



NEWSLETTER 14

Summer 2003

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Conference details and booking form: **Small Schools – Big Future**
(Jointly organised with the National Association for Small Schools and Human Scale Education)

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- Promoting high quality education in small schools -

Newsletter 14

Summer 2003

The **NSSF** Newsletter is published three 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 Newsletter on our behalf.

For information on how to join the **NSSF**, please see the details at the end of this newsletter.

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Editorial

Mike Brogden



We live in interesting times. The government works hard to invent new ideas at frequent intervals to keep us from becoming complacent. One of the latest is that museums should take over the running of some schools. No doubt they could do this on Mondays when many museums are closed. We've had armaments manufacturers, railway maintenance companies, road menders and others trying to run schools and LEAs. Legislation has enabled governors in England to run post offices but I'm not aware of schemes for headteachers to take over the running of industries, hospitals, police forces and the fire brigade but the idea is worth considering. As one of the respondents to our questionnaire on headship in small schools says, if you can run a small school, you can do anything, probably several things, simultaneously. The results of the survey indicate a very dedicated workforce who enjoy their many roles, concentrate on providing a broad and high quality education and do so by ignoring much of the perceived wisdom that arrives from government and local sources. This is a report to savour and for local

Leading and Managing the Small Primary School in Scotland

Conference Report

Mike Carter

Mike Carter reports on the first conference in Scotland to be organised for heads of small schools by the Centre for Educational Leadership which is based at the University of Edinburgh. He notes that for Scotland, this conference was unique in recognising that the leadership needs of small schools are different from those of larger schools.

Address by Yvonne McCracken from the borders (accompanied by two heads) who discussed the costs and benefits of “shared headship,” the Scottish version of two or more schools sharing one head. Shared headship works well when there are good local reasons for it and the heads are able, competent and sensitive enough leaders to fill these difficult roles. Shared heads, she said, need to generate informality and replace any lost informal communication.



Shared head generating informality whilst travelling between schools

First workshop:

Led by Bob Barfoot HMI, using findings from Scottish small school inspections:

1. What are the leadership qualities needed?
 - taking account of the views of others;
 - interpersonal skills;
 - objective evaluations of the qualities of staff;
 - promoting the best practice;
 - taking difficult decisions when needed.
2. What professional competence and commitment is needed?
 - wide-ranging up-to-date skills;
 - best model of teaching;
 - ability to direct, communicate and manage;
 - able to identify clear priorities based on objective self-evaluation;

- putting learning and achievement at the centre of management activity;
 - high level of differentiation in mixed age (“composite” in Scotland) classes, by aptitude and ability not by age.
3. How do relationships and teamwork support the school?
 - partnership should be productive;
 - effective communication about the school’s work;
 - actively seek feedback;
 - a planned approach to teamwork.

Second workshop:

Led by Linda Christie who supports a network of small schools in Perth and Kinross. The network works to alleviate some of the perceived inhibiting factors in small schools and is successful because it is owned by its members. Workshop participants raised some concerns:

- some parents expect pupils to receive almost full-time one-to-one attention;
- the regulations and administration for nursery provision are onerous;
- the use and distribution of classroom support assistant seems to be problematical;
- continuity between the 3 – 5 and 5 – 14 curriculum is difficult to achieve, especially in multi-composite classes;
- there are several different and overlapping systems for action planning including SDPs, Quality Evaluations, EDPs and National Priorities. This leads to a lack of focus and some duplication.

Address by Valerie Wilson, Director of the Scottish Council for Research in Education. She pointed out that there are over 800 small schools in Scotland (40%) of which 60 have a single teacher. In small schools, of course, composites change from year to year, requiring substantial changes to the curriculum planning. She recognised that the Scottish Qualification for Headship does not yet fit with the realities of small school headship. There was little done to match policy to small schools, leading to a disproportionate effect of new government initiatives on small schools and on the rate and focus of research in education. Every policy making planning group, she said, should have a small school representative. She also felt that small school headship required making better use of time.

Despite the building works and the helicopters, the coffee breaks on the terrace were really useful for meeting and talking with delegates. It was a successful event, well organised by Jennifer Kerr of the Centre for Educational Leadership and well worth building upon. I was really pleased to be there, as was Jill Ireson of the English NCSL small schools' programme.

Some useful websites mentioned during the conference:

www.ngflscotland.gov.uk/HeadsTogether
HeadsTogether@LTScotland.com
www.highlandschools-virtuallib.org.uk/
www.becta.org.uk/index.cfm
www.nationalpriorities.org.uk
www.scssa.ed.uk
www.sqh.ed.ac.uk

Small School Headships:

- "It's a big challenge but there's much to enjoy" -

Mike Brogden

Last term's NSSF Newsletter 13 carried a questionnaire which 59 heads of small primary schools completed and returned. We are extremely grateful to them and their responses provide the data for this article. The object of the exercise was to find out:

- what small school enthusiasts identify as the most rewarding aspects of their headships; and
- what potential candidates ought to be told to encourage them.

We sought these views to help to counter the negative publicity that appears to be in circulation and which may be at least partly responsible for the shortage of applicants for small school headships which we reported in Newsletter 13.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS:

(The figures do not always add up to 59 as not all respondents answered all questions.)

The 59 respondents came mostly from England but with a very small scattering of Scottish heads and none from Wales or Northern Ireland.

1. Gender:

	female	male
Percentage of respondents	79	21

We think this may show a slightly higher proportion of male heads than is the average for primary schools generally.

2. Type of school:

Type of school	primary	first	infant
Percentage of respondents	83	15	2

We received no responses from small nursery or special schools.

3. Size of school:

No. of pupils	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
No. of respondents	4	3	4	4
60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	100-109
5	7	3	8	7
110-129	130+			
4	4			

The range of sizes of school represented in the responses is well matched to the proportions of small (usually defined as 50 – 100 pupils) and very small schools (usually up to 50 pupils) that are found in the UK. A few slightly larger schools are in membership of the NSSF and their responses have been included.

4. When appointed:

	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-2003
No. of respondents	4	8	20	21

With 41 of the respondents being appointed since 1995, these figures may well reflect the general UK picture of the movement of heads.

5. Previous post:

Previous post:	HT up to 99 nor	HT 100-199
No of respondents:	5	1
HT 200+	HT (n.o.r not given)	LEA based
2	1	2
Promoted within school	DH up to 99 nor	DH 100-199
3	2	10
DH 200+	Curriculum or other leader up to 99 nor	Curriculum or other leader 100-199
13	2	0
Curriculum or other leader 200+		
8		

The most frequent route to headship of small schools in this survey is from deputy headship of larger schools. This is not surprising in view of the management experience that deputy heads are expected to have received before becoming heads, but the circumstances, especially in the 200+ pupil schools, are so different that the experience may not always be the most relevant for managing a small team.

Some respondents had been heads of other small schools and had moved from another LEA area. A very few had been heads of very small schools and moved to slightly larger ones. Three heads had moved from larger to smaller schools; in two cases the difference in size was very significant. The move to the headship of a small school from curriculum leader or similar leadership post is less frequent in this survey than might have been expected from anecdotal evidence.

We did not ask if any of the more recently appointed heads have the NPQH qualification.

THE RESPONSES:

6. What attracted you to the post?

(the numbers exceed the number of respondents because several reasons were given in most replies)

The reasons given included:

- The village/rural setting: 27 mentions
- Relishing the challenge/ felt able to make an impact/ school needed an uplift: 24
- The ethos of the small school: 24
- The people (staff; parents; community; pupils)/ able to get to know everyone: 19
- The focus on teaching/ direct influence from the classroom/ variety of roles 18
- The opportunity to lead/ be head/ use own style: 17
- Nearer home: 8
- The church ethos: 6
- Already employed in the school: 6

- Knew the school/ cluster of schools/ families: 4

Other reasons mentioned only once:

- Good facilities
- Less teaching (than in previous even smaller school)
- Increased salary
- Less of a social worker role than in inner city
- A long way from county hall

Enthusiasts for small schools won't be surprised at the mentions of the small school "ethos" and leadership issues (getting things done quickly and leading from the classroom). There were references to being able to have a direct influence rather than via the written policies and staff management structures of bigger schools. Being able to get to know everyone (including the parents' dogs according to one respondent) is also a strong feature.

In view of the high percentage of aided status amongst the small and very small schools, the low number of respondents mentioning the church ethos as an attraction ought to cause further thought amongst government ministers who want to open more aided schools. (See also section 7.)

Finally in this section, it would be interesting to know what led one correspondent to be attracted to a school that was "a long way from county hall."

7. What do you identify as the most rewarding aspects of headship in a small school?

(the numbers exceed the number of respondents because several reasons were given in most replies)

- Knowing all the children: 42 mentions
- Teamwork and relationships (staff and governors): 37
- Making things happen/simple systems: 29
- Teaching: 22
- Family atmosphere: 20
- Able to be innovative: 20
- Involvement of/with the local community: 19
- Knowing all the families: 14
- Variety of roles and tasks: 9
- High standards/children make good progress: 8
- Positive ethos: 4
- Job satisfaction/feeling valued: 3
- Links with other small schools: 2

Other reasons mentioned only once:

- Small year groups
- Individuals count:
- Christian ethos
- "More control of my destiny"

The leadership and relationship issues stand out in these responses. There's a marked emphasis on knowing everyone, especially the pupils, and on being able to get things done quickly, on leading from the front and on being innovative. One respondent aptly commented, "It's like a speedboat rather than an ocean liner." Another said, "You do everything you ask the other teachers to do."

These are well-established strengths of small schools and it is good to have them reaffirmed by practitioners.

It's surprising that links with other schools received only two mentions but perhaps that's because the question prompted answers that were located in the school itself, rather than on support structures located elsewhere. So far, no-one has mentioned the LEA, other than the one person who was glad to be far away.

8. What ought potential candidates for headship of a small school be told to encourage them?

(the numbers exceed the number of respondents because several reasons were given in most replies)

- Good relationships/teamwork (usually): 19 mentions
- Need to enjoy teaching/can lead by example: 18
- High level of job satisfaction: 13
- Can be creative/take risks/must be flexible/need vision: 13
- Opportunities for making improvements, often rapidly/ease of communications: 11
- Need to prioritise and be realistic: 10
- Can enjoy children and their successes: 8
- Need to be a jack of all trades: 7
- Usually strong commitment of other staff: 6
- Can get support from other small schools: 6
- Can have an impact on/ get support from the whole community: 5
- Good experience for a larger headship/a form of continuous professional development: 3
- It's education on a human scale: 2

Other issues mentioned only once:

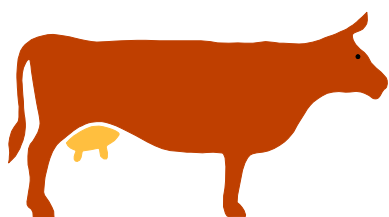
- Need to be strong
- Must have total commitment
- Takes up a lot of time
- Join the NSSF

Two of the comments were qualified with "usually:" usually there are good relationships but in a small school, one difficult person can be a very serious drawback. Usually, staff work very hard, share the load and take on extra work for the school's benefit: "Withdraw from the interview," says one respondent, "if any staff leave early." Small school headship "can take over your life" but big school heads would say the same thing, I believe. One cynic suggested that heads should take a photo of their families to school to remind them what they look like.

One reason small school headship takes over your life is to do with the variety of skills required - not just the teaching and the management but, as mentioned in the responses, the driving of cows from the school field, dealing with the septic tank and sorting out the plumbing problems. On the other hand, says one respondent, parents respect heads who are visibly good teachers, rather than office bound.

Several responses focus on the need to prioritise, to be good managers of time, to ignore a lot of the paperwork and to question the value to the children's learning of whatever initiative arrives from on high (so, says one, ignore the literacy and numeracy strategies). For many,

leading from the classroom is a strength so potential heads need to enjoy teaching and know how to teach mixed age



Visual aid for interviews for rural small school heads

classes. They also need to know that it is difficult to find the time to do the lesson planning.

Six respondents mention the support heads can expect from other small schools, a higher number than reported in part 7 (above) but still a low figure in view of the effort many LEAs have put into various forms of support groupings. Support from LEAs themselves doesn't get a mention. "You are never alone," says one head. I presume this was meant to be a positive remark. Another head said, "You are always visible." I'm not sure how to take that.

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

This has been an interesting exercise. Based on a smallish sample of small school heads and a questionnaire that sought positive answers, we have a picture of the hard work, the need for dedication and clear thinking and the strong rewards of the good relationships with parents, the community and, especially, the children. It is a job for people who enjoy teaching and who can handle the close working relationships. It's also a job for people with confidence, flexibility and imagination so that initiatives can be adapted or ignored, according to the needs of the school and its pupils. Reading between the lines of the questionnaire responses, the picture is of self-motivated entrepreneurs and not a few mavericks who lead from the classroom and value their opportunities to innovate and to have fun. "If you can do this job," says a respondent, "you can do anything." "It's a big challenge but there's much to enjoy," said another, reflecting many of the responses.

In the context of suggestions that it is getting harder to fill small school headships (see Newsletter 13), this exercise indicates some pointers for LEAs and governors who are looking to attract candidates:

- the strengths of small school headship (as listed by our respondents above) need to be emphasised in job adverts and particulars;
- for most small schools there is a large teaching commitment which should be played up, not down so that the post attracts people who will enjoy leading from the classroom (and can teach mixed age classes) and enjoy working with the children;

- candidates need to know that large school strategies such as policy documents (beyond the very few legal requirements), curriculum planning structures, management teams and massive development plans are not necessary to move a small school forward. Governors and LEA advisers need to make it clear to potential candidates that very slim management systems are appropriate.
- several of the heads in the survey had arrived via curriculum or key stage leadership posts, rather than deputy headship. This has implications for those who should have opportunities to undertake the NPQH if it ever becomes compulsory;
- the support offered by LEA small school advisers and local clusters of schools should be emphasised and described;
- LEA advisers might target good teachers and encourage them to consider small school headship. The secondment of teachers to acting headship in small schools encouraged some of our respondents to apply for the substantive headship.

The Website Competition

Many thanks to all those schools who entered our best small school website competition. We are taking care over the selection of the winner (ie we haven't finished the judging yet) and will announce the result, along with our reasons, in the autumn term newsletter. The winning school will hear in advance of that and receive a cheque for £100.

We were delighted with the responses to this competition and will be repeating it in 2004.

Etre et avoir

A small school in France

The following film review appeared in the Sunday Times. Small school aficionados who are also film buffs might be interested, but it seems that a good supply of hankies may be required...

"It hardly sounds promising – a gentle-paced documentary about a single-classroom primary school in a rural backwater of France – but this is a wonderful, unexpectedly moving study of life by the director Nicolas Philibert. The 13 children of St Etienne sur Usson, aged between 4 and 10, are all taught by Georges Lopez, an old-fashioned teacher at the end of his career, and the film follows them through an academic year as the youngest learn to read and the eldest prepare for the terrors of middle school.

Lopez is revealed as a low-key hero, an architect of humans whose reward for wiping impish JoJo's ink-stained face, settling Olivier and Julien's playground spat and coaxing sad Nathalie out of her shell is their respect and love.

Why should you see this in the cinema and not just on TV? Because the triumphs of childhood are so small and subtle, they deserve to be blown up on the big screen, and because, in the dark you can shed tears undisturbed when Lopez must say goodbye to his charges. A little gem."

Category: U
Length: 104 minutes
Sunday Times star rating: ***

School and College Performance Tables

DfES Consultation: June 2003

NSSF Response

The DfES proposes to:

- publish the "performance" tables itself, rather than via LEAs;
- include a KS1 – KS2 "value added" measure;
- include percentages of pupils reaching Level 5 in KS2 English, maths and science;
- include number and percentages of special needs pupils;
- continue not to publish SAT data for cohorts below 11 but;
- publish value added measures for all sizes of cohort.

The NSSF committee responded to the consultation exercise as the closing date fell between FORUM meetings. Our points were:

- We disagree with the publication of primary tables whether by LEAs or by the DfES.
- The effect of publication upon many schools has been to reduce the quality of the curriculum.
- If the DfES decides to publish, the current protection for small cohorts must be maintained.
- The inclusion of pupils with SEN, whether statemented or not, is invalidated by the lack of national criteria for decisions about their special needs, especially at the individual school level.

- Publication of Level 5 data will:
 - ❖ increase the external pressures upon schools to "perform;"
 - ❖ promote even more coaching in Year 6 to the detriment of curriculum breadth and balance;
 - ❖ increase the invalidity of small samples;
- If the DfES decides to publish Level 5 data, the current protection for small cohorts must be maintained.
- We note that this consultation does not include the crucial first question as to whether we agree with the publication of value added measures: we do not agree. The concept is flawed and simplistic, being based on data from SATs which test but a part of a school's work.
- There are several reasons why some children will not show significant progress between SATs, including illness and family crises. These children will have a major effect upon a school's "value added score," especially in small cohorts.
- If value added scores are to be calculated, they would be better discussed with each child's parents when the factors influencing the scores may be included, rather than published. Some schools are doing this already.
- If the DfES proceeds with the plan to publish value

- added scores, it would be better not to include spelling in the calculation.
- In small schools a 50% coverage factor is too low. In a 100 pupil school, it may represent only 7 pupils out of a cohort of 14; for schools below 100 pupils, the smaller cohorts will produce even smaller coverage. For a school's value added "score" to be calculated on data from so few pupils cannot be viewed as reliable or representative.
- A "stability" indicator will be misunderstood by some parents and seen as a judgement of the school's popularity: the factor will be read as a measure of quality.
- The term "stability" is value-laden; "mobility" is preferable.
- Small schools with their very small cohorts will be disproportionately disadvantaged by such an indicator.
- We agree with the current policy of not publishing the Level 4 data for schools with fewer than 11 in the Year 6 cohort. This policy must include the proposed publication of Level 5 data.
- For the same reasons that Level 4 data are not published for small cohorts, we disagree with the publication of value added measures for cohorts under 11. These reasons include the lack of validity and the risk of identification of pupils.
- We are very surprised to read that small schools in the DfES pilot were "strongly in favour of publication" of value added measures and wonder how representative this sample was.

Forum Communication

Mike Carter

The Forum can only be helpful if we communicate. Many headteachers/schools are members through our LEA scheme and here we do not know your contact details and therefore rely on you to communicate with us. In order to share good ideas and find ways to address requirements which are often made with large schools in mind we hope you will make contact. In order to encourage and protect high quality in small schools, we try to keep a watching brief on the impact of national initiatives. Can you help? In particular we need to know:

- Of local or national **research** with a particular small school focus, however small.
- How helpful the **NCSL** small schools' pilot programme has been.
- If you've found the **Talking Heads'** small schools' network to be supportive.
- The progress in the small school's **advisers** on-line network,
- Of helpful **web-sites** for small school,
- The reporting of small school support in **OfSTED LEA inspection** reports,

- The success of local, cluster, LEA and other **collaborations/initiatives**.
- The specific impact of **new funding** arrangements at LEA or school level.
- Problems/successes in integrating **Foundation Stage** curriculum with the National Curriculum in mixed reception/ KS1 classes.
- The impact on learning of **threats of closures** in Wales,
- How **Scottish** small school heads share ideas about small school **leadership**,
- About cluster and small school initiatives that enrich the pupils' **curriculum**,
- Feedback on how we might improve the **NSSF Papers and web-site**,
- About the value or lack of value of **value-added data**.
- Of strategies to promote small school **headship**.
- **LEA materials** or conferences for small primary schools.

A quick call or e-mail would be help for any of these issues. Contact any regional representative (details elsewhere in this newsletter) or: mike.carter3@tesco.net

The NSSF AGM

14 June 2003

The Chairman's Report
Mike Carter

Since our AGM was delayed in 2002, I'm only reporting on some six months of NSSF work. It's been a tough job following on from Mike Brogden. His time as Chair was so productive with effective innovations such as the

enlarged membership through the LEA scheme and the really useful web-site. Now he runs the web-site and edits the newsletter continuing to make an outstanding contribution to the Forum's work. Despite the time inhibitions, several members have also made very real contributions and we are very grateful. Apart from our more visible work, the Forum does contribute to national thinking about small school matters and often offers advice on an individual basis to heads, governors or advisers. We aim to share experiences and promote high quality education in small schools.

Now seems a good period in which a number of LEAs and national bodies have given attention to the particular needs of small schools. Some of this work is close to the NSSF's aim. For example, the NCSL's programme for small school headship, the on-line community of talking small school heads and the new network for advisers in small schools are making significant contributions to the general awareness of small school issues. It really is worth joining one of these. Over the last months the NSSF has also collaborated with other organisations such as HSE and NASS and this seems a good way to promote small school issues further. (See details of the joint conference to be held in Worcester in October in this issue.)

News that is affecting small schools -

- Funding policies and practice overall in different LEAs seems very varied due to the new funding arrangements from the DfES. NSSF made representations to the consultation.
- The loss of earmarked funding for collaboration could lead to a lower level of collaboration.
- Might a loss of LEAs ability to retain funds lead to a demise of support?
- News of OfSTED results is still positive although mixed when socio-economic factors are accounted. We had details from HMI Tim Key last Autumn.
- Consultation about the publication of results for the value-added data for small cohorts is being considered.
- There is a small but growing trend towards Federations due to recruitment difficulties.

But in lots of ways a small school headship is the best job in education. There are so many advantages but there is so much work. We all need to promote the positive aspects of this idealistic way of educating the next generation. NSSF support is growing:

- The web-site of very good quality offering much practical help.
- There is a growing set of advice sheets, and we regularly discuss new ones such as those for self-evaluation and clustering.
- The newsletter is now issued termly.
- We often answer personal requests for advice from heads, governors and advisers.
- We try to keep you in touch and gain views at conferences.
- We often respond to consultations and try to represent small school issues with national bodies. The Forum is now a registered charity.

Our thanks to last committee and current members who help and to the LEA reps., who distribute the newsletters and promote the NSSF. We don't want you to do extra work but we would like to share your successes and know

how we might help. Contact us, visit the website, or come to our termly meetings. The next is at Great Bowden School, Leicestershire at 11.00 am on 8 November. Book for the joint conference on October 3rd in Worcester and look out for the next NSSF conference in Sheffield on 19/20th March 2004. Furthermore we are planning to hold another national small schools' week in June 2004. Together, we are the Forum in which you can share your problems and celebrate your successes.

The Newsletter/Website/Papers Editor's Report Mike Brogden

The Newsletter

Newsletter publication has been increased to three times a year – an ambitious decision as the deadline for each edition always approaches with little in the in-tray. I'm very grateful to all those who produce articles at short notice, including non-NSSF folks who have allowed their pieces to be included. More contributions would be good.

Two LEAs have blotted their copybooks (an interesting scholarly expression) and failed to send out Newsletter 13 for three months – despite agreeing to do so. In the larger LEA case, it is to be hoped that new arrangements for who is to do this will prevent a repeat performance; in the smaller LEA case, the group of small schools have taken on the task themselves. Meanwhile, many thanks to those LEAs and Group representatives who send out the newsletter on our behalf. In most cases this works well and enables us to offer very preferential membership rates.

The questionnaire on the joys of small school headship in Newsletter 13 was completed and returned by about 60 heads – a very good response – and an analysis of the comments is in this Newsletter.

About a dozen schools entered the best small school website competition so there's now the task of looking at their sites and deciding upon a winner. If the committee agrees, we may run another competition next year, perhaps for the best small school prospectus.

NSSF Papers

Once each new edition of the newsletter reaches the schools there is a flurry of requests for NSSF papers, mostly by email, some by post and a few are downloaded directly from the NSSF website. We receive no feedback on these papers and can only assume that schools find them useful and helpful.

We do know from requests that schools are looking for practical guidance on teaching mixed age classes with Foundation pupils and we ought to try to do something about this. Are there other aspects of small schools for which guidance papers would be useful?

The Website

This receives some 150 – 200 visits a week from all over the world (except for some reason, Antarctica) the higher figure in the English half terms and other holidays when, presumably, teacher browsers have more time or find their deck chairs too boring. Our monitoring service tells us that more people are spending longer in their browsing than a year ago and that more are visiting the members' section for which a username and password are required. It also tells us that we get a lot of visits from Ecuador; goodness knows why. Despite reminders in each newsletter, members often have to email or phone for the members' not-very-secret codes. The committee's plans to change the password each year are currently on hold until more members understand the current system.

The website encourages a few new members, keeps people up to date with conference and meeting plans and offers the very useful Bristol University Document Summary Service. It's worth being a member just for that. Incidentally, probably because my email address is prominent in the NSSF website, I get increasing amounts of spam, most of it in very dubious taste. I have had offers of pills and creams to increase the size and effectiveness of

various parts of my body (including parts that I don't have) and not only American car insurance but also Russian brides. Who would have thought that being in the NSSF could be so exciting.

The Treasurer's Statement Chris Williams

Income:	2003	2002
Conference fees	3965	4100
Subscriptions (individual)	650	395
Subscriptions (groups & LEAs)	4159	2544
Sale of publications	27	78
Totals	8801	7177
Expenditure:		
Conference	3168	4100
Speaker's fees	325	652
Newsletters	2902	
Admin expenses	831	1666
Meetings expenses	297	88
Subscription: Bristol Summaries	294	294
Data protection fee	35	35
House of Commons meeting	100	0
Totals	7952	6835
Excess of income over expenditure	849	282
Nat West Current Account Balance at 18/02/02	4268	
Nat West Current Account Balance at 31/03/03	5117	

Audited and found correct:
(Signed): I.N.Chapman FCA
Honorary Auditor
28 May 2003-06-24

Teaching and Learning in Small Schools

Mike Carter

At the very heart of our schools is the teaching and learning but are we really clear about what constitutes high quality? In my large school visits I meet many heads and co-ordinators who have observed lessons taught by their colleagues but their observations have not often focused on the central issues of the pupils' learning and whether they are learning at the right levels. Their feedbacks have therefore concentrated on issues such as the pupils' concentration or the resources. In small schools I usually find that there is greater differentiation and a more holistic view of the teaching and learning. However, heads can be in danger of placing their expectations of high quality only just above the practice of the other teachers. We do need a more rigorous staff debate about the features of high quality teaching and learning and for this the new OfSTED handbook (May 2003) gives a useful list of criteria.

Inspectors must evaluate and report on the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn, highlighting relative strengths and weaknesses in literacy, numeracy, particular subjects and key stages, that help explain the pupils' achievement, assessing the extent to which teachers:

- show command of areas of learning, subjects and courses;
- plan effectively, with clear learning objectives and suitable teaching strategies;
- interest, encourage and engage pupils;
- challenge pupils, expecting the most of them;
- use methods and resources that enable pupils to learn effectively;
- make effective use of time and insist on high standards of behaviour;
- make effective use of teaching assistants and other support;

- where appropriate, use homework effectively to reinforce and extend what is learned in school;
- promote equality of opportunity;

and pupils:

- acquire new knowledge or skills in their work, develop ideas and increase their understanding;
- show engagement, application and concentration, and are productive;
- develop the skills and capacity to work independently and collaboratively.

For lesson observation in small primary schools these criteria provide a good starting point. However, there are particular features and advantages that teachers in small

schools may capitalise upon, for example, separate learning by individual pupils. There are also the particular challenges of small cohorts to consider, for example, stretching the oldest and most capable pupils.

We do need to be clearer about what we mean by high quality in our classrooms. Let's start a debate. Responses please to mike.carter3@tesco.net.

Mike Carter is chairman of the NSSF and an OfSTED registered inspector.

National Small Schools' Week

22 June 2004

Jointly promoted by Human Scale Education, the National Association for Small Schools and the National Small Schools' Forum.

Following the success of National Small Schools' Week in 2002, schools are invited to fix their 2004 open days, sports days, swimming galas, summer events, exhibitions and displays for this week, to capitalise on local and national publicity.

In addition to the schools' activities, in 2002 several LEAs put on special events, exhibitions and conferences and produced newsletters to celebrate the successes of their small schools. One headteacher's husband flew his plane over the LEA's small schools to photograph them ...

Please let mike.brodden@virgin.net know your plans so they may be included in the NSSF website.



NSSF National Conference

19/20 March 2004

Sheffield

Theme: Learning in the Small School

Details in future editions of this newsletter and on the NSSF website



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 1000+ 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**, thrice-yearly newsletters, 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 three newsletters 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. 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, Jim Cork, Holy Trinity CE Primary School, Curzon Estate, Tattershall, Lincoln LN4 4LD

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 newsletters 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).

We are very pleased to welcome new member schools via their LEAs in Leicestershire, Walsall and Belfast.

Name	LEA/Group	No of schools
Aspatia Group (Cumbria)	Group	6
Barnsley	LEA	27
Belfast	LEA	
Bromley	LEA	7
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
Kirklees	LEA	28
Leicestershire	LEA	69
Milton Keynes	LEA	14
Norfolk	LEA	139
North Ayreshire	LEA	11
Nottinghamshire	LEA	100
Renfrewshire	LEA	6
Shropshire and Wrekin	LEA	63
Somerset	LEA	79
South Gloucestershire	LEA	8

Staffordshire	LEA	63
Upper Wharfedale Cluster	Group	7
Walsall	LEA	18
Worcestershire	LEA	69

NSSF Papers

These 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.

Paper no:	Title	Price	Postage required	Env. size
1	*Required policies and documents; a guide to the law (Updated March 2002)	Free	A	C5
2	*Content of the school prospectus and of the governors' annual report to parents; a guide to the law	Free	A	C5
4	*Development planning; keeping it short and simple	£1.50	B	C4
5	Development planning forms (Word disc or can be sent free of charge by email)	£5	B	C5
6	*Time tips for busy small school heads (draft)	Free	A	C5
7	*A matrix of monitoring suggestions (draft)	Free	A	C5
8	*Differentiation (draft)	£1.50	B	C4
9	*Towards a policy for boys' attainment	Free	A	C5
10	*The curriculum; coverage, balance and teaching time: (Updated October 2002)	Free	A	C5
11	*The head's report to the governing body	£1.50	B	C4
12	*A code of conduct for school governors	Free	A	C5
13	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
14	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: YR/Y1 Numeracy and Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
14a	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y1/Y2 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
14b	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y2/Y3 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4
14c	Planning for Mixed Age Classes: Y3/Y4 Literacy	£2.00	C	C4

There are three ways to obtain copies of NSSF papers:

1. Download those marked * from the members' section of the **NSSF** website. This is free of charge.
2. Email mike.brogden@virgin.net with your requirements to be sent as Word attachments. Also free of charge.
3. Send for copies by post to: Mike Brogden, Ferndale, Shipton, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6LB

IF REQUESTING BY POST PLEASE NOTE:

- **Official orders are not accepted: 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
 - **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 newsletter at intervals.

Contact details for the regional reps can be found on the **NSSF** website.

Vera Ballinger	Doncaster	David Chaplin	Devon	Merle Lippitt	Shropshire
Lucy Davis	S. Gloucestershire	Tessa Pemberton	Essex	Mike Brogden	Shropshire
Gill Deakin	Worcestershire	Chris Williams	S. Gloucestershire	Mike Carter	Shropshire
Lesley Mason	East Sussex	Celia Smith	Kent	Peter Kemble	Somerset
Liz Howe	Market Harborough	Marilyn Thom	Kent	Bob Lambert	Staffordshire
Geoff Lee	Northumberland	Alison Pile	Lancashire	Janis Jenkins	Staffordshire
Jane Morris	Cornwall	Paul Weston	Leicestershire	Anne Keig	Surrey
David Cornwall	Cumbria	Jim Cork	Lincolnshire	Gill Ellis	Yorkshire
Jim Cobbett	Devon	John Harris	Norfolk	Carol Tosh	Buckinghamshir
Sue Davies	Dorset	Dot Charlton	Northumberland		
Jean Ennis	Derbyshire	Julia Matthew	Northumberland		

NSSF officers and committee (all re-elected at the 2003 AGM)

Name	Role	From	Phone	Email
Mike Carter	Chairman	Shropshire	01743 233893	mike.carter3@tesco.net
John Harris	Vice-chairman	Norfolk	01603 433276 x123	john.harris.edu@norfolk.gov.uk
Carol Tosh	Secretary	Buckinghamshire	01296 383522	ctosh@buckscc.gov.uk
Jim Cork	Membership secretary	Lincolnshire	01526 342349	James.cork@curzon.lins.sch.uk
Chris Williams	Treasurer	S. Gloucestershire	01454 313682	cwilliams0@btinternet.com
Mike Brogden	Committee	Shropshire	01584 841649	mike.brogden@virgin.net
Janis Jenkins	Committee	Staffordshire	01782 796214	offices@swynnerton.staffs.sch.uk
Jean Ennis	Committee	Derbyshire	01283 217774	
Julie Grainger	Committee	Northumberland	01620 882207	admin@cornhill.northumberland.sch.uk
Anne Bissett	Committee	East Lothian	01620 823298	annbissett@stmary'sgov.uk

Meetings of the FORUM

The **FORUM** meets termly, sometimes 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 quite a lot of business in between meetings via email to enable the **FORUM** meetings to focus on more interesting matters. At each meeting we invite a speaker 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** meetings are 8 November 2003; 31 January and 22 May 2004. 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, normally held in March, 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.

In 2002 our conference timing slipped to September. To get back to our normal calendar we will be holding our next conference in March 2004 rather than 2003. Details will be posted on our website and in future **NSSF** newsletters.

Newsletter

The **NSSF** newsletter is now published three times a year and is our main 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 (Cut this out or photocopy and stick on your computer!)

	<p>To access the NSSF members' pages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call up www.nssf.co.uk 2. Click on the button: Members' Pages 3. Enter the username: member 4. Enter the password: 2001_2 5. Click the button for the section you want 	
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	Queries: mike.brogden@virgin.net	
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