTA has increased from 40 to 70 children.

Barriers include the climate, which is severe in winter, lack of disposable income and transport. The Partnership has trialed a number of initiatives, including mini-buses and car-sharing, all with varying success. A local culture of self reliance presents a further barrier, together with low aspiration among parents who have traditionally found employment in local industries where qualification levels are not important.

The aim of the extended school programme is to raise attainment levels. There is a particular focus on transition because of the significant changes experienced by children from small village first schools into large middle or secondary schools. The Leek cluster delivers all the core services plus additional multi-sports programmes as part of holiday play schemes.

There is a full programme of activities which are open to any child in any school in the cluster – but which may be delivered anywhere, depending on need and sustainability issues. The campus is the hub, but a great deal of effort is made to ensure that rural children do have access to programmes and services near to them, using village schools and other community facilities.

They also have a strong model in place for needs analysis, planning consultation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and use the TDA impact measurement toolkit. They commission two impact measurement tools per term.

Community

A good example of the approach is the targeting of eleven private children's care homes in the Moorlands area where many of the children attending school are identified as needing more support over a wide range of issues. These children now receive the disadvantaged subsidy funding to enable them to access extended services. More resources would allow them to do more work of this kind.

The Community Interest Company (CiC) is also a highly successful initiative to ensure sustainability of services by generating income which can then be applied to keeping down the costs of rural

services, such as the multi-sports holiday programme. Such services could not, on their own, break even.

Craig Chorlton has responsibility for the CiC across Moorlands, aiming at sustainability of service provision. His background is in community development and he works to ensure that isolated communities are not excluded from services by applying the surpluses he makes from charges for extended services to support target delivery in rural areas.

Low income is an issue and the risk of isolation is ever-present ...and lack of confidence too, sometimes, because of the short term nature of previous provision. We are targeting families and children at risk of rural isolation. But there are still gaps in knowing who is in the area...and a lack of consistent information.

The most satisfying part of the job

Chris Williams, Headteacher of the Meadows Special School, described partnership working as the most satisfying part of the job and others would agree. He explained how partnership with Leek High School enables his students, who have complex needs, to participate in day-time activities, including outdoor pursuits. It also enables their parents to benefit from the support available from Room 21. The next development is a reciprocal opening up of Meadows facilities, in particular the ICT suite, to Leek students. The key to good partnership working, in his view, is *shared vision and attitude*.

The range of partners is very broad and includes Staffordshire Moorlands Sports Partnership; an independent child development programme called *Socatots*; and the Stoke City Community Football programme.

Connexions work out of Room 21 together with the education welfare officer. Childcare Co-ordinator, Suzanne Birch, from the Moorlands Rural Children's Centre, described the multi-agency working which was a feature of the virtual children's centre, as providing a *shared knowledge base, a continuity of partnerships and understanding of all the other agencies*.

Emma Brown represented one of the voluntary organisations benefiting from the secure funding base of the Partnership. She works for *Changes* – a voluntary mental health organisation.

the Community and Learning Partnership has given us longevity – this helps young people not to lose out ...ours is a peer based service, which encourages self-help, through Room 21 – it's brilliant.

Kevin Allbutt, the head teacher of Leek First School, was involved in the Full Service Extended Schools programme, and is an ex-chair of one of the Management Advisory Groups. He said

...it has transformed the way that parents view schools...there's much more on offer, and parents think there is a 'connectedness' of

professionals and services. You need a structure and model to make 'integrated working' a reality and to help target delivery and get help quickly ...instead of swimming around in murky fog'.

Warslow

Manifold Primary School is in the village of Warslow, a 20 minutes drive from Leek, in a hilly and beautiful part of rural Staffordshire close to the Derbyshire border.

The village had two schools, but declining numbers of children led to the closure of one, which is now a house. The village has a single pub, which dates back to around 1750. There is a village hall, but both the village Post Office and shop are now closed.

Manifold Primary School has been established for 50 years, originally as a secondary school for more than 400 children; then as a middle school. It has been a primary school for 21 years. There are 70 children on roll who travel an average of 7 miles each day. There are 3 full-time teachers and 1 teaching assistant. Margaret Cruyton, the head teacher, manages the extended services programme and also teaches in the school.

The school is the hub of the village. It has more than eleven acres of ground and buildings which offer scope and opportunities for other schools and other services. Manifold Primary School is a good example of how extended school clusters can strengthen and support the viability of village schools – the virtual rural children's centre is based there. There is a lunch club for older people, a breakfast club and pre-school - both with voluntary management committees - and adult learning, health support and after-school activities. The school is also used by the community for drama and many other activities.

Although only one child is receiving free school meals, Margaret believes that many others are on the borderline. This means that some children can't afford some of the after-school activities which are priced at £2.75 a session. The issue of low-income families not being able to afford activities is currently being looked at by the Management Advisory Group together with the use of the disadvantaged subsidy. At the moment, the morning breakfast club, which has eight children attending, is being sustained through a subsidy from the cluster core budget.

Margaret's view of the school is that *it is the servant to the community*. They are always open to ideas for new services and activities and with parents they are currently exploring proposals for a Post Office, GP Surgery and a prescription collection and drop-off service.

It's about looking at opportunities for being creative. It's about working with schools so that they understand the benefits of a cluster approach and budget. In this way, schools see extended services as integral, not enforced or a bolt-on.

The barriers for families accessing services for themselves and their children are *'low income, isolated farms and the impact of bad weather'*. If the village school closed, it would lead to further depopulation in the area; greater social isolation for families who were committed to living in rural areas; and a probable increase in weekend and holiday occupation leading to higher house prices and even greater housing affordability issues for locals.

An issue for her is transport – and *the inflexibility of catchment areas*. School transport is free *inside* the catchment area, but costs £360 a year if a child is outside it – this is a barrier for children and families wanting to come to her school.

Among the parents interviewed, three lived outside the village, the furthest at a distance of 6 miles. They echoed some of the disadvantages of rural living

What's in the village? A pub with a cash machine in it – that's it!

They agreed that the school was essential in making the area good for bringing up children – one parent had moved to the area from a town and thought that the school community was *wonderful – it brings everything together, from an education and a social slant – with Sure Start, the pre-school and then school...it builds friendships*.

They all play together in the playground – there are no problems of older children not playing with the little ones.

Small classes

They appreciated local access to the children's centre – *if it wasn't for the school, I wouldn't have known anything about it*. The school provides a drop-in for the school nurse once a month, but they are worried that there are new parents *out there* who don't know this.

A new drop-in service by the Parent Support Worker was welcomed and a *Just 4 Parents* after-school session is providing help, including help with managing debt. Parents felt that the main gap in services for children in the area was the lack of opportunities for 5 to 8 year olds during holiday times and the fact that such activities took place at another cluster school, a 20 minute drive away.

Parents were unanimous in their support of the school and considered that, if it were not there, social isolation and depression would increase and children's confidence and attainment would be damaged.

Longnor

Longnor is a hill-village in the Staffordshire part of the Peak District. It was once a thriving market town. Nowadays, two thirds of its residents commute to jobs outside. With a population of only 300 people, the village has a coffee shop, two stores, a fish and chip shop and three pubs, but no village hall.

St Bartholomew's Primary School is more than 100 years old. It has 30 children on roll, 2 full-time and 2 part-time teachers and a teaching assistant. Sue Evans is a teaching head teacher and she manages the Extended Services brief. She has been the head teacher for 14 years and involved with the Extended Services cluster programme since it started over 5 years ago.

The village residents are characterised as '*locals or incomers*'. There is a small housing association development in the village; more expensive stone houses and surrounding isolated farmsteads, holiday cottages and renovated barns. There is a lack of things for children and teenagers to do. The youth bus visits once a week on a Monday evening.

There is just one child in her school receiving free school meals, but Sue feels this does not accurately reflect the struggle which other families have on very low incomes. She cited the costs of maintaining cars which, because of the weather need to have four wheel drives. In some areas there are no buses at all.

The resulting isolation has, she believes, an impact on language development and some families are known to not place much emphasis on education. Access to health services, including GP services, is difficult for some families because of the lack and cost of public transport.

The school offers a wide range of extended services, including a GP prescription collection point, a wide range of after-school clubs and a breakfast club; access to specialist services; a family support service; Sure Start play sessions; and a playgroup. The school also hosts keep-fit, Brownies, drama activities and a cycle club, among a long list of activities and pastimes.

Charges for sessions are accessible at just £3 and are subsidised through core funding from the cluster. Families are consulted about the services and the local village action group is also involved. They would like to provide adult learning opportunities and are working with the local college to see if this is possible.

Sue sees the main benefits of village schools as providing community cohesion.

..keeping children in the community and providing a focal point for the village... without the school, all the young mums would have a very lonely life and all the Sure Start activities would have nowhere to go.

Membership of the school cluster provides support, sustainability and access to a wider pool of expertise.

She felt that village schools and extended services made a contribution to tackling rural poverty.

They are flexible and intimate enough to provide services that really do meet the needs of families – for example, running a breakfast club

to enable a family that doesn't have any local family network to get to work in the town on time; running after-school activities on days which allow a parent to finish studying at the local university.

The parents who were interviewed agreed. Small village schools gave children security and confidence. In other villages without schools, the streets were predominantly empty, with no real opportunities for families to meet.

A school in a village like this is the beating heart of the village – it gives the village a sense of being alive.

What students said

Churnet View Middle School is a feeder school for Leek High School, taking children aged 9 to 13 from a local estate and the rural uplands of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

What the children like about the area is space, peace and outdoor activities.

Activities – canoeing, footpaths, and you can run anywhere!

But, as in other rural areas, the disadvantages are mainly related to distance and transport. There were lots of complaints about having to stand in the rain and wait for buses that were late.

You can't get out to play with friends – when you want to play football, you have to kick it against a wall.

It's very slow Internet for some children.

Sometimes the buses are late...so you get to school late, and get into trouble.

One of the children said that going to a holiday club in the larger middle school, when she had been used to a small village school, was a different experience...*if you go to a little school, with 6 rooms in the school, then it's a very big change.*

The majority said that they wanted to live in the country when they grew up.

Travel to school could take between 25 and 45 minutes and the longest journey was 11 miles. One had to travel a mile before to get to the bus stop. For the children who lived in rural villages, transport was a very big issue and they spoke about the difficulties of fitting participation in holiday or after-school activities around the working patterns of their parents.

Everyone attended after-school activities and they were enthusiastic about the fact that they were consulted about what activities and clubs they would like. They were also very positive about the way in which the school responded to their views and requests. Asked to

rate the school in terms of extended services, the response was 8, 9 or 10 out of 10.

they're not perfect but 8 out of 10.

and if you ask.....they will try to do it.

Supporting villages, supporting achievement

Leek High School has been named one of the most improved secondary schools in the country and recently received an award from The Specialist Schools Trust. GCSE Results show a 21% improvement on the number of students passing five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above since 2006 and a 17% jump in the number gaining five Grade C and above passes including Maths and English. This puts Leek High in the top 1% of schools, nationally, for value-added at GCSE.

This is the result of the focused approach which the school takes to individualised learning and the outstanding care and support provided for each young person. The school has engaged both professionals and parents as active players in the drive for better outcomes; at the same time acting as a catalyst for community participation and cohesion.

Within the Leek vision and delivery plan, villages are not incidental, but central to achieving aims.

Village schools are about *communication, pride and quality of experience for children.*

They are the heart of the community – they are the only venue in some places where there can be any sense of identity generated. They are central to the delivery of services.



Rye College Cluster

With a population of just over half a million, East Sussex is predominantly rural but nearly three quarters of the population live in urban areas.

The coastal strip has suffered from the decline in UK tourism, poor housing stock and it has a low-wage economy focused on tourism, public services and the care industry. Rural areas and market towns have also suffered a decline in traditional industries and some are struggling to maintain basic services and facilities, such as local shops and public transport.⁶¹

Nearly one in five children in East Sussex live in low-income households and the number of children living in low-income households rose between 2004 and 2007.

East Sussex has aligned services for children and young people into 22 Local Partnerships for Children (LPCs). The LPCs bring together children's centres and schools, colleges, social services, health, the Police, voluntary organisations, childcare providers and a range of other services. Partnerships analyse the needs of children and young people in their areas, and within the aims and objectives of the Children and Young People's Plan, have freedom to respond distinctively, to local needs.

Extended services

In June 2009, 83% of schools were making the extended services core offer. This included 100% of secondary schools. An Extended Services Team offers schools support and guidance and work closely with the Local Partnerships for Children.

In 2008, the proportion of pupils (46.1%) who achieved 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics was above the national rate of improvement and narrowing the gap between the authority and the national figure. At all key stages there have been improvements in outcomes for vulnerable groups of children.

Exclusions are decreasing and more children are taking part in positive activities. All schools participate in the Healthy Schools programme and 88% have already achieved the new National Healthy School Status. East Sussex has recently been selected as one of four projects within the South East to receive funding to deliver a *Go for it Personal Effectiveness Programme* for young people across Rother who are at risk of becoming NEET, with a particular emphasis on Year 11 transition.

Rye

⁶¹ Pride of Place, Working Towards a Better Future for Local People and Local Communities A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008-2026

The small town of Rye is a tourist destination, and much of its economy is based on this. There is also a small fishing fleet.

There are 10 schools in the Rye cluster. Susan Churchill is the Local Partnership for Children Coordinator for the cluster, line-managed by the Vice Principal at Rye College and the chair of the LPC cluster. Partners in the Rye cluster include Rye Children's Centre, COPES – Action in Rural Sussex, family learning and health.

East Sussex has undertaken extensive consultation with parents in primary and secondary schools. More than 50% of parents of primary aged children in the Rye cluster wanted holiday schemes and after-school clubs, 40% wanted homework and revision clubs and 20% wanted breakfast clubs. Among parents of secondary age pupils, 30% of wanted homework, revision and after-school clubs, 25% wanted holiday schemes and less than 10% wanted breakfast clubs.

Each school has identified a Parent Information Contact (PIC) who could be a member of the administration team, a learning support assistant or a volunteer. Susan meets regularly with the PICs, who are trained to provide information to parents and also receive specific training.

The head teacher of St Thomas Church of England Primary School chairs the cluster.

The cluster stops small schools feeling so isolated, we have developed common policies so parents can't play schools off against each other. We share training and we've developed a children's cluster and a governors' cluster which meet annually. Small schools have less budget but we do try to help the most disadvantaged families.

Rye College

Rye College is an Arts and Enterprise Specialist College, for pupils aged 11 -16 years. It is smaller than most secondary schools with 702 pupils on roll and is the only maintained secondary school in the town of Rye. Previously called the Thomas Peacock Community College, it celebrated its centenary in September 2008 when it changed its name.

The college shares a site with a neighbouring primary school and sports centre, for which it shares management responsibility. The governor-run Pugwash Nursery has recently moved into an on-site new building. The Rye Children's Centre is also based on the same site.

Most students who attend the college are from the local area, the proportion of students identified with special educational needs or disabilities is higher than the national average and 10% of students are eligible for free school meals.

The college utilises a house system and emphasises the importance of a close supportive environment for young people. It holds a number of awards including the gold *Artsmark*.

In its inspection of the college in 2010, Ofsted found it was ably led by the principal, had placed itself firmly as a key player in the town and offered a wide range of creative and other experiences through which students, as well as members of the community, could learn and develop.

In 2009, 50% of students gained five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics, representing a trend of improvement over the last three years from 34% in 2007.

Pupils benefit from links with many performing arts groups and working with professional artists. The college also develops business partnerships in specific subject areas to give students a clear understanding of the relationship between the educational curriculum and the world of employment.

The college is a full service extended school and offers a range of after-school clubs including Arts, Astronomy, Badminton, Chess, Dance, Drama, English, Football, French, Geology, Mathematics, Photography, Rugby, Science and Textiles. The youth service also operates on site and has a kitchen equipped to teach cooking skills.

A school nurse runs a weekly drop-in, when students can access help to give up smoking, discuss any worries or get advice about bullying. The youth development service also provides one to one sessions. There is a peer mentoring scheme to support more vulnerable students or anyone with a problem or worry.

Through the LPC, there are good links to specialist services, including health.

The primary school nurse, Karen Sandland, works with 5 of the feeder primary schools. Karen is aware of deprivation in the area with families cut off from services, without cars.

Isolation is a big issue, families who are fleeing domestic violence who accept a place in a village and end up cut off from their family and any support networks. We see child poverty especially in council or social housing.

Karen identified a number of barriers for families in rural areas.

Transport, distance, time and costs are all barriers, but they may also be alienated locally, believe there is a charge for a service which is, in fact, free ... many of these families don't have access to the internet and so can't check if charges apply – they wouldn't want to turn up and find there's a charge they can't afford and so they just don't go. For others they are just not motivated to access service and some don't want to interact with others – we have a family living in a field in a caravan – by choice.

Health offer parenting support and parenting courses but attendance is variable.

The course runs for 12 weeks and it's targeted at parents who are at the end of their tether with their children's behaviour. Parents of children subject to a protection plan can be required to attend but often they don't engage and drop out.



Two village schools

The parish of Icklesham covers a population of 2,804 in the villages of Icklesham, Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour. Each village is a distinct and separate community.

Winchelsea has fewer than 600 people. Historically significant, more than half of the population is retired or semi-retired, a fifth are not full-time residents and only 10% are aged 16 and under. Winchelsea Beach is a small seaside village, with a church, doctor's surgery, pub, a hairdresser, shop, cash machine and a post office.

Both Icklesham Church of England Primary School and St Thomas Church of England Primary Schools are below average in size. The former was established in 1974, extended in 2002 and has 109 pupils, 6 teaching staff and 4 classes. The head teaches half a day a week. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The school has gained many awards, including the Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

The school stands proud of a small housing estate in the centre of the village. The majority of the children come from the village of Icklesham and walk to school. Between 8% and 15% of children are eligible at any time for free school meals.

The privately run Acorn Nursery is on site. Previously open only during school hours, it extended, in November 2009, and now offers flexible care from 8am to 6pm for children aged two and a half to 11 years during term-time. The nursery is full and the breakfast and after-school clubs currently have 10-14 children.

In its inspection in May 2010, Ofsted found Icklesham to be a good and improving school providing excellent care, guidance and support to pupils of all ages and abilities. There is a strong ethos of care and respect. The school's vision is ABC, '*Aspire, Believe and Care*'.

St Thomas Church of England Primary School was established in 1968, extended in 2005 and has 135 pupils, 6 teaching staff and 5 classes. The head is currently caretaking another school and doesn't have teaching responsibilities.

A few children attend from the village of Winchelsea, but the majority come from the villages of Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour. Currently 20 children are eligible for free school meals, but many don't take up their entitlement. There are no childcare providers in Winchelsea or Winchelsea Beach.

Both schools have a number of children with child protection plans, often in larger families and there are a number of fostered children.

The head teachers felt that children do better at small village schools where families receive more individual attention and the schools get to know them well. Outside of school, families meet up at cubs, guides, or swimming and spend a lot of time together. But this could also be a drawback.

Families can become labelled, community problems can impact on school life and it can be quite intense... it's very difficult to escape this label from other parents and children.

The parents interviewed at Icklesham Primary School like the area and describe it as friendly, but did identify a number of disadvantages

No shops, no decent recreational facilities – without crossing a major dangerous road, limited transport – there is only an hourly bus service between 6am to 8pm.

In addition to the school bus, there is a Rye Community Bus and the schools were investigating how this could be used for parents and the community at Icklesham as well as minibuses at a nearby sheltered accommodation. Some informal car-sharing happens, mostly in the evenings for social events.

The nearest post office and bank are at Winchelsea, the nearest supermarket is at Rye and there is a GP practice in Guestling and Icklesham Villages. For those who don't drive it is a challenge.

We're on a key meter, so if the electricity runs low at night we either have to ask a neighbour for a lift to Hastings to top it up or sit in the dark. To draw our benefits we have to pay for a bus to Hastings. It costs us £5.20 to go to the doctors.

Extended village services

Both head teachers are involved in the management of extended service activities. Icklesham provides breakfast and after-school care through the Acorn Nursery and St Thomas provides a holiday scheme for two weeks in the summer holidays.

The schools also offer community access to school facilities which are used by the Parish Council, Pilates group, archaeological society, book club, church harvest supper and a horticultural show.

The schools are working together to support parents to access services at both schools. A minibus funded by East Sussex *Rural Premium*, is leased for 2 years and used to transport children from Winchelsea to Icklesham for the breakfast and after-school care and from Icklesham to Winchelsea for the Holiday scheme.

Most parents using the breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs are not working, working parents make other arrangements. There is a lack of registered childcare in the area and the Acorn Nursery breakfast and after-school care only operates during term-time.

Both schools knew of families they described as hard-to-reach. These are families who lack basic skills and qualifications, which included most of the families in receipt of free school meals. A disadvantage subsidy fund, *Access to Activities* will be targeted at these families. Both schools would like to be able to do more for disadvantaged parents, but they felt it was a complex challenge.

Family learning has been offered, but the schools find it difficult to engage parents on parenting courses and the head teachers feel that a one-to-one approach works better. Parents who need help with their child's behaviour were identified as a priority for extended services.

In small villages like these there's a real danger of parents being labelled as bad parents by other families.

Both head teachers see the minibus as a community resource and subject to training and insurance requirements hope to make the minibus self-financing with regular use by the community. Other services have been invited to send people to be trained to drive the minibus.

The schools, through the LPC cluster, fund extra hours for Children's Outreach and Parents Extended Support (COPES) service.

It's an excellent service, easily accessible emotional support for children in crisis.

Parents felt that there was a lack of activities for young people and they'd like more activities in the village such as cubs, brownies, youth clubs, football and badminton for young people. Parents felt that activities for young people should be purposeful.

They shouldn't just be left to hang around.

There is a village hall in Icklesham which was recently refurbished, but still doesn't have access for wheelchairs.

Parenting support

In the East Sussex parent consultation, parents identified the school nurse or health visitor, support for parents of teenagers and educational psychologist as drop in information sessions they would be most likely to attend at school and Citizens Advice Bureau, benefits and employment advice as sessions they were most likely to attend at other venues.

Parent Support is provided through Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS), the Sussex Rural Community Council which covers East and West Sussex. It provides a range of services in the two counties including support to develop Village Action Plans, support to parishes wishing to provide affordable housing, exploring ways to improve community transport schemes and Children's Outreach and Parents Extended Support (COPES) service.

COPES was established in 2003 and is funded through the Children's Trust, Children's Fund, and other local area funding. The Local Partnership for Children for the Rye Area fund some extra hours and COPES supports 20-25 families in the Rye Cluster. The service is flexible and responds quickly. Referrals are made by schools and as the service is not a statutory provision, it is felt to be less stigmatising.

Dave Ely is the service manager for AiRS Children, Young People and Families and manages 11 full and part-time local based outreach workers. He spoke of the limited choices for those who are socially excluded on low incomes in rural areas.

They may have unreliable cars or no transport; they will often have significant problems. There are issues of access, a limited employment base in the Rother area. Isolation is a huge issue. Half of the children in need in East Sussex are in rural areas.

Dave believes schools can be conduits to children and families in need. Families are referred to COPES because of emotional concerns, bullying, behaviour or attendance issues.

It may be parenting style, fall-out from domestic violence, trauma or worrying or dangerous behaviour. The parents may have mental health

issues, be substance users, have difficult family relationship, or suffering from bereavement or loss.

The service includes support, advice and therapy and it is provided on a one-to-one. Dave identified a number of challenges for delivering the service in rural areas.

Staff need to be located within the area, so they are spread out which has implications for support and management. Funders must understand the cost of time and travel to deliver in a rural area.

Rye Children's Centre

The Rye Children's Centre provides support for families with children aged 0-5 years and Flora Williams is the Community Development Worker. The children's centre moved into new premises adjacent to the site of Rye College, 18 months ago.

East Sussex Children's Services provides, for each children's centre, a detailed profile of the area which includes data on free school meals, benefits, unemployed, teenage pregnancies and attainment data. This is discussed at the Rye and Peasemarsch Reach Meetings with a range of local agencies including Library service, Family Outreach Service, Rother Voluntary Action, BBUFA Toy Library, Health Visitors and local childcare providers. The LPC cluster coordinator is also invited.

Rye children's centre has within its catchment a high proportion of families on low incomes. Childcare is an issue and there is only one full daycare provider in the area. As a phase 2 children's centre, the centre doesn't offer childcare.

There are community outreach workers who go out into the villages on the Fun Van which has information about children centres and other agencies. There are also family outreach workers who go into the homes of families, initially to provide individual support, but we try to support them to come into the centre. We support children to access pre-school early from a crisis support fund. But in the summer during tourist season parking space, journey times and charges become an issue.

Many parents want to work, but employment is seasonal and low paid. The children's centre offers *Reflections* a self-development course from which some parents have gone on to do an NVQ in childcare, into employment or into volunteering. There is also a community parents' programme where parents support each other to develop – this has also led to employment. The centre also offers family learning, some certified adult education such as first aid and health advice.

The children's centre works with a range of other services including Battle and Bexhill Under-Fives Association and the Fellowship of St Nicholas (FCN) which provides the Fun Van, commissioned by the Rye Children's Centre, to take equipment out into the community and works with parent and toddler and playgroups, many of which are run by parents.

It's non-stigmatising way to engage with families, through messy play, and opens up the opportunity to support and encourage parents to access services in the area.

The Fellowship also provides parenting courses and will undertake a home visit on referral by schools, to support and encourage parents to attend a parenting course and they offer language and play courses in schools funded by children's centre. It is also working in partnership with Sussex Coast College, to offer Building Engagement Support and Trust (BEST) which assists low skilled and low income or unemployed adults to access learning opportunities that will prepare them for work, volunteering or further education.

Adult Learning

In the East Sussex consultation on extended services, parents in the Rye cluster identified sports, fitness and cookery as the activity, workshop or adult learning which they would be most interested in attending, followed by computers, arts and craft, healthy living and weight management.

Rye College provides adult learning opportunities on a self-funded basis on Wednesday evenings and the offer includes computing, cooking and basic skills. The training costs £25 per person and it is offered in Rye town on the college campus but take-up is poor.

Sussex Coast College would like to put on courses but the demand is not yet there.

The families are not ready for groups and certainly not yet ready for training. Pubs also used to be a good place to engage some of the families, but they can't afford to drink in the pubs now and don't go because they can't smoke there either.

The LPC Coordinator has also tried to run an IT course for parents at the college, but only one person attended. She knows the area is deprived and that family learning and adult education generally can provide a route out of poverty.

I work with head teachers to try to reach families; staff identify parents and provide names – but they are the ones who don't readily attend meetings or open days.

Susan identified the barriers as low self-confidence, lack of expectations, transport, childcare and being stuck in a poverty trap. The coastal strip has its own community.

There are villages like Rye Harbour which has a lot poverty, families stay because it's beautiful – but many have been in a cycle of poverty, where no one has worked, so there are no role models of being employed. The gap between poverty and wealth is extreme and visible. The school recently identified two women for support, both had six children and one had another on the way. The cluster does have

some budget for childcare, but it won't stretch to cover that many children.

Parents welcomed the idea of having training at the school. The school has a meeting or training room which could be used and childcare is available next door. A computing course was of particular interest.

Employment

As a tourist area, local employment opportunities include working in the hotels, pubs and restaurants in and around Rye. There are also local employment opportunities in the nuclear plant a local chemical works, the NHS and the college itself. Besides Rye, the nearest places to work are Hastings and Ashford.

In the East Sussex consultation, more than 20% of parents of secondary and primary aged pupils indicated that when going to work, training or education there wasn't sufficient childcare to meet their needs and the main reasons given were costs, type of childcare, 30% location and unsuitable hours.

The head teachers of the primary schools recognised this as an area where parents needed support.

We would like to do more to help parents, but in small schools we have to cover so much and we feel it's beyond our brief to support parents who would like to return to work.

Benefits of small schools

The head teachers of the village schools were clear that small schools can be more effective than a large school in engaging parents.

It's the heart of the community; children grow up and move on with their peers, the school understands the local communities, the local dynamics. There's more parental involvement and they're more likely to stay involved which is beneficial to their child's learning. They can walk to school and parents feel more confident to speak to teachers if they have worries or concerns. The head teacher and governors often become more involved in local life.

When schools close families lose local connections, those who lose out the most are those who are most excluded. Local authorities should look at other options such as shared head teachers and consortia rather than lose small schools; they should see schools as outlets or portals rather than separate schools.

Parents thought the village school was more personal and without it, the entire community would be undermined.

It would be hard to get our kids to school.

We'd move out of the area, we moved here to be able to access this school.



Smithdon High School Cluster

Norfolk is a large rural county which has 90 miles of coastline and an extensive network of waterways. Nearly a third of its population of 850,000 people live in villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. The largest towns are Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn. Nearly one in five children under the age of 15 live in income-deprived households. As in other predominantly rural areas, distance and limited transport create barriers to accessing services and there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk district has a slightly older age profile than other parts of Norfolk and is predominantly rural. Kings Lynn and West Norfolk has high levels of deprivation; 36% of the working age population have no qualifications, GCSE attainment is well below the

national average and health issues include obesity, diabetes and lower levels of physical activity among children.

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk has eight school clusters, including 72 primary and infant schools and eight secondary schools.

Norfolk was an Extended Schools Pathfinder and is one of four local authorities which participated in the Extended Schools Rural Pathfinder for the Training and Development Agency for Schools.

Docking Primary School

Docking is an inland village 6 miles from the coast. It has a population of just over 1,000 people. The area is economically mixed, but with low unemployment and a very low crime rate. A local factory has just closed down. There is a shop, post office, garage, GP and pub, but over a period of years Docking has lost a number of shops, including a chemist and bakery, as well a garage serving fuel, a dentist and a vet. The nearest bank is in Hunstanton.

Docking Primary School is part of a cluster of 13 schools. Based in the middle of the village, the site also has a childcare provider and community sports hall. There are 112 pupils on the roll, 4 full-time teachers, a part-time nursery teacher and 4 classes. The school was established in 1860.

The school is popular and oversubscribed. Many of the children live in the village and there are several children who are the third generation in their families to attend. To meet demand, a new classroom has been created by removing the kitchen. The head teacher, Rachel Williams is aware of concerns among villagers that the school might become too large.

Services which come out to the school include an educational psychologist, advisory support teacher for children with special needs, the school nurse, dental hygienist, police community support officer, fire service and the Vicar. In its inspection of the school in 2008, Ofsted found it to be a good school which was well led and one in which *people and their individual needs matter*.

Rachael directly manages the extended services including *Wide Awake* after-school club and knows the families well.

In addition to the breakfast club and childcare, the school offers access to CAMHs and parenting support from the PSA. From the children's centre, in Hunstanton, there is also access to family support, health advice and support for special needs. The school has also offered assemblies on asthma, sessions on reading to your child and Early Years Foundation training for parents.

Rachel described some of the families as hard to reach and is aware that some parents won't open their children's school bags, so a text messaging service is used to let parents know about a note in the school bag.

At the hub of the village, there is close liaison between the school and the on-site childcare provider. The school currently provides a breakfast and after-school club, but this will be amalgamated with the childcare setting in September. Each week, on a Thursday, is community lunch day and the community bus picks up 3 or 4 elderly residents who join the children in the sports hall for lunch.

The community sports hall is used for badminton, kung fu, dance club, netball, football club and a range of other activities. It is also used for a Sunday school on Thursdays and for governors meetings, conferences and parties. A local village hall also hosts clubs and leisure activities and provides a venue for weddings and parties.

The school was described by many as the focal point of the village.

The link which pulls the community together.

It's a great village feeling, we all know each other and there's always someone who knows where the children are.

There is a strong sense of community in Docking. The school, church and community police work together. A parent runs *Docking Devils* the local football team; another parent who lost her brother in a road accident runs road cycling training. There is a community bus scheme for the village and the funding for the building for childcare provided on the school site was raised by the village playgroup.

The vicar comes in, fortnightly, to assemblies, and helps in other ways in the school. He has opened a Saturday group here for young people. Uniformed organisations are trying to increase what's available – so there is now a scouts club for 11-16 year olds.

The majority of the children transfer to Smithdon High School. Transition from a small primary to a large secondary school was a concern for parents and who could also identify some drawbacks to a small school.

In a small school children miss out on school trips, museums are all too far away, they miss out on cultural activities and extra-curricular activities like swimming, after-school care. Norwich, the nearest bigger city is an hour away.

There's a lack of ethnic diversity.

Smithdon School Cluster

The Smithdon cluster has been established for more than 15 years. Nicola Darley, the current chair and head teacher of Heacham Junior School is, after 6 years, one of the longest serving head teachers in the cluster. There are no federated schools in the cluster.

For quite a number of schools, there isn't a local bus service, so the numbers using a breakfast club or other facility are not enough to be

sustainable. Children's achievement varies by school or cohort; all schools are trying to raise standards.

Smithdon High School, in the small coastal market town of Hunstanton, is the lead school and a Specialist Mathematics and Computing School. The school is almost entirely constructed of glass and steel and was the first example of *Brutalist* architecture. Now a Grade II* listed building, it has served the community for more than 50 years. As it has grown in size, additional facilities have been added, including a Design Technology block and ICT suite.

Smithdon High School was originally a secondary modern which became comprehensive in 1980. At this time, many small village Primary Schools were closed and three Middle Schools were created. Today the furthest distance a pupil travels is 20 miles. No single staff member has responsibility for extended services as a main part of their role. John Goodchild, the head teacher, liaises with the Extended Services coordinator, promotes the activity within the whole school and attends all of the half-termly cluster meetings.

John felt that all of the young people in the schools could be considered as priority and described the cluster areas as *very deprived; a stay put community, with a lack of parenting skills*. The average wage in the area is only £13,000 and there are issues around affordable housing. Alcohol misuse is a problem among young people and there have been some associated police incidents.

They are geographically isolated, isolated psychologically; families don't go out in the winter. There is also a lack of aspiration for themselves or to move away from this community. A number of families never go out of the area.

The take-up of free school meals is, at 11% average, there is felt to be a low take up because of stigma. Lack of aspiration is a major barrier and on the whole children don't do well at school. Those who do well generally leave the area, others go into seasonal and all round employment in local hotels, many go on to college at Kings Lynn and some become self-employed with their uncle or dad, in a trade.

At Smithdon, childcare and breakfast clubs are not provided. There is no family learning and only limited adult education. There is community access to school facilities, for example for sports. All villages have a local football club and there is a good inter-village structure.

The school has a school nurse, Sandra Webb whom pupils can approach for an appointment or attend a drop-in session. The school also has access to support for special educational needs and disability services and can initiate support through CAMHs. Support for parents is provided through the Parent Support Advisor.

The school offers after-school clubs including Mathematics and ICT, a gifted and talented programme, E-learning and a well-attended music

and drama group. The school also has a sexual health clinic on site – a local target is to reduce teenage pregnancies. There are drop-in sessions with Connexions advisers.

The school library and resource centre has recently been refurbished and has 21 new PCs which are all connected to the internet with a system that allows students access both at school and home. There is also support for exams e.g. through GCSE clubs. These are free and a bus picks up young people afterwards.

There are good links with Premium Sports and Kings Lynn Sport which provide football grants and coaching for 5-16 year olds.

Success is measured in terms of GCSE results and whether young people are engaged with activities. The music and drama club has worked well, with 150 young people engaged and parents and grandparents attending performances.

A summer school has helped with transition from primary to secondary. The disadvantage subsidy is used to address transport issues. The school doesn't employ outreach workers.

The school is on a notice to improve from Ofsted, as are other schools in the area. Ofsted found the school to be well led by the head teacher and the school is focused on improvement. The school also has a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and their needs were found to be well catered for. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and Maths rose sharply from 30% in 2008 to 39% in 2009, but is still well below average. Of the latest intake at Smithdon 58.2% were described as *educationally hesitant*,⁶² compared to 46.4% for Norfolk.

John had a clear view of the underlying issues.

It is a challenge for children coming from a small school to a much larger secondary school. Some parents choose to send them elsewhere because they'll be happier. This is a big issue, parents round here want their child to be happy, they are not worried how their child does educationally.

A parent governor at Smithdon High School also commented that,

If you want to remain living in this area, you have to be prepared to do certain types of jobs. When they get to secondary school, there's a lack of aspiration, they have no ambition beyond here. People are happy with their lot.

However, the overwhelming majority of school leavers – 97% of boys and 95% of girls – move into training or employment.

⁶² Education ACORN Group Profile

As, recently, long-serving head teachers within the cluster area have retired, there have been difficulties in filling posts and also in replacing school governors. Two primary schools have amalgamated and the chair of the cluster described plans for some governing bodies to cover more than one school. In this very rural area, recruitment shortages also affect other services.

There are recruitment difficulties to various services, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers, Educational Psychologists, Teachers, Head teachers – some posts have been vacant for long periods.

Cluster support for village schools

The Smithdon cluster of schools has a new extended schools coordinator, Mandy Graves, who had been in post for eight weeks. Her role is to develop the core offer across the cluster, develop community cohesion and to ensure the subsidy grant reaches those most in need. As a parent living in the area and formerly a member of staff at Smithdon High School, she is well aware of the disadvantages for families without access to transport who miss out on opportunities and who also lack choices.

Families are not used to having services, so we have to get people to feel that there are services they should want to access. There are small communities who don't want the outside world coming in, they perceive we are trying to change their lives and some want to hide from social services.

Barriers include finances, aspirations and transport – the subsidy fund will help remove practical barriers such as transport for children who fit the free school meal criteria, but there is a low take up to Free School Meals because of stigma.

Mandy saw her role as overcoming barriers and building up the trust of parents.

The children's centre was offering a good after-school service, which was well used by families, but the service has had to be withdrawn as their budget isn't for children over five. We shouldn't be making decision by arbitrary age rules; we should be looking at the needs of the families.

This view was echoed by the Chair of the Cluster.

The challenges of delivering extended services in rural communities are the limitations on resources and sufficient number to make a service viable and sustainable.

The extended services coordinator saw her role as meeting the needs of parents and families in the cluster, including those on low income, working parents and reaching out to priority families.

Parenting Support

The children's centre in Hunstanton provides a family support worker who works with individual families with children under five. The children's centre is involved in safeguarding and also works with the local women's refuge. The centre supports fairground travellers, who are often in the area during school holiday periods. They have close links with health visitors who identify families in need.

For the children's centre Docking village and Monks Close outside Bircham village are target communities. There is an area of social housing behind Docking Primary School, but the children's centre has found it difficult to engage those families, despite joint efforts with Docking Primary School and the childcare setting. The parents feel they're doing enough and don't need family support.

The Monks Close estate was mentioned by most interviewees as an area of disadvantage.

It's an area where a number of families are isolated as they do not have transport, it's as if they've been shipped off to Siberia.

Monks Close is a bit of a war site, with feuds that can transfer into school.

The cluster also has a new Parent Support Adviser, Denise Murton, who takes referrals from the 13 schools in the cluster. These are usually triggered by a child's behavior or attendance, but parents can also self-refer.

Although she had only been in post for a short time, she has already built up a heavy case load, supporting children and families affected by bereavement or separation, children with complex needs, custody issues and a family where the mother had walked out, but remains in the area, unwilling to acknowledge her children.

Denise has established links with a range of services including the children's centre, social services, the Travellers service, CAMHs, Relate, the Adoption and Fostering Unit and the Police.

I'm not a local person, so parents feel it's confidential to talk to the PSA. Parents on Monks Close know me and talk to me, trust is important. Monks Close, yes it's an area of disadvantage, but parents feel safe to let their kids walk and play outside alone – they have their own community spirit and they help each other out and keep an eye on each other's kids.

Raising skills

Education and skills deprivation among the adult population is an acknowledged issue. In one school, texts are used in place of letters and the children's centre offers family learning and adult education, including computer training, British Sign Language and basic skills. Adult Education is represented on the children's centre board.

Schools are expected to link with family learning, if they identify a need or demand in the community for Adult Education but classes run by the Adult Education service require a minimum number of 8 – 12, depending on the course, and although tasters are free, for some courses there is a fee. Part of the PSA role is to informally engage parents and link them to opportunities available, e.g. within ICT suites.

The head teachers at both Smithdon High School and Docking Primary School would like to develop classes for adults, as these could help to reduce rural poverty and disadvantage.

I'd like to provide adult education; to be able to work with parents to help them better understand current education processes; to help them to be better educated and able to support their child's learning. For many families, if their child goes to University, it will be the first child in the family to do so. But sadly the area is denuded of local intelligent young people. There is a need to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills for parents – this could be done here at Smithdon High School.

The school isn't offering family learning or other adult education; this is a possible area for development. Computer training with a crèche is an idea for the future – but there is a computing club that runs in the village hall in Docking and we try not to affect other local community provision.

The cluster

Within the cluster, some schools are offering childcare, breakfast and after-school care. Currently each school meets the needs of their families and they occasionally work together, but this is affected by the rural nature of the area with transport being an issue and a cost.

Transition is acknowledged to be an issue for children coming from small schools and it is a key part of the PSA role to support transition. At Smithdon, a Holiday Summer scheme for Year 6 is part of their transition into High School.

There is no dedicated bus service to enable children or their parents to take part in extended activities, but the grant to subsidise activities for low income parents may be used to support transport costs.

In Heacham, three miles south of Hunstanton, both the Infants and Junior schools consulted with parents about their needs and parents wanted the services provided at the infants school, so Heacham Junior School doesn't provide any of the extended services at their site.

The head teacher of Smithdon saw the Extended School Cluster and Children's Centre as hugely important.

The primary schools work together to make opportunities available and the aim is, by working together, to raise aspiration among children and their parents to enable more children to reach levels of attainment commensurate with their abilities.

The cluster is seen as important as village schools are isolated and through the cluster they can act as a group and have more power collectively. It also helps by linking up and joining up, to offer particular kinds of activities and support.

Being part of the cluster is being part of a bigger wheel, yet retaining the identity of the village school.

Sustaining village life?

For parents, Docking village offers a sense of identity and community and while life is harder for those lacking transport, those interviewed felt it was better to be poor in the country than in towns.

In an emergency, you could knock on any door and someone would help you – even if they didn't know you.

It's not just about the children, it's the whole community, you're never alone, if you've not been seen for a while, someone in the village will check that you're okay.

Docking Primary School was considered by all to be the lifeline of the village.

The school gives purpose to the lives of many, a reason to get up, an interest in the next generation, a chance to pass on their valuable knowledge and skills.

Affordable housing is a problem in Docking village, but there is some social housing and the Parish Council has stopped the building of larger houses which encourage second home owners. There are many families who have lived in the village for generations. One parent had a strong view about the benefit of village life:

We have a core of childhood friends who grew up around here and we've all been married for 36 years. We've got something that's worth keeping.

Public transport to the village was described as poor with a weekly bus service to Kings Lynn and Fakenham, but better along the coastal routes. A better service is apparently coming to the village. In the past, when there was work in the village, there was a good bus service.

The limited public transport system and the lack of services were seen as particular disadvantages for teenagers and young people.

Transport is an issue, the youth club was popular, but it wasn't sustainable – the numbers were not sufficient to cover the cost of the coordinator.

Teenagers find it difficult – once they get to secondary school all their friends are spread out and it's difficult for them to meet up, parents end up as taxi drivers.

Older children have to be bused to Smithdon or Wells for their schooling, so their friends are outside of the village. They tend to rely on their parents for lifts or meet at each other's houses.

There is a community minibus which is used by the elderly, families without transport and - at times - by teenagers. The service is provided by West Norfolk transport and all drivers are vetted to work with children. Alan, a volunteer driver uses his own car to collect the elderly for community lunch at the school on Thursdays. Norfolk Children's Services owns a fleet of Minibuses which are available for loan to any Youth and Community Groups.

It's better than a taxi; Alan (the driver) carries our shopping to the door!

It's a lifeline for the elderly, especially the ladies who have lost their husbands.

The local shop opens from 6am to 10pm, daily, for basics and emergency purchases. The nearest supermarket puts on a bus on Saturdays which comes to the village. Families are also finding their own solutions, with parents coming together to order online and have shopping delivered to one house and sharing the delivery charge.

Impact of closing the village school

Parents felt very strongly that the school was essential to the well-being and sustainability of village life.

It would be a very sad day, the beginning of the end of our village. It would impact on children, on the elderly who love to see the children; it would have a big impact on the shop.

The village would die, the school brings in families. It would become a place of second homes, more shops would close. It is sad when a village school is not used – like King George VI in Bircham, the village has become a thoroughfare. All the primary schools locally are small, but when a school is nearly empty, no one wants to use it, they believe something is bad. A thriving school creates a thriving village. Docking Primary School has become the school to get into.

People would leave; children would have to be bused in and out daily. You'd lose the village community. I also think the number of families with problems would go up.

For some families, without access to transport, it would be catastrophic.

The chair of the cluster echoed this,

Where a small school is lost there is long term ill-feeling in the community and you have to work very hard to maintain a village identity.

The head teacher of Smithdon High School believed that children in the area were potentially disadvantaged by being geographically and psychologically isolated, in a “stay-put” community which lacked aspiration to explore the world outside of the village. He considered the primary schools and their dedicated staff teams to be vital.

Village schools have the potential to engage parents and children in a small, intimate and caring atmosphere. Problems with children and families can be easily identified and the quality of information when the children transfer to secondary school is very good.

Docking Primary School has recently acquired the land adjacent to the school using money bequeathed by Bertha Page, a former pupil. This is now being developed as their *Field of Dreams* in conjunction with the Octavia Hill *Our Place* project. The aim is to provide an outdoor learning environment for the children but also a focal point for the village. The field is used as an outside play area, a classroom, a quiet and reflective space and some where to appreciate the many changing aspects of the natural world throughout the seasons. There are many other aspects to the field including a memorial chair that was donated by parents who lost their son in a road accident; a bog garden dug and planted by the children and local community members; and there are also plans to create a garden area dedicated to Bertha Page and Octavia Hill, a co-founder of the National Trust who believed everyone had a right to fresh air and open spaces. *For ever, for everyone* is the National Trust motto, now adopted for the Field of Dreams by the school and community.

5. Findings and conclusions

This study provides a glimpse of four school clusters, considered to offer good or best practice in providing access to extended services in rural areas. While each has a distinct approach, all have established or contributed to effective multi-agency services for children and families in their localities. All have formulated innovative strategies to engage children and young people who may be vulnerable, isolated or at risk of not meeting their potential. Each has also considered and taken steps to overcome the practical and other barriers which might prevent those families using the various services on offer.

The style and content of services has been developed in response to local needs, as these have been understood by those leading the delivery. The configuration of services on offer in each case has been influenced by the local Children and Young People's Plan and local partnership structures. Each is based on some form of consultation with users. Good working relationships between front-line professionals contribute to the success of extended service delivery.

In each case, head teachers and others involved in extended service design are keenly aware of the constraints of a rural context. At the forefront are the issues of distance and transport and the challenge of bringing people and services together. Other constraints are available budgets, localised recruitment difficulties and a perceived culture of low aspiration among local families which, in the opinion of some professionals, stands as a barrier to change.

The extended services offer is nuanced in different ways across the four case studies. All of the clusters have developed strategies to overcome transport difficulties, whether through community transport schemes or use of the disadvantage subsidy, but the Twilight Bus scheme in Driffield is particularly successful. Similarly, the award-winning Room 21 concept in Staffordshire Moorlands perhaps represents the most comprehensive integration of services and inter-school co-operation. In both Rye and Norfolk the range and depth of partnership working and the use of rural community organisations is outstanding.

Together and in their diversity of approaches, the case study schools lend weight to the idea that extended service delivery is less of a defined intervention than a family of approaches. Nevertheless, there is a commonality in the way each has addressed the key issues in rural extended service provision. These issues have been extensively documented, for example in the guidance and support tools for rural delivery provided by the TDA and include transport; the location of services to make them most accessible; transition for pupils from small more remote schools, multi-agency and cluster working; and partnership with voluntary organisations and community groups.

5.1 Delivering outcomes

It is clear from the case studies that the provision of extended services, within a framework of school improvement, is associated with gains for children and young people and for parents.

This is most clearly suggested in the improving attainment results for the children involved, not just at GCSE level, but at other key stages. Others reported impacts included fewer exclusions, families helped to resolve behaviour and adjustment problems and more engagement by schools with the community.

This is consistent with the results of the early Full Service Extended Schools evaluations and with the interim findings of the current evaluation of the extended services, full roll-out. In the latter, two thirds of schools believed that the development of extended services had had at least some influence in raising attainment and over half of pupils also thought there had been a positive impact on the marks they receive for their schoolwork.

What is harder to determine are the specific factors within the broad offer of extended services which may have the greatest impact on children's enjoyment of school and their attainment and aspiration. Not all of the improvement in GCSEs and other assessments may be solely attributable to the extended school activities. As one head teacher explained, it was possibly due to a combination of strategies, including targeting vulnerable children, use of extra-curricular activities at breaks and lunch times and the greater community presence in the school.

All four of the secondary schools in the study are specialist schools. Specialist schools have benefited substantially from grants and from sponsorship, which means that they have higher levels of funding than those that do not have specialist status. Compared to other schools, specialist schools do well against a range of indicators, including leadership and management, quality of teaching and improving standards.⁶³

Factors like school attainment and behaviour provide one measure of achievement for extended schools. In comparison, the challenge of evidencing gains in parenting confidence, adult skills development or wider community engagement is fraught with difficulty and complication.

The TDA has developed an evaluation model and impact measurement tool. Within this broad model, some of the evidence sources include, besides exam results, numbers of school exclusions, referrals and participation profiles for children and families.

No mechanisms were in place in the case study schools or the clusters to closely monitor wider adult and community outcomes. At least two schools held statistics on adult learning participants though

⁶³ Castle F., & Evans, J (2006) Specialist Schools – what do we know?
<http://www.risetrust.org.uk/specialist.pdf>

these were enrolment based and no information was held on achievements. In one school, arrangements were in place to track pupils who were considered vulnerable and this will eventually yield information about individual trajectories and outcomes.

Although each of the clusters were clear about their target families and made use of demographic and other data profiles, there were no mechanisms in place to specifically track the involvement of particular types of families.

It is possible, therefore that some of the wider outcomes of extended service provision are not being fully captured or recorded and this might be an area in which local authorities could give support.

5.2 In it together

The head teachers of the village schools and the lead schools profiled were clear that the cluster structure was helpful.

Extended Schools help to protect smaller schools - through networking and lobbying - we have a bigger voice as a cluster; the little schools are heard within the cluster – there is complete equality. The secondary school connects with and gets to know the small schools.

The cluster stops small schools feeling so isolated, we have developed common policies so parents can't play schools off against each other. We share training and we've developed a children's cluster and a governors' cluster which meet annually.

In one of the clusters - Leek - the approach has been to develop a campus model and pooled budgets, integrating these with funding for children's centres. This has enabled the best and most cost-effective use of resources, including school buildings, without apparent loss of local responsiveness.

Federated schools also emerge as a useful expedient for rural clusters, as a response to falling rolls and difficulties in recruitment. In the Driffield cluster, the federation of two small schools appears to have invigorated both and increased contact between families in two small communities.

In this context, clusters and school federations appear to be moving, at least in spirit towards becoming mutuals, a model which may be particularly appropriate for rural communities. At this stage, it is not clear how, if at all, the emergence of free schools and academies will affect such mutual arrangements among schools. However, the case studies offer the suggestion that in sparsely populated areas, at least, schools need each other if they are to achieve their objectives.

5.3 Funding

The study did not specifically consider funding levels or the use of funding, but there was abundant anecdotal evidence that the weight of the expectations hanging on extended schools far outstripped the resources available. In each of the case study areas, transport was an issue and cost factor. For example, while schemes like the twilight bus service in Driffield enable young people to participate in extended service activities, budgets do not permit an extension of this to parents in remote locations who wish to access school facilities for themselves.

In at least one case study area, some classes run by the Adult Education service require a minimum number and some courses carry fees. Given the recurring emphasis, in all of the case studies, on the need to engage “hard to reach” parents, the requirement to charge fees, together with the difficulties of accessing transport, must be seen as an impediment.

In one cluster, the extended service coordinator expressed uncertainty about her post as the element of government funding which has paid for her post comes to an end. The expectation that schools will support these costs from their own budgets was, she felt, unrealistic.

As noted, in at least one case study cluster, budgets have been pooled, which appears to offer a good way forward. But, in all areas, compromises have to be made about the level of service that can be offered - both overall and in any one cluster school.

Current funding for extended schools and for the Dedicated Schools Grant is weighted for deprivation and includes an element for sparsity but there is a view that the funding system does not adequately address the needs of rural areas, particularly the most disadvantaged rural communities.⁶⁴ Two of the local authorities in the study are in the bottom rank of funding allocations. This must and does affect what can be provided.

The landscape of education funding is changing and will change further as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review. While direct funding to schools has been protected, cuts in other areas of spending, including local authority front-line services may affect a number of the wide range of services such as family support and youth work which are associated with the extended services offer.

Education policy itself is changing, with a renewed emphasis on front-line teaching and learning and encouragement for Academies and Free-schools. Individual schools will have greater freedom to determine their funding priorities and it is too early to tell how this may affect both the priority given to extended services and the strategic partnerships between schools which have been led, up to this point, by local authorities.

⁶⁴ Hansard: Westminster Hall debates, 2 February 2010 Schools Funding HC Deb, 2 February 2010, c65WH

5.4 Configuring aims

When asked to talk about their aims and what they were trying to achieve, most head teachers and school staff were focused on raising the achievement and participation of young people.

Extended services enhance the core business of the school.

It's to raise attainment levels through raising aspiration and achievement.

It's about equalising chances for children.

However, almost all could see the links to other policy agendas, whether raising adult skills, meeting local skills shortages or sustainable local communities. Heads were aware of the value of the facilities which schools can offer to the community and all but one of the secondary schools were involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in adult learning provision.

In some of the schools this aspect of their programmes is substantial. However, in explanations of what they were trying to do - the greater value attached to the provision of adult learning appeared to lie in its potential to yield positive returns for children. Some respondents described parents in deficit terms, whereas children who were pupils in the school were not talked about in this way. Instead, responses focused on the obstacles in their way – poor transport, lack of things to do or lack of support from their parents.

Head teachers in the village schools were more likely to conceptualise their aims in terms of the wider community or to emphasise the social value of the school.

Extended services could help tackle rural poverty and disadvantage by offering parents the opportunity to develop their skills, to help them to access services

The school is what connects the community; it should be for all in the community and provide what the community needs.

Those working in linked services could also see the benefits of extended services for their own agendas. Among them, family learning organisers were particularly aware of the potential for engaging low income parents in improving their basic skills and taking the first steps towards gaining qualifications. A recurring theme, however, expressed in many of the interviews with head teachers and other services, was the difficulties of engaging certain types of families.

5.5 Addressing poverty and inequality

There is an extensive body of research on the reasons why families might not engage with services. Some of these reasons may be purely practical, for example, cost or distance, but there is also some evidence that the way in which help is structured may put off certain groups of families and conflict with their own constructs of what they need.

In a study of outreach from children's centres and extended services in schools, parents described prior, negative experiences of housing, social work and other services. It was not possible to determine how objective these descriptions perceptions were but they were in marked contrast to the trust they felt in children's centre and school outreach staff.

Other research has suggested that child-rearing practices among low-income families may be grounded in a "material and social reality" which prioritises "getting by" and helping their children negotiate disadvantages and adversities which more affluent families rarely, if ever, face.⁶⁵

In rural areas, part of the difficulty in building links with families lies in the larger distances involved in making contact. It is also possible that the area divisions defined by local authorities for delivery may not match the customs or preferences of local people. Rural school clusters serve a very large number of small communities. In the towns where secondary schools are based, the rural community was described, largely, as "out there", whereas among the parents in the villages in the study, the community was "right here".

Poverty is a complex concept and one in which there is considerable scope for subjectivity. Low income families were frequently described as "lacking aspiration" and such parents were on a number of occasions described as "uninterested" in their children's education. However, it was not clear how far this had been put to the test of objective inquiry. In contrast, some of the parents who participated in focus groups expressed considerable interest in attending adult learning activities, or parenting activities *if* these could be organised at times of the day or in places which were convenient.

Some interviewees commented on the inward looking character of their rural communities. Where this occurred, it was mentioned as a factor in families, holding young people back, but some experts have suggested that emotional ties to place play an important part in sustaining communities and *sense of place education* proponents have suggested that schools may be guilty of marginalising the value of small local environments.^{66 67}

The Child Poverty Act places a duty on local authorities, with their partners, to develop a needs assessment and strategy to reduce child poverty within their areas. If poverty is to be tackled effectively, it

⁶⁵ Gillies, V. (2006) Parenting, Class and Culture: Exploring the Context of Childrearing, Community Practitioner; 79, 4: 114-117, 2006

⁶⁶Phillips, M., Rural community vitality and malaise: moving beyond the rhetoric? (2010) ESRC/ Scottish Government. Rural community empowerment in the 21st century: building a 'can-do' culture

⁶⁷Sanger M (1997) Journal of Environmental Education, Vol. 29,

must, in rural areas, be a priority to identify and consult with those families who are most in need but have not been identified or are prevented from accessing services.

In rural areas, the challenge of consulting with diverse and different communities and with different groups of families is considerable. Local authorities and partnership structures are already leading the way. However, it is important that consultations are not only formalised but also participative, involving the perspectives of all groups within the community.

The low levels of engagement of disadvantaged adults in training and education perpetuate inequalities in income and in health and well-being. In rural communities, this is made worse by poor transport which can make training provision inaccessible. Involvement in education and training by parents will not only improve their opportunities in the labour market but also add to the skills base of local communities.

There are persistent structural and economic factors which are not within the power of schools to resolve, but parents who need and want help with vocational skills or qualifications could be identified as part of extended services consultations and needs analyses.

In addition, the low skills base in rural communities suggests the need for a stronger strategic lead from local authorities, where necessary re-aligning adult training provision, enabling it to be a mainstream offer in lead and cluster schools.

The social enterprise model, illustrated in the Leek case study also offers a useful direction of travel. A number of rural schools have based the provision of childcare and other extended activities in social enterprises. Arrangements of this kind can not only strengthen sustainability but increase community participation, raise skills and create jobs.⁶⁸ Social enterprises may be particularly well matched to the needs of rural communities where private and/or public services are in decline.

Secondary schools have considerable intellectual and technological resources to offer to their communities. The performing arts facility in Driffild, hosting theatre productions for the whole community is just one example. Others include access to IT, help with benefits and tax credits and support for local businesses.

In smaller, more remote villages, such support could be critical in making communities sustainable, addressing environmental problems and strengthening local economies. The added value of schools operating in this way could make a good subject for further research.

⁶⁸ CBFT Education Trust/SEL (2010) Extended services: ensuring sustainability using the social enterprise model

5.6 Constructing community

Nearly all of the teachers and other professionals responding to the study believed that village schools were not only good for children, but provide an essential outreach function. The idea of the village school as a “family” was repeatedly stressed. In those small communities teachers know families relatively well and are thus better placed to identify when some need help. The mechanisms by which village schools may engage children and adults who are at risk of social exclusion would also provide a good subject for further research.

In each of the case study areas, consultations with families underpin the direction and delivery of extended services, but it is in the village communities that democratising factors are most evident.

All of the parents interviewed lived in the rural areas of the clusters and their children attended village schools. In this sense it was a selective view, but there was no mistaking the strength of feeling about the lacking infrastructure of housing, transport and services in smaller and more remote villages and hamlets.

Parents frequently emphasised the stake they held in the village schools and a feeling of equality in their relationship with teachers. There was a sense that the schools were almost community associations, where all had a part to play.

In this way, the village schools came closest to representing a definition of community as *an interlocking pattern of just human relationships in which people have at least a minimal sense of consensus, within a definable territory. People within a community actively participate and cooperate with others to create their own self-worth, a sense of caring about others and a feeling for the spirit of connectedness.*⁶⁹

Whether they were settled residents, whose families were part of the history and fabric of the area, or more recent incomers, none saw any fairness in the diminishing choice of goods and services as post offices and shops closed.

Childcare and other services alongside schools were agreed to be a good way to strengthen village life. Most of the parents interviewed were aware of the opportunities to access the facilities of the lead secondary school, but felt it was too far away. Many would welcome the development of adult learning as an integral feature of village schools.

Parents passionately opposed the thought of closure of village schools. In a very particular sense, the loss of the school is more than

⁶⁹ Freie, J.F. (1998). *Counterfeit Community: The Exploitation of our Longing for Connectedness*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc

the inconvenience of children being bussed to school, or even the loss of high quality teaching, but is the loss, or death, of community itself.

A school in a village like this is the beating heart of the village – it gives the village a sense of being alive.

The village would die, the school brings in families. It would become a place of second homes, more shops would close.

Throughout rural England, village schools continue to close. On the available evidence, this is a loss to children of high quality teaching and learning. It remains to be seen whether, in the face of threatened closure, small communities will avail themselves of the opportunity to set up free schools. However, in the face of impending funding cuts, local authorities may find themselves compelled to cut costs where they can.

Small schools not only offer more personalised learning, but provide opportunities for interaction between community members which might otherwise disappear. In addition, at a time when there is a new governmental emphasis on democratic renewal and the involvement of people in services, schools as the hubs of rural villages appear to offer an important template.

In the study, some teachers and parents are already developing this template, considering the potential of add-on activities on school sites, whether cafes or health clinics, post offices or shops. Two of the schools were actively exploring these ideas. Federated schools or shared head teachers or governing bodies were also seen as better options than school closure.

These ideas are not new and have echoes of the ambitions of the early village schools, incorporating all of the activities and interest groups within the community and widening the focus of schools. Reconfiguring schools as productive enterprises is also not a new idea and social enterprises are well-established in other areas of health and public services.

Extended services aim to bring schools and community together but the increasing scale and regimentation of large schools make it difficult for them to be other than professionally-led institutions. Smaller schools, in contrast, have more scope to act as facilitators and – like the Docking Primary School head - to encourage hopes and dreams. Absorbed into their communities, the model is less dependent on “reaching out” and more on working together.

This is not to obscure central value of creative school leadership, or the critical part played by other services, working together on the ground to support young people and their families. The rich detail provided by these case studies underlines the importance of these but reminds us that communities are authorised by the people who live in them and it is in their lives that the levers for change will be

found. The rural school cluster adeptly incorporates each of these dimensions.

Annex 1. Methodology

The study, undertaken between April and July 2010, included the following components:

Desk Study

A desk review was undertaken of policy documents, guidance, evaluations and research findings relating to extended schools, small schools, access to children's services for rural children, transport to school and rural child poverty. Databases searched included British Library; Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department of Education); Department of Work and Pensions; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; and the Commission for Rural Communities. Search terms used included small schools, extended schools, parenting outreach, and rural poverty. A specific web search of key stakeholders including the Training Development Agency (TDA), Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) the National Association of Small Schools (NASS), Continyou, 4Children, Defra and Ofsted was also undertaken.

Key Stakeholders

Expert stakeholder bodies were approached for background information and opinion relating to the delivery of extended services in rural areas which was used to guide the development of the study. This element of the study took the form of semi-structured telephone interviews of approximately 40 minutes duration. Contributing organisations included:

- TDA
- NASS
- Continyou
- 4 Children

Development of case studies

A large body of case studies and evidence relating to extended schools already exists, developed by stakeholders, in particular the TDA. Rather than replicate this, the aim was to capture an "on the ground" snapshot of four rural areas, exploring the qualitative experiences of those involved in delivery and take-up.

Four extended services case studies identified through web search and from known contacts. The case studies were selected as likely examples of good practice reflecting different types of rural settlements and a balance of north and south. The case studies were:

Drifffield School Cluster (East Riding of Yorkshire)

Leek High School Cluster (Staffordshire Moorlands)

Rye College Cluster (East Sussex)

Smithdon High School Cluster (Kings Lynn and West Norfolk)

Visits, over a two-three day period, were made to each centre. Each was preceded by a telephone call with the extended services coordinator, who provided information about the services offered, and

advised on the selection of a village school or schools, to be included in the case studies.

A number of upper thresholds have been adopted to identify small schools. For the purpose of the study an upper threshold of 150 pupils was used. The village schools selected included:

Gembling Primary School (Driffield School Cluster)
St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School (Leek High School Cluster)
Manifold primary School (Leek High School Cluster)
Icklesham Church of England Primary School (Rye College Cluster)
St Thomas Church of England Primary School (Rye College Cluster)
Docking Primary School (Smithdon High School Cluster)

Qualitative, semi-structured, interviews were conducted with the head teachers of both the lead school and the selected village school; the extended services coordinator; the parent support adviser; and where available, representatives of the school health service, family learning and adult training providers, children's centres, specialist services, local community associations and voluntary bodies.

Topic guides were developed for all of the interviews, with topics relating to the perceived benefits and challenges for young people and families in the case study areas; extended services delivery; strategies to engage young people and/or families; multi-agency working; best practice and the role of village schools. The interviews took approximately 40 minutes.

Focus groups were held with parents of children attending village schools. The purpose of the focus group was to explore parent's experiences of extended services and their views on village schools.

Focus groups were held, in two case studies, with young people attending cluster schools. The focus groups explored the perspectives young people about growing up in a rural area, travel to school and their experiences and opinions about extended school services.

For each area, the Children and Young People's Plan and other relevant policy documents and needs assessments were and reviewed prior to the visits. Local documents and web searches were used to map services and activities related to or dependent on the village schools in the study.