



# Journal & News 21

Spring 2006

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## Invitations to

Take part in research  
Join our Summer Conference  
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Join in National Small Schools' Week

[www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk)

Registered Charity 1096234



- Promoting high quality education in small schools -

## Journal & News 21

Spring 2006

The **NSSF** Journal & News is published two times a year and issued to all individual and group members. Individual members receive their copies directly by post. Group members receive their copies via their group or LEA representative. We are most grateful to our group and LEA contacts for distributing the Journal & News on our behalf.

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For information on how to join the **NSSF**, please see the details below and at the end of this Journal & News.

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*The views expressed by contributors to this publication are not necessarily those of the **NSSF***

### About the NSSF

Registered Charity Number 1096234

The **NSSF** is an independent, member organisation with charitable status, which seeks to promote the continued development of high standards of teaching and learning in small primary schools. Its 1200+ members include individual schools, heads and teachers, governors, LEAs, LEA advisers, independent consultants and groups of schools in the United Kingdom.

Our aim to promote high quality education in small schools is implemented via the termly meetings of the **FORUM**, Journals, publications and papers, a website and an annual conference, which keep members in touch with one another, with research into the work of small schools and with developments at national and local levels. We do not, however, engage in campaigns on behalf of schools that have been identified for reorganisation by their local authorities beyond calling attention to the evidence about the high standards attained by pupils in small schools. We commend the work of the National Association for Small Schools in this area.

In alternate years, we organise with the National Association for Small Schools and Human Scale Education, **National Small Schools' Week** to celebrate and publicise the strengths and achievements of small schools in the UK. These have been held in 2002 and 2004 and the next is week beginning 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006. We also organise a Best Small School Website competition which will in future coincide with National Small Schools' Week.

Our definition of small primary schools includes schools of up to about 100 pupils in nursery, primary, first, infant, junior, middle-deemed-primary and special settings. We have in membership a number of larger schools who welcome our emphasis on high quality teaching and learning and on slim management systems. We welcome this diversity. While the majority of members are from England, we have many friends in other parts of the UK and hope to extend this in the belief that the Forum will benefit from experiences gained in diverse contexts.

#### Membership

Membership is open to individuals (eg heads, teachers, governors, LEA personnel, colleagues in HE etc), schools, higher education establishments, groups and clusters and local education authorities. Individual persons or schools join for £10 per annum; groups, clusters and education authorities may join for £4 per school plus £4 per adviser or officer who may also wish to receive our mailings, subject to a minimum of 6. Membership brings the benefits of two journals each year, attendance at meetings of the **FORUM**, access to the members' section of the **NSSF** website and preferential rates at our annual conference.

**The membership year is from 1 April.**

To renew membership please visit the website

For membership details visit the **NSSF** website at [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) or contact the membership secretary, Mike Carter, details above.

## Editorial

Dear colleagues,

With changes of its officers, the NSSF is restructuring and has outsourced some of its work. If you receive this newsletter, you are most probably a member and we welcome you. Those who have individual membership will need to renew this on April 1<sup>st</sup> and this can be done by post or through the website. We work hard to provide specific support for small schools and the feedback we have, though rare, is extremely positive. However, **we always want to hear your views about what we should do to help.** Details of the new committee and members are located towards the back of this journal and newsletter and on our website.

The three main anxieties for small schools are PPA time, TLRs and the new SEF. We have tried to help with these issues but there is no single answer. While the issue of workforce remodelling may have fine objectives its implementation in small schools can be particularly difficult. Do let us know of intractable ones as well as solutions that you may have found.

The NSSF has always been very cautious about advertising and endorsing private enterprise. However, our thinking is changing somewhat because the quality of what the private sector can provide is improving greatly and often LEAs (which should now be called LAs) find difficulty in providing the specialist thinking needed.

It is pleasing to see that there is more research beginning about leadership in small schools and about the teaching of mixed age classes. Both these are discussed in articles in this issue. An area of importance to pupils and teachers is how, in small schools, teachers often teach a group of pupils for two or more years. This may have advantages as well as some difficulties but has not been researched well yet.

We do hope that you will consider joining in with some of the research opportunities offered in this issue. There is so much that we need to prove about small school education.

Do keep in contact.

With best wishes for a good Summer term

Mike Carter

### Message from the new NSSF Chairperson:

Dear colleagues,

I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself as the New Chairman of NSSF and to outline a little about myself and my aspirations for the organisation during my time as Chairman.

I am currently the Small School Adviser in Buckinghamshire but have been a headteacher in three schools:- one as acting headteacher of a very small school; one as a headteacher of a small school which grew and the third as an interim headteacher in a school of about 150 (small in DfES speak). The first school closed following a decision of the then Secretary of State even though we were just short of the magic 33 on roll to relieve the situation. My substantive headship lasted for nearly 13 years and saw the school grow from 39 to 125 over that time with two major building projects and lots of other developments. I was seconded out of there to assist a school undergoing difficulties and from there found myself as a Local Authority Adviser.

As far as NSSF is concerned, I joined the committee in the early 90s and have, I think, been secretary since 1993. This year I find myself as Chairman. During my time with your committee our membership has grown tremendously, we have introduced National Small Schools week, we've launched a website which receives over 120 'hits' each week and we've overseen the growth of our Journal and Newsletter plus a few other things along the way!

Our committee consists of headteachers (past and present), advisers (past and present), consultants and, most recently, new 'back office' support. We are a strong and varied team and as with every successful team,

depending on other commitments, people play a greater or lesser role at any one time.

Over the next few months we will be putting the finishing touches to our 24 hour conference planned for 22/23 June at Missenden Abbey, Bucks. More details (and regular updates) can be found on our website [www.nssf.org.uk](http://www.nssf.org.uk) and, if you are that enamoured with IT, then a fact sheet and booking form can be found on the brightly coloured centre pages of this journal. We've got some really top class speakers and workshops planned as well as time and space to network – I look forward to welcoming you to Buckinghamshire.

The conference is just a small part of what goes on in National Small Schools' Week (19-23 June 2006). Please see information on the back page for how you can obtain certificates and stickers to help celebrate the event and

your invitation to the launch at the House of Commons on Wednesday 21 June.

I have taken over as Chairman from Mike Carter who has been a stalwart of our organisation and, indeed, a founder member. Mike remains on the committee as our Journal editor and I'd like to pay tribute to his work as our past Chairman. I would also like to publicly thank Mike Brogden, our former webmaster, who has just left the committee to actively pursue a part-time building career in his retirement. Mike is still prepared to write and research for our Journal in his own inimitable style.

To all other committee members and regional representatives, past and present, I would like to thank you for the work you have done or for the support I hope you will continue to give over my time as chairman and I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can over my period of office.

Kind regards,  
Carol Tosh

## **Events and News**

### **Teachers' TV: Audience research:**

An average 21% of the target audience watch at least 5 minutes of the channel a month. Of these, two thirds watch at least 30 minutes. The programme has a good and growing audience rating. 80% of the viewers felt it had improved their performance at least slightly and their motivation. Source: DfES Research News January Issue 15.

### **Perfectly Formed 2006**

28<sup>th</sup> April, Central London – A free funded conference for Small School teachers. GTC has responded to requests made last year by: sharing-mail addresses; ensuring small school views are heard through representation at GTC events and focus groups; providing an annual event to enable small schools CPD leaders to meet and learn together. (This conference has limited places and may already be fully booked.) (NB Investigate membership of the "Connect" network.)

### **NCSL Small Schools' Programme**

This is now run by the East Midlands' Leadership Centre and has limited national "roll out". Application is through the NCSL and the programme includes: interactive workshops; a two-day residential; a series of structured inter-school visits and access to a dedicated online community.

**NSSF annual Conference** 22/3 June Missenden Abbey. See centre pages for details.

**National Small Schools' Week** w/b 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006. A week of events on a local and national basis. You can link your schools activities to the week in order to help proclaim the benefits of a small school education. See back page and NSSF website.

**NSSF Small Schools' Website competition.** Free entry and a good way to promote your website.

**NSSF Forum Meeting:** Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April; Venue TBA - Check the website.

## The NSSF Website: [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk)

- Get the best of advice on small school curriculum and management issues from NSSF Papers
  - Read or download NSSF Reports (research, studies, conferences etc)
- Browse and download authoritative \*summaries of documents from the DfES, OfSTED, the QCA and some Parliamentary reports (\*You need a password for the Summaries; see below)
  - Visit back copies of the NSSF Journal & News
    - Sign up for the NSSF conference
  - Get details about the next meetings of the Forum
  - Find links to other useful organisations and ideas

**\*To protect the copyright of some of these Documents, members need to use a password to gain access to these marked pages. Members should please email Mike Carter ([mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net)) with your name, school, cluster name (if applicable) and LEA and a password will be sent to you.**

**Not sure if you are a member?**

Individual members receive this Journal & News by post. Group members receive it via their cluster/group/education authority contact. See the list of member education authorities and groups on page 30. If in doubt, email the membership secretary, Mike Carter.

Also visit the website for joining details.

NB Our apologies! We have had some technical difficulties for members downloading NSSF reports but this should be corrected soon.

### **REVIEWS**

**(Contributions for this section are welcomed by the editor)**

Currently the NSSF does not endorse, nor carry advertising for, commercial products. This policy is under consideration. However, when products appear of particular value to small schools we will carry reviews, hoping they may save members time in searching and evaluating.

### **An e-learning service with potential to save teachers' time and provide individual learning and assessment.**

**Taecanet Springboard** (Yes, that's the right spelling.) is a web based e-learning service with a particular facility for individual pupils to learn at school or at home. It draws together pages from some of the best subject websites as chosen by a 50 strong teachers' advisory group. From such pages it forms an interactive learning journey with much variety, and provides the pupil with simple assessments. After a full journey, there is an extension involving open-ended questions and problems. Teachers set the date for the pupil to complete the journey. Whole classes, groups or individual pupils can be offered the journey and each journey has some flexibility and is closely related to QCA schemes and to age groups. Such a system seems to have many advantages for mixed-age classes and especially where there may be only a very few pupils at one particular age/level. There is a full assessment record provided and teachers can plan the next learning if needed. The system is finding favour in small schools due to the ease and flexibility of use, combined with the opportunity for individual learning. Children can progress at their own rate.

I felt it did need a little time (about an hour) to understand the system as a teacher, but once learnt it is easy to use and potentially quick for children. It does not make direct links and this would be a useful additional feature. It can easily be used at pupils' homes, providing more flexibility in the time and type of learning. (Perhaps, one day, pupils will seldom need to go to school!) It avoids much of the dulling effect of identical formats and multiple choice questions because of the imaginative use of a variety of materials from many web sites. However, the current problem is that it is limited to KS2 and KS3 history, science and geography but other subjects are coming. This limitation is to some extent recompensed by its low cost and the possibility of using e-learning credits. There is also a free trial available at: [www.taecanet.com](http://www.taecanet.com)

Mike Carter

Currently the NSSF does not endorse nor carry advertising for commercial products, although this policy is under consideration. However, when products appear of particular value to small schools we do carry reviews, hoping they may save members time in searching and evaluating.

## **Managing the Load.**

### **A personal view of using published materials to support leadership and management.**

As a teaching head, finding the time and energy to produce the School Self Evaluation (SEF) report has proved to be both a challenging and daunting task. It certainly didn't do much for my work-life balance! Like many of my colleagues my first effort, is an attempt to 'get everything we do in' resulted in a far too long and wordy document, but how to make it sharper with concise and precise answers? In particular- 'so what impact has an action had?' - seemed to lead me to even more description, instead of honing in to specifics.

Last term I came across 'Every Child Matters- Writing a SEF that works', produced by Focus Education. It claimed to offer practical and simple guidance. I have to say this was music to my ears, my first draft having been anything but! Even more helpful was the direct focus on the Every Child Matters agenda – an aspect I felt I had not entirely got to grips with in terms of assessment. The publication looks at what should be mentioned in each section; details what outstanding, good, satisfactory and adequate look like and gives examples of how an answer might read for a given category. Above all the emphasis is on being brief and succinct, with clear indications of what not to include. It has prompted me to think more clearly about what and why we do certain things, which in turn supports planning for further school improvement. As I re-visit sections of my SEF this year, I am finding this document very helpful as I come to update and refine my previous ramblings!

Another document also by Focus Education, (I'm not on commission!) which we as a staff are finding useful in planning and delivering the curriculum in key stage and at times whole school groups, is 'Key Skills for an Excellent and Enjoyable Curriculum'. As a very small school we are working towards developing a fully integrated skills based curriculum in order to ensure continuity and progression, as well as maintaining our strong commitment to creativity. This publication levels the six key skills which should be developed across the whole of the curriculum: communication; the application of number; improving own learning and performance; information technology; working with others and problem solving. It also details and levels the specific skills in each national curriculum subject.

We (all 2.5 of us!) are finding it very useful as a planning and assessment tool. We like the wealth of ideas which are offered as starting points, while appreciating the flexibility to build a curriculum which suits our personal circumstances. Like any published materials their value to any one individual or school is varied. Some of my colleagues are going to stay with their present support systems, while others have also found using one or both of these publications very useful.

Vera Ballinger

Focus Education is offering these with a 10% discount to NSSF members. Just state that you are an NSSF member and reduce the price accordingly. Furthermore these books can be sent on approval electronically as pdf files. Visit: [www.focus-education.co.uk](http://www.focus-education.co.uk) or ring 01457 872427

## **Village Schools**

### **A History of Rural Elementary Education from the 18th to the 21st Century in Prose and Verse**

**By John Proctor**

**Price: £11.99 (Hardback)**

ISBN-10: 0-19-597996-6

Publication date: 27 April 2006

Oxford University Press

*Village Schools* traces, through three centuries, the development of rural education in the United Kingdom and abroad. Memoirs, contemporary observations and verse are used effectively to enable the reader to look over the shoulders of the pupils, teachers, inspectors or occasional

visitors, into a surprising variety of ancient and modern village schools. Whether they write of the dame school, the hedge school, the common day school, the one-teacher school, the National, the British, the Board schools, the Muslim maktab, the Hindu pathsala, or of other forms of rural school, each writer in this history-anthology makes a unique contribution to the understanding of the formal educational processes in rural areas, in its variety of forms and with its many challenges. Over three centuries, while enormous rural and urban transformations were taking place, the schoolteachers, their pupils and their school premises, educational legislation, and the gradual changes brought about in the provision and expectations of elementary schools, are lucidly described and the period atmospheres charmingly evoked." The book purports, at least, to provide a continuous history of rural elementary education as told by those who participated as pupils, teachers, inspectors, managers etc., and includes not only the UK but, for comparative purposes, the sub-continent and a number of other countries, i.e. the USA, France, Portugal, Senegal, China, Solomon Islands, Australia. Amongst the book's aims, as given in the Preface and Introduction, is to provide support for small schools and, in developing countries such as Pakistan, support for the elimination of child labour. (For example, in the UK between 1870 and 1900, provision of school places and legislation to enforce attendance ensured that most children to age 11 were in school rather than at work.)

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## Poem, or small school mission statement?

### 'A people Place'

If this is not a place where tears are understood,  
Where do I go to cry?  
If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing,  
Where do I go to fly?  
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked,  
Where do I go to seek?  
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard,  
Where do I go to I go to speak?  
If this is not a place where you'll accept me as I am,  
Where can I go to be?  
If this is not a place where I can try to learn and grow,  
Where can I just be me?

**By William J. Crocker**

(Cited in Catherine Corrie: Becoming Emotionally Intelligent)

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## Ask the NSSF

We are often asked for information or advice and try to give it when we can. For example:

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I am a headteacher of a small school and currently also a Research associate with the NCSL. My area of study is small school leadership but in particular when there is one head and more than one school. What heads can I approach to discuss this role and are there publications or papers that may assist?

Jo Williams

*We put Jo in touch with Simon East who runs two such schools in Norfolk and with Christine Pfaff, who has much experience of leading schools in more than one village. Our Summer Conference (see middle pages) will focus on forms of collaboration.*

Further to your request for suggestions on how schools are tackling PPA...we have 73 children in 3 classes. All our teachers are part-time and do not want to be out of the class any more and we have decided to pay for their planning time rather than reduce the teaching.....Best wishes and thanks for the NSSF Journal- rest assured that it is keenly read down here in Devon.

Nick Barnwell

*Thanks for this, Nick. Hope you don't run out of funds too soon!*

*We telephoned this head with further suggestions and possible approaches to take.*

LEA Adviser

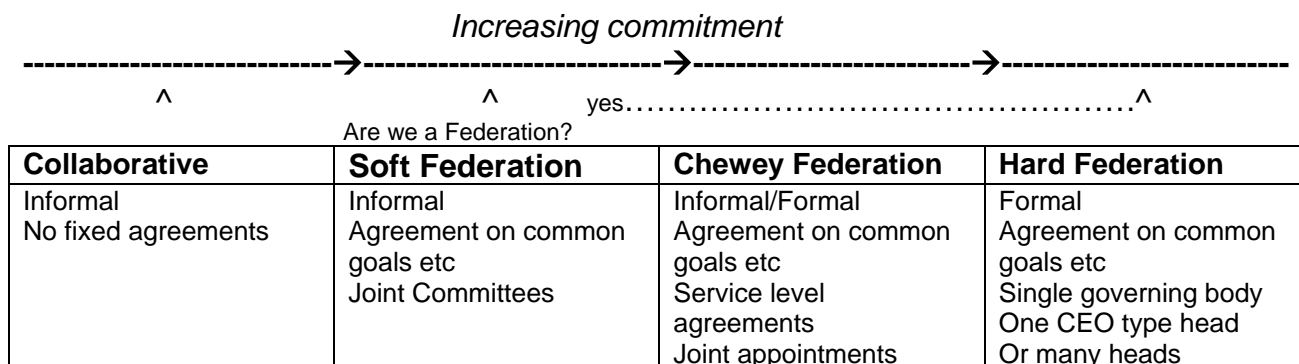
*I suggest you contact John Harris, who advises in Norfolk, where a number of schools have "partnership heads". There are, of course, issues of the formal collaboration between schools (separate finances, governance, staffing or full federation where the school's effectively become a big school on several sites) and a number of models in the country but we don't know of any that are close to you. There is also slightly different terminology being used so beware! You will have heard some of the issues from Christine Pfaff. Our conference in June will focus on these matters. (Visit [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) for details.) Incidentally, there is a closed e-network run by NCSL specifically for advisers working with small schools, which includes a chat room/question space.*

**This is but a selection of the enquiries received recently. NSSF is pleased to help and often is able to put folk in touch with those having a similar problem/solution. Contact [mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net)**

## Federate or what?

The DfES is promoting collaboration between schools as a school improvement strategy. In their booklet “An Introduction to School Federations” (available on-line at the Innovation Unit of the DfES) they tend to use the term “Federation” as encompassing any form of collaboration. Their helpful Continuum outlines the thinking that suggests movement towards “Hard Federation”, which is the definition that the Standards Site makes clear.

## Collaborative Federation Continuum



Much more detail, case studies and legal implication are available at the DfES website.  
eg The DfES is running a series of regional meeting for those interested and seeks the views and  
experience of schools.

Small schools have some of the best and the longest experience of collaborations. The NSSF is also interested to hear from those with experience of travel along this continuum.

## A Personal View

Experience suggests that hard federations can be very successful. They are usually slightly more expensive to run and if not sensitively led can become a large school on several sites. Soft or collaborative federations can also be very successful in enhancing provision. Heads and governors at a school at any point along the continuum need to ensure that the Federation's business supports their children's needs. The point here is that progress along the continuum should not be deemed as inevitable or necessarily desirable. Nevertheless, the shortage of small school headteacher applicants, may be eased in this way.

Mike Carter

## The benefits of glitter from heaven?

I'm sitting in my very warm hotel bedroom overlooking a stunningly beautiful scene of white snow and a frozen river. I'm close the Arctic Circle and it's minus 14 degrees Celsius outside but really comfortable indoors. Children at the local school lead very orderly lives in this sophisticated and confident society where school results are often some of the highest in the PISA comparative scales. Somehow, the schools seem very unpressured and there's lots of happy faces of children and of adults. Perhaps it is deceptive but the pace of life and rate of innovation seems slower than in the UK. Judging from this one visit to Rovaniemi, (the regional capital of Lapland in the North of Finland) here is a relaxed and happy society enjoying good economic benefits, although with a high cost of living.

I've been trying to find the magic formula for their successful education. Teachers sometimes state reasons for their success and their pride in the educational system. I've heard mention of the culture that values education, and teachers seem to be regarded highly but Finland has returned to having a National Curriculum Framework, (although it's fleshed out locally and reviewed every 10 years). Nevertheless, teachers say they have a good deal of autonomy and most are educated to Masters' level. Some feel that the lack of pupil selection and no inspection system helps. (Schools are visited but by a supportive government officer.) However, in line with many European countries, formal schooling starts later than in the UK. It could be a significant factor in promoting higher standards. Much Early Years research has identified this and Wales is beginning to experience it. Furthermore, in Finland, rural schools are given proportionately larger budgets to manage in recognition of sparsity factors.

Yesterday, I visited the beautiful village school at Tapio, with its 23 pupils, 2 teachers and an ice rink.



Despite its popularity and community work, it's up for closure and the only reason is finance. (Pupils and adults make ice sculptures.)



Finland has no measures of school effectiveness, so the school can't prove its value. However, an aspect of good Finnish schooling seems to be the high level of skills that children gain.



Tapio's 11 year olds could hold adult chats in English, play several musical instruments from music and showed an enviable, social maturity. Yes there were just five in the group, but high skill levels were also evident in larger schools.

Oh MY! What a racket! - The peace here is occasionally shattered by the noise of snowmobiles starting off on their trips through the snow laden forests. Even as it gets dark, the lights glitter on the crisp snow which occasionally flutters down from the roofs, sparkling like glitter from heaven. Could this be the magic that makes the difference?

Mike Carter

## **Self evaluation and the SEF in small schools**

### **Objectiveness, integrity and usefulness for small schools with primary age pupils.**

In Issue 20 of the NSSF newsletter and journal, we printed an article giving advice about features of the new inspection system.

This outlined some of the principles of robust school self-evaluation, the SEF and the processes of Section 5 inspections. It also outlined some common weaknesses that OFSTED had discerned in schools' SEFs. I asked you to share your experiences had you been inspected. Only two people have and we are still very interested in how this system is working in small schools to share experience (anonymously). My worry is that some inspectors could fail to recognise the fickleness of SAT results when there are small cohorts, but also that some heads may fail to apportion appropriate value in their SEF to the often strong values and personal development provided for pupils, which are part of the woodwork of many small schools.

Another concern is the amount of time and effort perceived to write the SEF. This is hard to find and produces anxiety to say the least. Yet the SEF is a super tool and its potential for school improvement and gaining confidence in direction, is good and, in many cases, unprecedented. We need to see it, not as a one-off evaluation, but as a document that both prompts and underpins much of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as well as its development.

There's much advice now available about writing a robust SEF. See: OFSTEDs website, judiciously chosen help and advice.

Some points from rigorous SEFs are that they:

- have clear analysis of the school's distinctiveness with a few significant contextual points
- succinctly state what "other views" are and not just how they were gained
- include rigorous data analysis (not just PANDA) and particularly of pupils' achievement (not just SAT results) A further article will deal with how this can be achieved effectively)
- provide evaluation, not just description, of what is provided
- answer all areas of the questions asked, with evidence of impact
- clearly explain grades awarded in overall effectiveness section with evidence, and using benchmarks.
- are short and kept up-dated.

In order to make the SEF a really useful document consider:

- its value in prompting staff to monitor.
- how it helps in identifying strengths and weaknesses
- prompting us to grasp the nettle where needed
- how it can support whole school issues in staff appraisal (PM)
- its value in identifying priorities for improvement
- the justification it provides for expenditure
- the identification of how the cluster/network can support the school
- the way in which it can prompt provision for the permeating ECM outcomes
- it promotes interpretation of PANDA data
- how it (or sections) can provide informed discussion by the governors

And all this is before we consider its value in informing inspectors.

"The new system is principally an exercise in validating the school's own evaluation of how it is doing. Inspectors do not have the time or inclination to wade through a forest of documents; they will be more impressed with short well-focused evidence that supports the self evaluation form (SEF) than by piles of irrelevant documents. Teachers tell pupils sitting exams to make sure they answer the question that's been asked. It's a skill that some heads need to brush up on."

from Selwyn Ward 17 02.06 "Ofsted Expects" TES Friday p15

## NEMED (*NEtwork of Multigrade Education*)

is a trans-national network, where the term 'multigrade education' refers to classes in which teachers work with more than one curriculum grade (age-group, *Ed*) at the same time. It is supported by the Socrates Programme (Comenius 3 Action) of the EU (project no. 114323 - CP -1-2004-1- GR - COMENIUS – C3PP). The website is:

<http://www.nemed-project.org> and is in English and other languages.

Multigrade schools play an important role in providing access to 'Education for All' in many parts of the world – both developing and industrialised. They are also a frequent reality in many parts of Europe, especially in primary education, often through necessity in small schools, where their role is crucial in providing isolated communities with local schooling.

However, there are some indications that a small number of schools are experimenting with multigrade classes for educational reasons. Nevertheless, due to geographical and other socio-economic factors, multigrade schools typically constitute a neglected part of education systems. This project has as its goal to create an online European network of multigrade teachers, who can support each other with ideas for teaching and learning as well as useful materials. The network will also offer workshops, training and a range of resources.

Teachers who are interested and willing to participate in the project, in however small a way, are warmly urged to contact the UK partner,

Anita Pincas, Senior Lecturer,

Lifelong Education and International Development [LEID]

Institute of Education,

20 Bedford Way

University of London

London WC1H 0AL Tel 0207 612 6522 Personal Web page < <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/english/Apincas.htm> >

Short course: Online Education + Training: Full details and application from: <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/english/OET.htm>

### Switch to mixed-age classes

TES

01 April 2005

Charlotte Walsh

A secondary school is to allocate pupils to classes by ability rather than by age. It also plans to put new arrivals with poor literacy or numeracy in primary-style groups. Cheryl Heron, headteacher of Bridgemary School in Gosport, Hampshire, said that while the plan - to be introduced in September - sounded radical, it made sense for children to progress at a rate that suited them.

- Pupils will be assessed and placed in groups for each subject depending on their test results, classwork and teacher's notes.
- The new ability groups will be called access, entry and levels 1, 2 and 3.
- The plan could mean a 14-year-old will study history at entry level but geography at level 2.
- In another radical change designed to ease the transition to secondary, those with poor results will be taught in a classroom set up like a primary, with a single teacher for all their lessons.
- She said the children would have plenty of time to mix with their same-age friends during breaks. Mrs Heron said:

"Children are all different and we need to cater for their individual needs. If they are in a class beyond their capabilities then they become disaffected and do not want to learn. This can lead them to disrupt others. "If youngsters get fed up in one subject then they may switch off in other lessons and lose interest in school..... It is about personalising learning and recognising that children are all individuals and do not learn at the same pace."

## Don't lose your head!

Although many small school headteachers report that they gain a good deal of satisfaction from their job and it has many rewards <sup>(1)</sup> the job is still not seen as desirable and many heads find it highly pressured. So much so, that many excellent teachers are put off headship altogether and especially small school headship. The main reason is that they see just too much to do. Some LEA staff think the job is 'un-do-able', even concluding that small schools should close just for this reason. Additionally, the pay scales are unattractive to deputies from larger schools.

Interestingly, the things that attracted small school heads to their jobs do not quite line up with the potential advantages identified by researchers:

### Attractions to the job: <sup>(1)</sup>

The village setting  
The challenge and ability to make an impact  
The ethos of the small school

The people and the ability to know everyone  
The focus on teaching/classroom influence  
The opportunity to lead in own style

### Potential advantages found by researchers

The ability to make changes quickly <sup>(4)</sup>  
The opportunities for "real learning" <sup>(2)</sup>  
The impact of direct influence at class level <sup>(4)</sup>

The ability to bring aboard many stakeholders <sup>(4)</sup>  
Close knowledge of pupils and parents <sup>(3)</sup>  
Quick decision-making and staff involvement <sup>(3)</sup>

(These are summarised from the fuller explanations and lists available in the references below.)

Brogden's survey of small school heads <sup>(1)</sup> found that once in post, they noted **particular satisfaction through:**

- knowing all the children,
- teamwork and relationships,
- the simple systems that can make things happen,
- their own teaching,
- the family atmosphere,
- involvement with the community and
- Knowing the families well.

**Often heads feel the job has more rewards than many jobs** in education. Indeed, such features of job satisfaction are harder to realise in large schools and some large school headteachers envy them. **So the difficulty is largely to do with time.** For example, one often has to prioritise between urgent issues, essential issues and important issues. Prioritising can lead to stress because to leave a task may let others down or jeopardise the future. But prioritisation is essential and making the most of the available time is a very important skill. (NSSF Paper 6 at [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) may help.) When all's said and done, stress is a feeling in each one of us and few have had rigorous training to develop sufficient resilience. Most heads blame government innovations and these are often problematic in small schools – another factor

contributing to the image of small school headships as being difficult. Yet, we provide some of the best education in the country but lose too many good heads. What can be done?

**We certainly need to prioritise** and learn to do this in the principled way that a good number do already. This might mean ignore "a lot of the paperwork and question the value to the children's learning of whatever initiative arrives from on high".<sup>(1)</sup> We all need to acknowledge that it can't all be done and, furthermore, others know this now. Many of us could improve our time management skills but stress often makes one less time-efficient. I have to take a break and come back clear about what's most important. Yes, there are some ameliorative strategies and we probably need to use lots:

**The head's time is the most valuable commodity a small school has.** Intractable problems may need radical answers. Sometimes hard decisions have to be taken to find funds to reduce the head's load and this is a very high priority, (eg reducing TA time, doubling classes for a period, cancelling

swimming for all but the statutory requirements or even sending a class home for an afternoon of learning on home computers, when legally possible).

Some ameliorative strategies could be:

- **Clustering.** Sharing round generic management tasks, jointly purchased support, shared specialist for PPA or management time release, data analysis, cluster CPD co-ordinator, shared bursar schemes eg Cornwall's, shared aspects of each school's management, eg finding evidence for the SEF such as collation of parents' views but most important is for heads to share the problems and gain strength in numbers.
- **Well focussed CPD.** Much valuable work is done within schools and within clusters. Don't go to courses that fail to address small school issues, buy in specific expertise, use the cluster to look around for the most focussed training available: it may not be in your LEA, "grow a head", heads should ensure resources are available for development of their own teaching.
- **On-line support.** Try NCSLs talking heads small schools' network, use the telephone conference call facility to save time and travel for cluster or other meetings, use other networks to suggest solutions, use "Schoolzone" to investigate and evaluate internet sites for teaching and learning ideas, visit [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) and LEA small school websites,
- **Attitudes.** First we must recognise that we can't do everything we would like to do. Few small schools do. (The same is often true for bigger schools, despite their larger staffs.) Then we must use principled prioritising. This proactive approach impresses inspectors. Focus on what we/you have achieved (which, generically, is very impressive against the odds). I do think we can make opportunities out of threats but only when we promote the positives sufficiently. There's so much to celebrate in small schools we should not let mismatched government initiatives cloud the successes.
- **Refreshers or outward-looking activity.** The churches' retreats seem a good idea for tired professionals so take a good holiday when you can. Taking part in international or other activities outside school also seems to help in renewing resilience to school based difficulties. I found support in the NSSF from colleagues around the country.
- **Good time management and clarity of focus.** These are essential and start from being physically healthy. Some small school heads manage time very well and usually have a clear sense of purpose in their work. However, many find it hard but could improve with further training. This area is rightly dealt with in many headship courses, but it needs to be specific to the small headship. (See NSSF Papers at [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk))
- **Governors' overview.** Governors need to know about the difficulties of the school and of the head's role and most are very supportive. However, they need to keep the head's ambitions in check and promote every strategy to retain the head's effectiveness, for example, by reducing the demands.

But if the headteacher post is to be vacant, it will require considerable thought to replace him or her successfully. Governors may need to consider:

- **"Growing a head".** Are there signs of potential leadership on the existing staff (or dare I suggest a neighbouring school's staff?) How could this be promoted for the future? In fact there is a disproportionately high number of successful NPQH applicants from small school teachers. The opportunities for such suggestion/support/potential are likely to be much greater within the larger domain of a cluster.
- **Advertising in unusual places.** Sometimes, local advertising can yield interest leading to applications, from people who otherwise may not have thought of the job, yet be well qualified.
- **Making the role attractive.** eg by reducing either teaching or management responsibilities or finding novel ways to provide leadership. For example, a Herefordshire small school has recently advertised an "Open Headship" for which applicants might state how they can perform the role eg full/part-time, proportions of teaching/management, etc.

- **Possibilities for two staff sharing the headship.** There have been a few successful examples of this. Eg The TES (30.09.05) reported this in the Lord Scudamore Primary School and Education Guardian (20.09.05) reported about the All Saints Catholic High School. In this article, Wendy Berliner (5) reported NCSL's research and summarised that:

Martin Coles, assistant director of research at the NCSL, says the college is getting one inquiry a week from schools for information about models of shared headship. "People are thinking about their lives in a different way and many people want more flexible hours" he says. "A job share lowers stress, means less isolation and gives you a better work-life balance, and you get more than 100% accountability. Shared leadership is better than the hero leader model."

- **"Shared headship" or Partnership schools – eg in Norfolk.** In this model a head from one school leads another as well. The two schools retain their separate identities and governance. However, it can be seen that the terminology is developing differently in different areas and it is important that clarity is provided. There are a few examples of this model running successfully for a good number of years. With all such suggestions LEA advice and local regulation are critical.
- **Federation.** This is usually a more formal arrangement where two or more schools retain their sites and identities but come under joint leadership and governance. However, the word is sometimes used to denote a group of schools voluntarily sharing some of their provision. There is a growing interest in various forms of collaboration, partly promoted by the DfES. They vary from informal and voluntary clustering to formal amalgamation forming one school on two or more sites. The NSSF conference in June is to look at these and details can be found at the centre pages. The conference welcomes heads, teachers, governors advisers and all interest in small school issues.

The NSSF is seeking to provide more background information about such arrangements and to provide more support, for example, in self-evaluation and time management. So do check on the website from time to time. Meanwhile, there is information available from the DfES and the NCSL (eg Marion Court's research associate report). But it is long term experience and impact on learning that counts. Please let us know if you can share experience that would be helpful to others.

Mike Carter

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- 1) Brogden M. (2003) "Small School Headships" in Newsletter 14, NSSF.
- 2) Carter M. (2004) "Headship in Small Primary Schools: Some Researchers' Views" in Journal and News 18, NSSF.
- 3) Chaplin D., Earlam J. and Davies J. 2004 "Strategies for Effective Management and Leadership of Small Schools" in Journal and Newsletter 17, NSSF.
- 4) Harris J. (2003) "Small Schools Advisory Conference: Managing the Impossible" in Journal and News 15, NSSF.
- 5) Berliner W. (2005) "They're a Right Pair" article in Education Guardian 30.09.05

Because of its involvement with schools in East Sussex and Lincolnshire, CfBT is researching small school leadership development. Dr Jeff Jones of CfBT has enlisted the help of Prof Charles Desforge of Exeter University and small number of heads and advisers are being prepared to carry out semi-structured interviews in these two counties, with strong LEA support. However, a geographically wider background of issues, particularly those concerning collaboration/federation is sought and NSSF is pleased to help by carrying the following invitation. The researchers request that you forward responses to the five questions below, as soon as you can but **no later than the end of April 2006**.

My advice: - answer the questions as stated – stick to the main points – use bits from other documents where appropriate (eg SEF, cluster agreements, etc.).

## **CfBT research project on leadership development in small schools**

**Aim.** The aim of the research project is to establish the actions being taken by heads of small schools to enhance their leadership capacity through various forms of collaboration but with a particular focus on federation in its various forms.

**Background.** Across the whole educational system head teachers are being pressed to extend their leadership capabilities to meet the challenges of educational transformation. Various gurus have suggested that as part of this endeavour heads should develop 'lateral capacity' ie the capacity to network with other heads to learn lessons and spread good practice.

Small schools are particularly interesting in this context first because they are especially vulnerable to the pressures of falling rolls and ever increasing demands placed on schooling (eg the full service extended school) but more especially because they have been leading the way in developing 'lateral capacity' for decades. The upshot is that small schools heads are a potentially rich source of information in this field whilst at the same time they might be most in need of sharing that information. They have important things to teach the system and some lessons to learn from each other.

Whilst there is a great deal of rhetorical literature on small school leadership there is very little evidence based material and the aim of the research project is to help build such a corpus of information.

**Method.** We are calling on heads of small schools to help build a picture of leadership and leadership development. We define a small school as n.o.r.<120. If you are a head of such a school and want to help we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions and send the responses to the editor. There is no word limit to your responses.

1. What is the nature and extent of the leadership challenges facing you?
2. What is the nature and extent of existing forms of collaboration you are involved in beyond your own school?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your current collaboration?
4. What forces are helping or hindering your current collaboration?
5. What action do you plan to enhance your collaboration over the next year? How do you expect this action will help you to achieve your goals?

If you reply we guarantee you complete confidentiality but to help us analyse responses we would need to know the number of children on roll, the % on FSM and a pen portrait of the catchment area indicating the rural/urban background, the dominant social class and other features of the school you think distinctive.

Professor Charles Desforges

Meanwhile NSSF (under Mike Brogden's leadership) is developing a "Paper" on small school headship. This will be especially helpful for new or recent small school headteachers. We are looking for examples of any papers/materials that have been written by an LEA, cluster or school that could support us in this. As with the response to Charles Desforge, please send responses to Mike Carter, who will pass your responses on. By post to:

**NSSF Research, 6, Butterwick Drive, Herongate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY1 3XE**

Alternatively they can be e-mailed to: [mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net)

This article has been heavily edited for reasons of space. We are very grateful to Jude Stringer and Anita Pincas, who here demonstrate a key feature for the effectiveness of small schools but also the hard work needed by teachers. (Ed.) NB. An extensive list of references is available.

## How do multigrade teachers manage monograde resources? (a UK study)

Adapted and partially re-written with permission from the author: **Jude Stringer**,

Nottingham Trent University, School of Education, UK. (Master's degree dissertation, 2005)

By Anita Pincas, Senior Lecturer, Lifelong Education and International Development [LEID] Institute of Education, University of London <<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/english/Apincas.htm>> <<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/english/OET.htm>>

### Overview

In this interview study, multigrade teachers were asked how they manage to effectively teach their classes using monograde resources.

The teachers described a variety of methods mostly including:

- adapting government strategies into their own long and medium term plans,
- teaching year groups concurrently or consecutively,
- combining similar subject units.

Most teachers organise their students by ability, and then try to foster independent learning. The study found that monograde resources are of limited use in the multigrade setting. Teachers were noted to have a number of special qualities necessary for effective teaching of multigrade classes in the given circumstances.

### UK conditions

Multigrade teaching is found most commonly in "small" schools where, from economic necessity, there are fewer teachers to enable single-grade, or monograde, class formation. (Veenman 1995) Very little research about multigrade teaching in England exists but what there is suggests achievement in multigrade classes appears to be no different from achievement in monograde classes. Recent research in 2004 by Dr. Chris Berry of the Institute of Education in London, Learning and teaching in Multigrade setting, found that opportunities and problems within were the same as found by previous researchers – Galton and Patrick (1990), Hargreaves et al (1996) and Hayes (1999). Many teachers are working in multigrade settings.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils progress in monograde classes, but increasingly children are being taught in multigrade classes formed by falling roles rather than by choice. In the United Kingdom in 1997/98, 6.3% of schools enrolled less than 50 children thus giving rise to multigrade teaching. Multigrade classes are a reality in most countries. (Ibid)

There exists a variety of terms for classes where children of mixed ages are taught together. Veenman (1995) distinguishes between multigrade classes where children form two or more grades are taught by one teacher in one room at the same time whilst retaining their respective grade levels, and multiage classes where children are deliberately mixed for educational reasons. Most research on multigrade teaching focuses on its effectiveness and its impact on student learning compared to those pupils in monograde classes. (Gaustad 1992, Katz 1992 and 1995, Kinsey 2001, Cotton 2002) .

Planning for multigrade classes requires much more time and effort than for single grade teaching. (Veenman 1995, Mason & Burns 1995, Vulliamy & Webb 1995, Hayes 1999) Veenman (1995) Mason and Burns (1995) quote teachers who spoke about "twice the work and planning," "stressful," "problematic" dealing with more than one curriculum and "You're very busy every minute." (p41) Vulliamy and Webb (1995) highlight the problems of instigating a rolling four year long term plan for Key Stage 2 (KS2) classes in order to avoid repetition.

Hayes (1999) comments that multigrade classes provide a specific challenge for teachers' ability to plan, organise, manage and monitor children's work but also notes that the complex decisions and demands placed on these teachers, although heavy, are not "unmanageable for an experienced teacher." (p106) Veenman (1995) found that more than 80% of the respondents in his research had not had any training in multigrade classroom teaching. Berry (2001) confirms that multigrade schools are common in many parts of the world particularly in sparsely populated areas but that multigrade teaching is often neglected in texts on curriculum and in teacher training programmes. Curricula are not designed for use by teachers in multigrade schools.

Ofsted (2000) reported that in terms of overall quality of education, pupils in small schools are not disadvantaged when compared with those in larger schools and that small schools are equally capable of providing an effective education and many are the most effective in the country.

### This study found that:

- 1) **multigrade teachers manage monograde resources in a variety of ways**  
(the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are adapted by the teachers themselves, Ofsted (2000) confirm that small schools are producing results as good as, and often better, than monograde schools.)
- 2) **materials are also produced by the teachers themselves.** All of the interviewees indicated that their job would be much easier and their workload lighter if they could have pre-made multigrade schemes of work. Many schools are compelled to work with minimal resources restricted by low budgets.
- 3) **multigrade teachers have many special skills and qualities.**

Storey and Sisson (1993) comment that small schools may incorporate multilayered, interconnecting roles and responsibilities. Multigrade teachers have more demands on their time than monograde colleagues. For many subjects most teachers use a two year rolling programme and all but one is working to construct a four year rolling programme in order to incorporate subjects being introduced in the near future – citizenship and a modern foreign language – and to avoid repetition.

A Netherlands team (Veenman et al 1987, Roelofs et al 1994, Veenman & Raemaekers 1995) concluded that staff development on the theory and practice of multigrade classes increased teachers' instructional and

management skills, their use of materials and space, how to deal with disturbances and improved pupil behaviour, particularly their time on task. Despite these positive findings the researchers note that there were no significant *achievement* differences between trained and untrained teachers.

Ofsted (2000) comment that the quality of education in small schools and hence multigrade schools is often the most effective in the country. One of the schools in this study was consistently the top primary school in the county's league table.

### **Skills and Qualities for Effective Multigrade Teaching**

Specific qualities and skills required of multigrade teachers like *patience, adaptability, super organised, flexibility, enthusiasm, good managerial skills and a variety of ways of approaching problems*, have been identified by researchers as qualities found in all effective teachers. [Getzels & Jackson (1963), Flanders (1970), Rosenshine (1971) Berliner and Tickenhoff (1976), Borich (1988), Mortimore (1988), Kyriacou (1991), (Galton (1995) Hay and McBer (2000) and Muijs and Reynolds (2001)]

However, this study found several qualities and skills that seem to be multigrade specific:

- teach all ages and levels and to know where the children are going i.e. to be fully conversant with the whole primary curriculum;
- adjust one's language to suit the target group;
- be prepared for, and cope with, constant interruptions;
- manage thorough planning and organisation;
- multi-task;
- differentiate extensively;
- maintain concentration and never "switch off".

Resources that would improve the multigrade teacher's job were, in some cases, related to the building and space available, since multigrade teaching self-evidently needs more space to operate effectively because of paired and group work. It almost goes without saying that they need books, practical equipment designed to be used in multigrade schemes of work and containing suggestions for wide differentiation. All respondents wanted more help in the classroom, e.g. full-time, classroom support.

### **Multigrade Classroom Organisation**

Fifty percent of respondents group pupils according to ability but others work in age groups with paired work within those. Another teacher commented that the children have to become independent learners very early. Monograde teaching is viewed as an easier option as there are fewer objectives to concentrate on at the same time. Nevertheless, research by Veenman (1995) Katz (1995) and Kinsey (2001) all point to the advantages gained by children in multigrade setting.

### **Recommendations arising from this research are that:**

- Training for multigrade teaching should be included in all teachers courses;
- In-service training and advice for multigrade teachers is urgently needed;
- Multigrade courses for supporting advisors is urgently needed;
- Education authorities should review education budgets for small schools;
- Multigrade curricula and resources ought to be provided by government.

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## **Issues of relevance to Small Schools in Parliament**

The following pages report a small collection of the debates and questions raised in the parliaments of England and Scotland and the Welsh assembly. They are highly edited, with small schools in mind, from the summaries provided by “Education Parliamentary Monitor”, with the kind permission of the editor, Demitri Coryton. Members wishing for more detail may join this service at [epm@educationpublishing.com](mailto:epm@educationpublishing.com) Relevant reviews will be posted occasionally on the NSSF website for members only. ([www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk))

### **School Funding (England)**

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what response she has made to the representations made by the F40 group of local authorities on school funding. [33570]

**Jacqui Smith:** I met representatives of the F40 group of authorities in June 2005 and listened to their presentation about the funding model which the group supports, and subsequently wrote to the group's chair following my statement to the House of 21 July 2005 about the new school funding arrangements to be introduced from April 2006. My department has recently replied to the group's request for a further meeting about the funding model, indicating that officials will be happy to meet representatives of the group as part of the longer term review of the school funding arrangements announced in my statement of 21 July. We will announce in the new year the terms of reference for the review and our detailed proposals for engagement with individual local authorities, their representative organisations and special interest groups, including the F40 group, and with other key stakeholders.  
6 December 2005

### **Yellow School Buses (England)**

**Ben Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent discussions she has held with the Secretary of State for Transport with regard to yellow school buses. [33880]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Secretary of State for Education and Skills has not held any discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the subject of yellow buses in recent months. However, my Department and the Department for Transport share the view that well-designed yellow bus schemes have the potential to reduce car dependency for journeys to school and the traffic congestion that results from this. We would anticipate that, subject to the will of Parliament, some local authorities might include proposals for yellow bus provision in their bids for the pathfinder schemes envisaged by the recent White Paper—Higher Standards, Better Schools for All.  
6 December 2005

### **Surplus School Places (Northern Ireland)**

**Lady Hermon:** To ask the Secretary of State for **Northern Ireland** what strategic planning his Department has undertaken to address surplus school places in Northern Ireland. [35320]

**Angela E. Smith:** Surplus places are removed from the schools estate through closures and amalgamations, and through the capital programme which provides schools to meet long-term demand when buildings are replaced. The education and library boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools are aware of the need to take action to tackle surplus places and I have offered some financial support towards the costs of bringing forward rationalisation proposals. Following a review of the procurement and delivery arrangements for the schools' estate earlier this year, the Department of Education has been examining how to improve the planning of school provision in future, including the need for rationalisation, and intends to provide guidance to school authorities on longer term planning of the estate.  
8 December 2005

### **School Closures and Surplus Places (England)**

A House of Commons debate on school closures and surplus places was held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2006 which was led by Dr John Pugh (Southport). He saw the falling rolls issue as significant but that the new Education Bill might

diminish the ability of LEAs to manage the surplus place situation. Several MPs outlined the potential hard decisions needed in their constituencies. The minister was unable to give a figure for the cost of surplus places. This debate echoed many of the comments in the following debate on school closures.

## **School Closures (Weaver Vale)      House of Commons Debate**

House of Commons • Westminster Hall Debate • 13 December 2005

**F**alling rolls in primary schools have set off a number of short debates in Parliament in recent months as MPs respond to local consultations about school mergers and closures. Mike Hall (Lab, Weaver Vale) had sought this debate because he objected not just to specific proposals in his constituency but to the methodology used by Conservative-controlled Cheshire County Council.

Mr Hall told Members that the county had produced a report entitled *Transforming learning communities* as the basis for its attempt to deal with falling rolls. The result in his constituency was the possible closure of two or three schools. This was the result of a process in which the county had divided the LEA into eight areas and was working systematically around them examining the demand for and supply of school places.

Mr Hall objected to the closure of Frodsham Technology College and the possible closure of village primary schools in Weaver Vale. The county's claim that falling rolls was one of the justifications for the proposal was challenged by Mr Hall, on the grounds that the LEA was using 2002 population figures and that the birthrate in the county was now rising. Mr Hall also objected to what he called the "piecemeal approach" of the county, which would result in his area being re-reviewed after three years. He called for the county to take look at all the schools in the county and not work on an area basis.

Mr Hall was supported by Andrew Miller (Lab, Ellesmere Port & Neston), whose wife was a governor of one of the village schools listed for possible closure. He agreed with Mr Hall that the county's methodology was dubious.

School's Minister of State Jacqui Smith (Lab, Redditch) could offer little comfort to the two Cheshire MPs because, as she reminded the House, decisions on school closures were now taken locally.

Mrs Smith told the chamber that Cheshire was indeed reviewing its surplus places in Frodsham and Helsby and it was undertaking a public consultation on proposals for schools in those areas. The Minister said that it was important that such a consultation process should allow for alternative proposals to be put forward and she said that the law had been changed to require LEAs to consult the local MP.

The Minister emphasised that these were not statutory proposals for closure or merger; they would come later after the county's executive committee had decided which proposals should go forward into the statutory change process. Mrs Smith agreed with a point Mr Hall had made, that there was a presumption against the closure of rural schools but she pointed out that it was not the policy that no village schools should be closed. The Department's own guidance did suggest that schools with fewer than 150 children might have difficulty maintaining the quality of education.

## **Head Teachers (England)**

**Mr. Gibb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what steps she is taking to promote the recruitment of head teachers. [46407]

**Jacqui Smith:** We are doing more than ever before to provide the incentives, pay and professional development to attract and retain effective head teachers. The top of the leadership group pay spine in England and Wales has risen by 35 per cent. since 1997 to £93,327 now, with nearly £100,000 available in inner London. Schools and LAs have greater flexibility to award recruitment and retention incentives and they can set a head teacher's salary above the top of the pay spine. Vacancy rates for head teachers are low—0.8 per cent. in 2005. Through the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), we will continue to develop strong school leaders with the necessary skills to help us achieve our objective of raising standards for every pupil in every school. Since 2001, over 14,000 candidates have completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship, which prepares aspiring heads to take up headship posts in schools.

And we have also asked the NCSL to consider how it can help schools make more effective succession planning arrangements and to work with governor associations and other key partners, including local authorities, to develop advice to governors on recruitment, selection and succession planning.

30 January 2006

### **Headteacher Training; (Wales)**

**Janet Ryder:** What money is available for existing head teachers to access training? (WAQ45761)

**Jane Davidson:** The national headship development programme in Wales supports professional development for aspiring, newly appointed and experienced headteachers. Since April 2005, this programme has been fully funded centrally by the Assembly Government. A specific allocation of £1.55 million supported this programme during 2005-06, allocated equally to fund training for aspiring headteachers and professional development for existing headteachers. In light of recommendations arising from a quinquennial review of the national headship development programme last year, significant development work is being undertaken to refresh the leadership programmes during 2006.

Prior to launching a new leadership development programme early next year, during 2006, the Assembly Government will continue to fully fund support for new heads, together with follow up support for experienced heads involved in the leadership programme for serving headteachers. Appropriate levels of funding have also been allocated to fully support the new leadership programmes during 2006-07. From April 2006, £210,000 will be made available to support an innovative leadership seminar programme to provide higher order professional development for up to 300 experienced school leaders, together with £100,000 to support a pilot consultant leader programme at the National College for School Leadership in England, providing additional professional development opportunities for a further 24 heads from Wales.

*16 February 2006*

### **Closing Primary Schools: (Wales)**

**Alun Cairns:** Will the Minister list in detail the criteria taken into account when considering a local authority's request to close a primary school? (WAQ44654)

**Jane Davidson:** The criteria are set out in full in circular 23/02. I am arranging for a copy to be sent to you. The circular can also be accessed at the Learning Wales website through the following link: <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/circulars/2302/cover-e.htm>

Of prime importance is the effect that such a proposal would have on standards of education; consideration of the quality and diversity of provision in the alternative school or schools proposed is thus a major factor. The interests of the learner are paramount. I would not be prepared to approve the closure of a Welsh-medium school unless the alternative proposed also offered Welsh-medium education of at least equivalent quality. Other important factors include the impact of closure on accessibility and on journey-to-school times, financial issues, the amount of surplus capacity in the area and whether alternatives to closure had been explored. I also take full account of the points raised by statutory objectors and the potential effect a closure could have on a community.

*10 November 2005*

### **School Closures (Wales)**

**Lisa Francis:** How many schools have closed in Wales since 1999 and would the Minister break these figures down for each constituency? (WAQ45811)

**Jane Davidson:** This information is available by local education authority, but not by constituency, as follows. It shows that 57 schools have closed in the period in question. This list does not include amalgamations of junior and infant schools, closures of nursery schools or instances where a school has been replaced by a new school on the same site.

### **Foundation Stage Profile (England)**

**Mr. Gibb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many statements are included in the Foundation Stage Profile. [46134]

**Beverley Hughes:** The QCA Foundation Stage Profile scales booklet covers 13 areas of development related to the early learning goals. For each area, the booklet offers a series of statements, numbered 1 to 9, describing aspects of

development within that area (117 statements in all). For each individual child, teachers decide which of the nine statements in each area best describe the child's stage of development. Schools report to the local authority, as the child's "score", 13 numbers ranging from 1 to 9.

1 February 2006

### **Funding for Rural Schools (England)**

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the allocation of funding for schools in rural areas in 2006–07. [50219]

**Jacqui Smith:** The formula used to calculate Schools Formula Spending Share for 2005–06 and previous years took account of the extra spending needed by sparsely populated rural authorities, mainly to keep larger numbers of small primary schools open; the additional costs for secondary schools are mainly from home to school transport, funding for which was delivered through the LEA FSS for 2005–06, and which continues to be part of the local government finance settlement. Since the formula for Dedicated Schools Grant starts from local authorities' spending on schools for 2005–06, which in two thirds of cases was above Schools FSS, so that will also take account of the extra spending needed by rural authorities. In distributing their Schools Budget, most local authority formulae take account of the need to provide extra funding for smaller schools, to allow them to meet the extra costs they face, that a purely pupil led formula would not deliver.

15 February 2006

### **Local Government Finance Debate**

### **Scottish Parliament • Delegated Legislation • 8 February 2006**

**The Scottish Parliament debated the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2006 (SSI 2006/29). Most of the debate concerned local government finance and is not covered in this report, which concentrates on those aspects of the debate that referred to education and young people.**

Fiona Hyslop (SNP, Lothians) said that it was interesting that the targets on class size reductions and employing more teachers were for 2007–08, while the spending to produce those changes was coming through now in the 2006–07 settlement. Local authorities had said that, because of the pressure on budgets from single status, they were considering school closures. She said that it was known from the efficiency programme statements that councils should not touch the revenue costs that related to the number of teachers who were employed, but if councils were considering school closures how were they to ensure that there was a sufficient number of teachers?

If sufficient resources were being put in, why was it that, in Glasgow, nursery teachers were being pulled out of nursery classes to save £370,000? With all the money that was going into education, why were cuts being made now, especially given that education should not be targeted under the Government's efficiency proposals?

In West Lothian, an extra £600,000 needed to be provided for residential child care, specialised foster placements, child protection and care of children with

special needs. There had been legislation on special needs, but it needed to be resourced through core funding. Last week, the First Minister had talked about the need for children of drug misusing families to have temporary or permanent care places, but that would cost money, which should be provided through core funding. Local authorities throughout Scotland had to spend 50 per cent more than their grant-aided expenditure allowance on children's services to protect Scotland's children. Local authorities faced tough practical choices in relation to the children of Scotland.

The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform & Parliamentary Business, George Lyon (LDP, Argyll & Bute) said that compared with the revenue support for core services that was provided in the 2005 order, the increase for 2006–07 of £315 million that had been announced today represented a like-for-like increase of 3.9 per cent. A further increase of more than £140 million had been provided to meet the spending pressures that had arisen since the 2005 order was approved. On top of that, another £1.1 billion would be provided to councils in specific revenue grants, which would support new and refurbished schools, criminal social work initiatives and the achievement of strategic waste targets. An additional £0.7 billion would be provided in direct support for councils' investment in infrastructure. The total support that would be provided to Scottish councils would amount to around £10.1 billion in 2006–07.

SP 2006/0059

## Draft School Finance (England) Regulations 2006

### House of Lords • Motion for Approval • 16 February 2006

After the approval by the House of Commons last week of the School Finance Regulations they came to the House of Lords this week. In a short debate many of the points made in the earlier Commons' committee hearing were repeated.

Lord Adonis presented the regulations to the House and in doing so said that they contained three important changes to the current school finance arrangements. These were: a ring-fenced dedicated education budget for each LEA; multi-year budgets for schools; and a rationalisation of the standards grants.

The Minister believed that the Government's approach balanced national prescription with local flexibility. The rules would ensure that LEAs kept their core central costs in education separate from the schools budget. There would be new rules on how to count pupils for the purposes of setting a budget. In future, all schools would have a budget based on the number of children on the roll in January with special provisions for schools with three points of entry.

The regulations did allow for LEAs to hold back a larger amount from schools budgets where there was exceptional reason to do so. In future, such decisions would need the approval of the schools forum for the LEA rather than the Secretary of State.

### Education Finance (England)

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how Government grants for education will be affected by the White Paper proposals; [50456]

(2) what changes are expected under the White Paper proposals with respect to councils' allocated education budget; and what assessment she has made of the possible effects on levels of council tax. [50457]

**Jacqui Smith:** One of the main changes arising from the White Paper will be a greater emphasis on Personalised Learning, with its stronger focus on English and mathematics, and on those children who have a particular gift or talent. We see this greater focus as being key to driving up standards and to tackling the persistent achievement gaps between social and ethnic groups. As I stated in the Schools Funding announcement on 7 December 2005, funds within the new Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) have been specifically earmarked for Personalised Learning. Primary schools will receive an additional £230 million by 2007–08, while £335 million will be available for secondary schools to deliver personalised learning for 11 to 14-year-olds. Those schools with the highest number of children who have fallen behind in English and maths will receive a further targeted £60 million grant in each of 2006–07 and 2007–08, shared equally across the primary and secondary sectors, to provide more effective one-to-one and small group tuition. In making arrangements for the DSG and its distribution, we have allowed for the White Paper policies of more independent schools entering the maintained sector, and for more schools becoming academies. We do not otherwise expect that the White Paper will affect the Schools Budgets of authorities. In so far as White Paper policies cause increased costs to affect the LEA Budgets of authorities, we will provide extra funding under the New Burdens rules. We do not therefore expect there to be an impact on council tax.

15 February 2006

### Headteachers (England)

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the introduction of the extended schools scheme on head teachers' work-life balance. [49310]

**Jacqui Smith:** By 2010 we expect all schools to be providing access to a core offer of extended services, including child care from 8 am to 6 pm; a varied menu of study support activities; parenting support; swift and easy referral to specialist services and wider community use of facilities. Head teachers, along with others, will want to ensure that these services are planned to support the overall vision of the school and contribute towards the School Improvement Plan. However, we do not expect teachers to provide or head teachers to directly manage all these new services. Schools working with their local authority may wish to nominate an extended schools co-ordinator to develop services, and may work in clusters with other schools and children's centres in their area. We are also encouraging schools to work in partnership with existing local private and voluntary sector providers. The National Remodelling Team will take a lead role in supporting schools through the development of extended services to ensure that it is consistent with the tenets of work force reform. Extended services can help remove barriers to learning and give support to pupils with their non-educational problems, helping school heads and teachers focus on their core job of teaching. We do recognise that the context of school leadership continues to evolve quickly, and so we have welcomed the School Teachers Review Body's timely recommendation for an independent study to report by December 2006 on the roles, responsibilities, structures and reward systems of the leadership group, looking at both current practice and likely future developments. We will announce shortly further details on the independent study.

15 February 2006

### **Vacant Headteacher Posts (Wales)**

**William Graham:** How many posts for the position of headteacher in both primary and secondary schools in Wales have been vacant for (a) longer than two years (b) 19 to 24 months (c) 13 to 18 months (d) six to 12 months and ( e ) under six months? (W AQ45399)

**William Graham:** Will the Minister confirm the number of primary and secondary schools in Wales which currently have a vacancy for the position of headteacher? (W AQ45406)

**Jane Davidson:** Separate data in relation to headteacher vacancies in Wales are not held centrally. Data produced by an independent body, Education Data Surveys, on senior staff appointments in England and Wales indicate that, since January 2003, 284 posts were advertised in the Times Educational Supplement in Wales, of which 16 per cent were re-advertised. This figure is lower than figures for re-advertisement in England for the same period. My officials are engaged in ongoing dialogue with local education authorities and these discussions have not provided any evidence to suggest that headteacher vacancies or time taken to fill posts has changed significantly in the past year. The national professional qualification for headteachers provides a training and development programme for aspiring headteachers in Wales. We are conscious of the need for sufficient qualified practitioners to apply for headship vacancies as the NPQH is now a mandatory requirement for all headteachers appointed to their first substantive post. I am therefore pleased that in Wales, 200 teachers have secured headship posts since gaining the qualification and we currently have 650 teachers, who are not headteachers, who hold the national professional qualification for headship, making a total of 850 headteachers and teachers who are qualified to be headteachers. In addition there are over 200 teachers working towards this qualification, with another 165 about to embark on the programme this month, which will add another 365 teachers who will qualify in the next year. Once appointed, new headteachers in Wales are supported by the professional headship induction programme, which facilitates retention during the early stages in post as heads.

26 January 2006

### **Small School Closure (Wales)**

**Nick Bourne:** How many small schools closed across mid and west Wales during 2005? (W AQ45412)

**Jane Davidson:** I am providing the information requested in respect of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Ceredigion and the relevant parts of Conwy and Gwynedd in the list below.

#### **Small' school closures in Mid and West Wales counties during 2005**

Carmarthenshire - None; Pembrokeshire - None; Powys - Treacastle Primary, Libanus Primary; Ceredigion – None; Conwy – None; Gwynedd – None.

Small has been defined for the purpose of this answer as a school having fewer than 90 pupils on roll.

'Closure' in this context does not include Infant and Junior school amalgamations or instances where a school has been replaced by a new school on or near the same site. It also does not include federated schools i.e. schools on several sites, where one site may have closed.

26 January 2006

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## **NSSF partners**

The NSSF works with a number of organisations for various aspects of its work:

**NCSL** - NSSF has helped support development of the Small Schools Leadership Programme.

**GTC** - NSSF is grateful for collaboration in making sure small school matters are accounted for in consideration of CPD for all.

**SDF** - The "DD office" section of this web design company supports NSSF administration eg of meetings and running conferences, as well as running our well visited website.  
On these issues contact can be made at [diane@sdfonline.co.uk](mailto:diane@sdfonline.co.uk)

**PBM** - This training and inspection company helps NSSF with producing and distributing our Journal and newsletter as well as dealing with membership matters.  
On membership issues contact can be made at [admin@pbm-group.co.uk](mailto:admin@pbm-group.co.uk)



## **NATIONAL SMALL SCHOOLS' FORUM**

**Aim: To Promote High Quality Education in Small Schools**

**www.nssf.co.uk**

## **INFORMATION PAGES**

### **About the NSSF**

Registered Charity Number 1096234

The **NSSF** is an independent, member organisation with charitable status, which seeks to promote the continued development of good standards of teaching and learning in small primary schools. Its 1200+ members include individual schools, heads and teachers, governors, LEAs, LEA advisers, independent consultants and groups of schools in the United Kingdom.

Our aim to promote high quality education in small schools is implemented via the termly meetings of the **FORUM**, Journal & News, publications and papers, a website and an annual conference which keep members in touch with one another, with research into the work of small schools and with developments at national and local levels. We do not, however, engage in campaigns on behalf of schools that have been identified for reorganisation by their local authorities beyond calling attention to the evidence about the high standards attained by pupils in small schools.

Our definition of small primary schools includes schools of up to about 100 pupils in nursery, primary, first, infant, junior, middle-deemed-primary and special settings. Because recent government grants for small school projects included those of up to 200 pupils, we have in membership a number of these larger enterprises. We also have a few large schools whose heads welcome our emphasis on high quality teaching and learning and on slim management systems. We welcome this diversity.

### **Membership**

Membership is open to individuals (eg heads, teachers, governors, LEA personnel, colleagues in HE etc), schools, higher education establishments, groups and clusters and local education authorities. Individual persons or schools join for £10 per annum; groups, clusters and education authorities join for £4 per school plus £4 per adviser or officer who may also wish to receive our mailings, subject to a minimum of 6. Membership brings the benefits of two Journal & News each year, attendance at meetings of the **FORUM**, access to the members' section of the **NSSF** website and preferential rates at our annual conference.

The membership year is from **1 April**. The individual membership fee remains at £10 but we have reluctantly increased the group/LEA discounted fee to £4 per school/adviser/officer for 2003/4 on. This is still very good value at only 40% of the individual price.

For membership details visit the **NSSF** website or contact the membership secretary, Mike Carter, 6, Butterwick Drive, Herongate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY1 3XE. Tel: 01743 233893. E-mail: mike.carter3@tesco.net

### **Member Education Authorities and Groups**

In addition to our individual members, the following groups and education authorities have joined their small schools. These groups and LEAs benefit from greatly reduced subscription rates, in return for one person acting as the point of contact who also distributes our Journal & News and conference information. Details of this scheme and an application form can be found on our website or by contacting Jim Cork (see Membership above).

LEA and group membership for 2005/6 comprised the following but this list is being up-dated.

<b>Name</b>	<b>LEA/Group</b>	<b>No of schools</b>
Barnsley	LEA	27
Buckinghamshire	LEA	92
Devon	LEA	138
East Lothian	LEA	11
East Sussex	LEA	80
Flintshire	LEA	22
Herefordshire	LEA	36
Isle of Wight	LEA	11
Leicestershire	LEA	69
Milton Keynes	LEA	14
Norfolk	LEA	139
North Ayreshire	LEA	11
Nottinghamshire	LEA	100
Renfrewshire	LEA	6
Shropshire	LEA	63
South Gloucestershire	LEA	8
Staffordshire	LEA	63
Threshfield	Group	6

**NSSF Papers** offer guidance to small schools on matters of policy, management and curriculum. They take the realities of life in small schools into account and reflect the need for slim and effective systems.

**NSSF Reports** are digests of research and other studies, articles that have appeared in the NSSF Journal and News, and reports of conferences

Paper no:	Title All but P14 – P14c can be downloaded from <a href="http://www.nssf.co.uk">www.nssf.co.uk</a> All can be emailed	Price	Postage required	Env. size
P1	Required policies and documents; a guide to the law (Updated March 2002)	Free	A	C5
P2	Checklist: Content of the governors' annual report to parents; a guide to the law	Free	A	C5
P3	Checklist: Content of the school prospectus: a guide to the law	Free	A	C5
P4	Development planning; keeping it short and simple	£1.50	B	C4
P5	Development planning forms (Word disc or can be sent free of charge by email)	£5	B	C5
P6	Time tips for busy small school heads	Free	A	C5
P7	A matrix of monitoring suggestions	Free	A	C5
P8	Differentiation	£1.50	B	C4
P9	Towards a policy for boys' attainment	Free	A	C5
P10	The curriculum; coverage, balance and teaching time: (Updated October 2002)	Free	A	C5
P11	The head's report to the governing body	£1.50	B	C4
P12	A code of conduct for school governors	Free	A	C5
P14	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: YR/Y1 Numeracy and Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
P14a	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y1/Y2 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
P14b	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y2/Y3 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
P14c	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y3/Y4 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
P15	Cultural Education in Small Primary Schools (2003)	Free	A	C5
P16	A Model Complaints Procedure (2003)	£1.00	A	C5

Report no:	Title All but R1 can be downloaded or emailed	Price	Postage required	Env. size
R1	The Small Rural Primary School and its Community: Educating Together, by Ronald Arnold (Published jointly by the NSSF and Action for Communities in Rural England [ACRE]) (NB not available by email)	£1.50	B	C5
R2	Small Schools: Big Future: report on conference held on 3 October 2003	£1.50	B	C4
R3	What are small schools' advantages and disadvantages for pupils' learning, by Mike Carter (from NSSF News 16; 2004)	Free	A	C5
R4	Small School Headship: Part 1 – Are there enough applicants? Part 2 - NSSF Study of what heads find rewarding, by Mike Brogden (from NSSF News 13 & 14; 2003)	£1.00	A	C5
R5	Review of research into small schools: some annotated references (Part 1) by Mike Carter (from NSSF News 12; 2002)	£1.00	A	C5

**There are three ways to obtain copies of NSSF Papers and Reports:**

1. Download from the members' section of the **NSSF** website (except for P14 – 14c and R1). This is free of charge.
2. Email [mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net) with your requirements (except for R1) to be sent as Word attachments. Also free of charge.
3. Send for copies by post to: Mike Carter, 6 Butterwick Drive, Herongate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 3XE

**IF REQUESTING BY POST PLEASE NOTE:**

- **Official orders are not accepted: a cheque must accompany orders for priced items**  
(This is because we don't have staff so pre-payment saves a lot of the volunteers' time.)

- **SAE essential (see above for size and stamp)** with note of your requirements  
(This is also because we don't have staff.)

- **Envelope codes:** C5 holds A4 folded once; C4 holds A4 unfolded
- **Postages on SAE:** up to 3 papers at A = 20p (second class) or 28p (first class)  
4 or more at A = 34p or 42p  
1 paper at B = 34p or 42p  
2 or 3 papers at B = 46p or 60p  
1 paper at C = 46p or 60p  
2 papers at C = 80p or £1.01  
3 papers at C = £1.25 or £1.56  
4 papers at C = £1.68 or £2.10  
Other combinations: please use best guess!

- **Cheques** to the **NSSF**, please

**Regional Representatives**

Our regional representatives provide informal links between the **NSSF** and their areas. We don't define "regions" so we're very happy to have several reps in an LEA area. Regional reps are invited to the termly meetings of the **FORUM** and to bring or send us news of small school issues in their regions. The news is added to the minutes of the meetings and summarised in this Journal & News at intervals.

Contact details for the regional reps can be found on the **NSSF** website. (This list may be dated and is currently being checked.)

Vera Ballinger	Nottinghamshire	David Chaplin	Devon	Dot Charlton	Northumberland
Lucy Davis	Forest of Dean	Tessa Pemberton	Essex	Julia Matthew	Northumberland
Gill Deakin	Worcestershire	Chris Williams	S. Gloucestershire	Mike Carter	Shropshire
Lesley Mason	East Sussex	Mrs N Skinner	Kent	Janis Jenkins	Staffordshire
Geoff Lee	NCSL	Marilyn Thom	Kent	Carol Tosh	Buckinghamshire
Joe Caudle	Cornwall	Alison Pile	Lancashire	Stephanie Fane	Surrey
David Cornwall	Cumbria	Jim Cork	Lincolnshire	John Harris	Norfolk
Anne Bark	Milton Keynes	Linda Orchard	Staffordshire	Derek Mullen	Leicestershire

#### NSSF officers and committee

Name	Role	From	Phone	Email
Carol Tosh	Chairperson	Buckinghamshire	01296 383522	ctosh@buckscc.gov.uk
John Harris	Vice-chairman	Norfolk	01603 433276 x123	john.harris.edu@norfolk.gov.uk
Vera Ballinger	Minuting Secretary	Nottinghamshire	01427 880342	veraballinger@yahoo.com
Mike Carter	Membership Secretary + Newsletter Editor	Shropshire	01743 233893	mike.carter3@tesco.net
Chris Williams	Treasurer	S. Gloucestershire	01454 313682	cwilliams0@btinternet.com
Christine Pfaff	Committee	Dorset	01305 852977	christinepfaff@btinternet.com
Janis Jenkins	Committee	Staffordshire	01782 796214	headteacher@swynnerton.staffs.sch.uk
Chris Foster	Committee	GTC	0790 1580 897	Chris.foster@gtce.org.uk
Julie Grainger	Committee	Northumberland	01890 882207	admin@cornhill.northumberland.sch.uk
Anne Bisset	Committee	East Lothian	01620 823298	abisset@st-marys.elcschool.org.uk
Diane Miller	Committee	Leicestershire	0116 2478563	office@arnesby.leics.sch.uk
Diane Fisher	Committee	"DD Office" and Web-site.	01296 431513	
Donna Miller	Non-Committee			

#### Meetings of the FORUM

The **FORUM** meets termly, usually as centrally as possible and sometimes in regional areas to follow up a particular issue or contribution. These Saturday meetings begin with a meeting of the committee to sort out **NSSF** business and plans and we are joined by regional representatives and members for the main part of the meetings. The officers and committee conduct business in between meetings via email to enable the **FORUM** meetings to focus on more interesting matters. At each meeting we hope to have a speaker(s) to talk with us about areas of particular interest to the work of small schools. These include curriculum, management, leadership, LEA issues, research, ideas, successes, practicalities etc. Regional reps tell us about small school issues in their areas and other news and ideas are exchanged. These meetings are much valued and seen as mini-conferences which help to keep people in touch and enthused – Saturdays well spent despite the giving up of increasingly precious "free" time.

The dates for the next **FORUM** meeting is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, to be held in or near Leicester. For further information about the venues and programmes for the meetings of the **FORUM**, please visit the **NSSF** website.

#### Annual Conference

This residential 24-hour event, held annually, offers an opportunity to hear contributions from heads and teachers and from advisers, researchers and others whose experience and studies inform the work of small schools. In addition to the speakers there are group sessions and meals and coffee breaks which give time to the important business of meeting people from across the UK and exchanging ideas and information. Details are posted on our website and in **NSSF** Journal & News.

#### Journal & News

The **NSSF** Journal & News is published at twice a year and is an important means of keeping in touch with members. Back copies for the past year or so are in the members' section of the **NSSF** website.

#### Website

Go to [www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) for news and information, NSSF Papers and Reports, back copies of the Journal, conference plans, membership details and the document summary service. A member's password is required for the summary service. Members should please email Mike Carter at [mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net) with your name, school, cluster name (if applicable) and LEA and a password will be sent to you.

## Forum Meeting

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006**

**Venue to be confirmed (watch out on website or contact Mike Carter)**

**Please contact Mike Carter (mike.carter3@tesco.net or 01743 233893) with a message to say your contact details and that you are coming. You will be sent updated details and a map, etc.**

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## **Its easy to enter our free website competition**

**Entries by: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

**Enter your school's website for a £100 prize - free entry (just 4 entries received so far)**

**To be presented at the Conference 22/23 June at Missenden Abbey**

All you need do is to e-mail your school's web-site address to [mike.carter3@tesco.net](mailto:mike.carter3@tesco.net) and that you want to enter it by 13<sup>th</sup> April. After this, the judges will access each and decide the winner. This will be announced and presented during an event during National Small School's Week. The criteria for judges are:

- |                            |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Ease of use,            | b) Addressing likely audiences,     |
| c) Breadth of functions,   | d) Reflection of school principles, |
| e) Use by or for children, | f) "Human scale"                    |
| g) Up-dated.               |                                     |

Previous winners' and committee members' sites are not eligible to be entered.

The last winner was: [www.swynnerton.staffs.sch.uk](http://www.swynnerton.staffs.sch.uk)

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## **The third National Small Schools' Week** **Week beginning 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

In planning for the year, you may like to take account of this. You could link Summer events to the week, or plan for your cluster's get-together then, for example, or - etc, etc. A list of previous happenings was posted in Journal and News 18 (Autumn '04), and is also available on the website:

[www.nssf.co.uk](http://www.nssf.co.uk) The week has good potential to promote small schools and your successes locally and nationally. There will be some national events held with an aim of keeping small school education in a high profile. Let us know what you are planning for this week. There will be more suggestions and plans made soon so look out on the website. Also available free will be stickers and A4 posters. Let Mike Carter know the quantity you require.