

Title of Report: **Scrutiny review into Supporting Small Schools**

Report to be considered by: Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Date of Meeting: 2 November 2010

Purpose of Report: To outline to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission the results of the investigation into the additional support that can be provided to small schools in West Berkshire.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission endorses the recommendations for the consideration of the Executive.

Reason for decision to be taken: To establish a West Berkshire position on small schools

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority(ies):

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic downturn** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce crime and the fear of crime**

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**
- CPT12 - Including Everyone**
- CPT13 - Value for Money**
- CPT14 - Effective People**
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First**
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management**

Portfolio Member Details

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Stronger Communities Select Committee Chairman	
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Implications

Policy:	This report will help establish a Small Schools Policy
Financial:	No direct financial consequences If there are any financial implications contained within this report this section must be signed off by a West Berkshire Group Accountant. Please note that the report cannot be accepted by Policy and Communication unless this action has been undertaken.
Personnel:	No direct implications
Legal/Procurement:	N/A
Property:	Consideration of condition issues and support for school projects
Risk Management:	Ensuring effective education for all pupils
Equalities Impact Assessment:	None For advice please contact Principal Policy Officer (Equalities) on Ext. 2441.
Corporate Board's Recommendation:	N/A to be completed after the Corporate Board meeting

Executive Report Summary

1. Introduction

1.1 On the 16th February 2010 the Stronger Communities Select Committee agreed a review of small primary schools in West Berkshire with an emphasis on how they might be supported.

1.2 In doing so, the Select Committee agreed the following terms of reference:

- To review the leadership, governance, funding and performance of small schools in West Berkshire, in partnership with schools and the Oxford CE Diocese.
- Small schools in the scope of the Review are those with a roll of one hundred pupils or less in 2008 and/or 2009 (January census). The Review will consider demographics, value for money, asset issues and the contribution schools make to the communities they serve.
- In addition, the Review will look at successful and innovative ways other authorities support small schools in their areas.

1.3 Sixteen primary schools (including one “infant”) were identified as being within the scope of the Review. These schools, their pupil numbers, net capacity/surplus places, forecasts and unit costs are set out in Appendix A.

1.4 Membership of the Review Group is attached at Appendix B.

1.5 The Review Group met five times as set out below:

26th February 2010
26th March 2010
7th May 2010
21st July 2010
17th September 2010

2. Key Areas of Review

2.1 The Review focussed on a number of key areas which are summarised under the following headings:

- Performance
- Catchment/Demography/School Organisation
- Finance
- Leadership and Governance
- Accommodation
- Community Contribution/Links

- Local Authority initiatives and New Models

3. Performance

- 3.1 A number of studies have been conducted in England and overseas looking at the perceived advantage of small schools in achieving better attainment results. However, research has so far failed to identify a clear and consistent relationship between school size and performance.
- 3.2 Interestingly, it appears to be class size and organisation above school size that has the potential to influence outcomes. While small schools do not necessarily mean small classes, of necessity they more often than not operate mixed age groups.
- 3.3 For assessment of performance to be meaningful it is important to look at a high level of aggregation across several years in order to create a big enough data pool from which to draw conclusions that are statistically robust. Small school performance is particularly affected by individual pupils within small cohorts (e.g. SEN), movement of teachers, changes of head and funding. All this makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the role played by school size alone on overall performance at each key stage. This is equally true of attendance and exclusions, which tend to be individual pupil circumstance lead, with no obvious pattern other than anecdotally, it can appear disproportionate.
- 3.4 There is no doubt the quality of leadership and teaching/learning are the main determining factors when it comes to academic performance. This is borne out by an analysis of West Berkshire data when comparing a number of key indicators at different Key Stages. A Key Stage 2 analysis of results sharing two levels of progress from KS1 and Level 4 outcomes over a three-year period comparing performance with the West Berkshire and national averages was undertaken. This showed conclusively that small schools were performing well, with one or two exceptions where results remain stubbornly below the West Berkshire average.
- 3.5 The importance of the Headteacher was underlined by inspection evidence and in small schools Heads can have more of a direct influence on the quality of teaching and standards achieved because they nearly always have a teaching commitment and can lead by example.
- 3.6 The most recent Ofsted and Anglican inspection outcomes for the sixteen schools within the Review are attached as Appendices C₁ and C₂.
- 3.7 Another area that was reviewed was transition from small primary schools to much larger secondary schools. The evidence available indicated that there was no discernable difference in pupils either settling in or their academic performance.
- 3.8 Previous national research (LGA/NFER) has raised the issue of whether small schools can provide a broad curriculum and give pupils the same opportunities as larger schools in terms of experiences, resources and specialisms, particularly with the limited cohort sizes. Evidence from West Berkshire schools' Ofsted inspection reports does not support this hypothesis. In terms of breadth, most small schools have developed close working relationships with other schools to share experiences, including through the West Berkshire Small Schools Federation.

- 3.9 Successful small schools remain very popular with parents with advantages cited including high standards, good behaviour, positive ethos, family atmosphere, closeness to parents and importance to the local community/village.
- 3.10 While the Review Group felt it important that this report should remain uncluttered from the wealth of performance data reviewed, an example of school performance (Key Stage 2 results) is summarised in Appendix D.

4. Catchment/Demography/School Organisation

- 4.1 The Review Group looked at the location of small schools in West Berkshire, their catchment areas, secondary feeder links, roll numbers and pupil forecasts.
- 4.2 Of the sixteen schools reviewed five had a roll average of less than fifty over the last five years and one school an average of below forty. Individual school data is set out in Appendices A and E.
- 4.3 The Group also looked at where pupils on roll actually live, to identify those travelling in and out of catchment areas, so providing a view on popularity and travel arrangements. Parental choice plays an important part in the fortunes of small schools with some drawing in significant numbers of pupils from outside their area. Key Stage results and Ofsted reports can greatly influence the attractiveness of an individual school.
- 4.4 Consideration was given to size in relation to educational viability and whether there should be a minimum pupil number. It was also pointed out that numbers in year groups should also be taken into account. It was agreed that number on roll could be one element, amongst others that could trigger an organisational review, arrived at establishing viability and any additional support required.
- 4.5 Should reorganisation be considered this would need to take into account strategic place planning and the consequences of closure e.g. catchment realignment, travel costs, pressure on places in other (receiving) schools etc.
- 4.6 Interestingly, the last National Report that provided a definitive statement on school size was Plowden in 1967, which suggested a minimum school size of 60 with at least 20 in a class on the basis that schools smaller than this would lack the resources to provide “effective education”.

5. Finance

- 5.1 West Berkshire’s Schools’ Funding Formula includes a “primary taper” to cover “fixed costs” (those that have to be met by all schools irrespective of size based on a minimum teaching workforce of 2.2 including Headteacher and a class size of around 17/18) for schools where statutory numbers are below 200 pupils. In addition, there is further funded curriculum protection where pupil numbers are below 60. In 2010/11 around £900k was distributed via small schools factors to 42 schools, with seven schools getting the additional “below 60” allowance. When analysed across small schools within the Review, additional funding support varied between circa £32k and £39k, equating to a budget percentage of between 8.75% and 19.59%.
- 5.2 With only one exception, small schools, retained healthy revenue balances at the end of 2009/10, varying from around £3k to over £58k, the latter specifically to

support a significant capital project. Investment in ICT is another area where schools sometimes save up funds for replacement costs.

- 5.3 Unit costs vary considerably and are listed in Appendix A.
- 5.4 An analysis of small school funding in benchmark authorities, found almost universal protection being used in formulas, with West Berkshire as one of the higher funders.
- 5.5 It is recognised that the next round of work for the Heads' Funding Group/Schools' Forum is to review the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) element of the schools' funding formula and the small schools' funding factor will be a part of this discussion.
- 5.6 Small school representatives on the Review Group raised the issue of "buy back" and the fact this can be disproportionately expensive if calculated on anything other than a pupil number basis.

6. Leadership and Governance

- 6.1 As previously stated, strong and effective leadership is a key component in successful small schools.
- 6.2 The recruitment of Heads, staff and governors is of vital importance, as is retention to maintain continuity and parental/community confidence.
- 6.3 Appointing Headteachers has become more difficult over time as the burdens of the job have grown and deputies in larger primary schools are often remunerated as an equivalent or higher salary. At the same time, and to make the job more attractive and doable, the teaching commitment of heads has reduced and they are now supported by Business/Finance Managers to help spread the administrative burden. Sometimes these posts are beneficially shared between schools.
- 6.4 Filling vacancies can be somewhat unpredictable with some being filled first time, but most having to be advertised two or more times. Looking at data from the last couple of years small school headships application pools have varied between four and no candidates.
- 6.5 Many governors and chairs of governors are long serving and filling vacancies on governing bodies can sometimes take quite some time.
- 6.6 The Review Group considered in some detail the creation of a hard federation between Shefford and Chaddleworth St Andrew's schools, which are managed under a single Head and single governing body to ensure greater viability.
- 6.7 The two schools working as one have enabled staff and resources to be shared and a class structure which means that no more than two age cohorts are grouped together. This is a long term project which provides a structure for other schools to consider.

7. Accommodation

- 7.1 All pupils deserve an accommodation entitlement which supports teaching and learning and enables the national curriculum and early years foundation stage to be taught.
- 7.2 Small schools in West Berkshire vary significantly in age, construction and layout, as do their sites. Many have Victorian origins with rooms of difficult shapes and sizes together with planning restrictions. For many it is difficult to make them DDA compliant for both pupils and staff, and some lack halls and suitable non-teaching space. This said, several schools have benefited from creative thinking and capital investment from a variety of sources. A number, however, remain challenged with specific needs yet to address. For others it is not design and space, but condition that poses the greatest challenge. More details are provided in Appendix F.
- 7.3 All schools receive devolved formula capital (DFC) and some projects have benefited from Council investment, support from the CE Diocese and a significant amount of local fund raising. Where projects have been instigated and delivered locally, the time required to fund raise and project manage should not be underestimated.

8. Community Contributions

- 8.1 All small schools within the scope of the Review were asked to contribute to this section. A summary of the contributions is listed in Appendix G. These contributions highlight the mutual support between schools and their local communities, with many identifying positive church connections. Comment was made on schools within communities underpinning the Council Plan themes of “vibrant villages” and “stronger communities”, adding to a sense of belonging/place and enlivening a sense of community.

9. Other Authorities

- 9.1 Most Local Authorities have school organisation policy documents that emphasise the importance of keeping open small schools, particularly in rural areas. With few exceptions authorities maintain viability by financial formula support (see Section 5 above). In addition, they encourage schools to share resource, such as business managers/admin and joint working/partnerships including more formal structures such as federations.
- 9.2 The Church of England Diocese maintains a position of wishing to keep open small church schools because of the value they add to local communities.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Following a thorough review of small school provision within West Berkshire the Review Group has come up with a number of outcomes/recommendations for consideration, aimed at strengthening the viability of small schools to deliver high quality education, with a focus on pupil entitlement and outcomes, and community contribution.
- 10.2 The Select Committee fully endorses this comprehensive piece of work and the recommendations for improvement. Members of the Select Committee are pleased with the efforts being made to continue to support small schools in West Berkshire.

11. Outcomes/Recommendations for the Executive

11.1 The suggested recommendations for the Executive are outlined below:

- (1) Heads' Funding Group/Schools' Forum to review DSG formula and small schools' funding to help support and strengthen small schools.
- (2) Encourage schools to explore the benefits of affiliations, creative partnerships and federations (structural and non-structural) where appropriate with schools of all sizes. For example, access to sports provision, teaching for gifted and talented pupils, and to create opportunities for teachers to share knowledge and experience.
- (3) Encourage the sharing of capacity and resources e.g. business managers and curriculum expertise.
- (4) Establish a set of broad criteria that could trigger a support and viability review to consider the best way forward for a school. These criteria would include pupil numbers and trends, standards, finance and Headteacher/staff recruitment issues.
- (5) Develop an accommodation entitlement schedule, and assess schools against this. Deficiency to be added to capital programme criteria.
- (6) Develop a means by which innovative building solutions can be shared and school based projects can be offered project management support.
- (7) Review the feasibility of cooking meals on all sites.
- (8) Work with schools to promote and share community links.
- (9) Admissions material produced by the Local Education Authority and by schools should include a section on the benefits of choosing a local school to encourage parents to send their children to their catchment school.

12. Recommendation for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

12.1 It is recommended that the Members of the Commission agree the recommendations outlined in section 11 for the Executive's consideration.

Appendices

Appendix A – Schools within the Review – (capacity, pupil numbers, budget etc)

Appendix B – Membership of Review Group

Appendix C₁ – Ofsted Inspection Outcomes of Schools within the Review

Appendix C₂ – Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) Outcomes

Appendix D – School Performance Summary

Appendix E – Catchment Area Attendance Data

Appendix F – Accommodation List

Appendix G – Community Contributions by Schools

Schools in Review											
Schools	Status	Admission number	Numbers on Roll				Net Capacity as at January 2010	Surplus Places No May 2010 Return	Surplus Places % May 2010 Return	Budget £	Unit Cost £
			2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11 (forecast)					
Beedon CE Primary	VC	7	44	51	51	52	52	1	2	227,199	4,455
Beenham Community Primary	LA	15	84	86	89	90	105	13	12	353,259	3,969
Brightwalton CE Primary	VA	15	105	102	102	103	105	3	3	358,495	3,515
Brimpton CE Primary	VC	9	39	48	43	42	63	20	32	248,696	5,784
Chaddleworth St Andrews CE Primary	VC	8	45	44	19	20	56	32	57	197,995	10,421
Enborne CE Primary	VA	8	52	52	59	59	60	1	2	241,714	4,097
Hampstead Norreys CE Primary	VC	14	99	101	105	106	102	-4	-4	402,654	3,835
Inkpen Community Primary	LA	12	51	57	59	59	87	26	30	302,410	5,126
Purley CE Infant	VC	17	53	52	55	56	51	-4	-8	233,573	4,247
Shaw cum Donnington CE Primary	VC	11	78	68	68	70	77	8	10	330,011	4,853
Shefford CE Primary	VC	12	41	45	44	45	90	50	56	229,112	5,207
Stockcross CE Primary	VA	15	98	98	102	106	105	3	3	366,850	3,597
The Ilsleys Community Primary	LA	12	62	64	72	69	88	13	15	285,793	3,969
Welford & Wickham CE Primary	VC	12	51	66	76	77	84	8	10	311,063	4,093
Woolhampton CE Primary	VA	15	87	91	95	94	105	11	10	366,964	3,863
Yattendon CE Primary	VA	10	61	62	72	71	70	1	1	302,949	4,208

Membership of Review Group

Ian Pearson	Head of Education Service (Chairman)
Andy Tubbs	Chief Adviser for School Improvement
Anna Ditchburn	Service Manager, Access*
Jeanne Lapsley	Service Manager, Advice, Information & Training*
Susan Robbins	Interim Manager, Advice, Information, Training & Access**
Caroline Corcoran	Service Manager, Advice, Information, Training & Access***
Andrew Breavington	School Improvement Adviser
Mark Lewis	Education Assets Manager
Janet Scott	Service Manager, Adult & Community Learning, Childcare/Children's Centres, Extended Services
Franco de Mori	Education Data Officer
Julie Mintern	Oxford CE Diocese
David Babb	Oxford CE Diocese
Florence Rostrun	Headteacher, Welford & Wickham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
Kathryn Simmons	Headteacher, Yattendon Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
Sue George	Chair of Governors, Beedon Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
Linda Curson	Chair of Governors, The Ilsleys Primary School⊗
Patricia Brims	Chair of Governors, Brimpton Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School⊗⊗
Barbara Alexander	West Berkshire Councillor, Portfolio Holder Education
Irene Neill	West Berkshire Councillor, Chairman Stronger Communities Select Committee
Alan Macro	West Berkshire Councillor, Shadow Executive Children & Young People

* , ** , *** Posts replaced due to redundancy

⊗ , ⊗⊗ LC resigned and now replaced by PB

Ofsted Inspections

School	Date of last / current Ofsted	Overall Effectiveness	Achievement and Standards	Quality of Provision	Personal Development & Well-being	Leadership & Management
Beedon	12.2.09	2	2	2	1	2
Beenham	24+25.1.07	2	2	2	2	2
Brightwalton	5+6.10.06 (22.4.09 – PE) Ofsted letter July '10 deferred to 09.2011 at earliest	2	2	2	1	2
Brimpton	25.2.09	3	3	3	2	3
Chaddleworth St. Andrew's	14-15. 07.10	3	3	3	2	3
Enborne	17.1.08	2	2	2	1	2
Hampstead Norreys	2.10.08	1	1	1	1	1
The IIsleys	15.5.09	2	2	2	1	2
Inkpen	02-03.12.09	3	3	3	2	3
Purley Infants	08-09.02.10	1	1	1	1	1
Shaw cum Donnington	11-12.05.10	3	3	3	2	3
Shefford	14-15.7.10	3	3	3	2	3
Stockcross	5.12.06 Ofsted letter July '10 deferred to 09.2011 at earliest	2	1	2	1	2
Welford and Wickham	9.3.09	1	1	1	1	1
Woolhampton	7+8.2.08	3	3	3	2	3
Yattendon	12+13.3.09	2	2	2	1	2

Grades

1 = Outstanding

2 = Good

3 = Satisfactory

4 = Inadequate

West Berkshire Small School Review
Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools – SIAS

School	Date of last / current SIAS	How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all its learners?	What is the impact of collective worship on the school community	How effective is the Religious Education?	How effective are the leadership and management of the school, as a church school?	Overall judgement
Beedon CE (VC) Primary	19 th March 2009	1	2	n/a	1	1
Brightwalton CE (VA) Primary	30 th April 2007	1	2	3	1	2
Brimpton CE (VC) Primary	30 th April 2009	2	2	n/a	2	2
Chaddleworth St Andrews CE (VC) Primary	10 th 11 th October 2007	1	2	n/a	2	2
Enborne CE (VA) Primary	26 th February 2008	1	2	2	2	2
Hampstead Norreys CE (VC) Primary	13 th November 2008	1	1	1	1	1
Purley CE (VC) Infants	3 rd March 2010	1	2	n/a	1	1
Shaw cum Donnington CE (VC) Primary	11 th June 2010	3	3	n/a	3	3
Shefford CE (VC) Primary	10 th 11 th October 2007	1	2	n/a	2	2

School	Date of last / current SIAS	How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all its learners?	What is the impact of collective worship on the school community	How effective is the Religious Education?	How effective are the leadership and management of the school, as a church school?	Overall judgement
Stockcross CE (VA) Primary	5 February 2007	1	2	3	2	2
Welford & Wickham CE (VC) Primary	23 rd April 2009	1	1	1	2	1
Woolhampton CE (VA) Primary	28 th March 2008	2	3	2	3	3
Yattendon CE (VA) Primary	8 th May 2009	1	1	2	1	1

1 Outstanding
2 Good
3 Satisfactory

COMBINED ATT. TIME CHART 2007-10

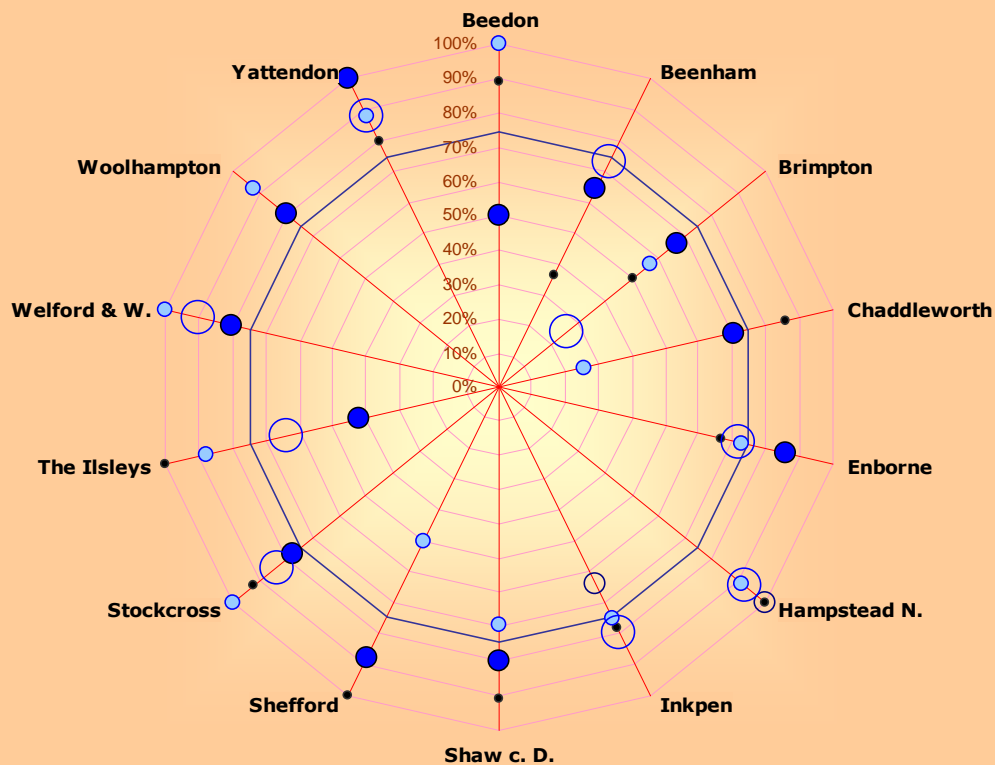
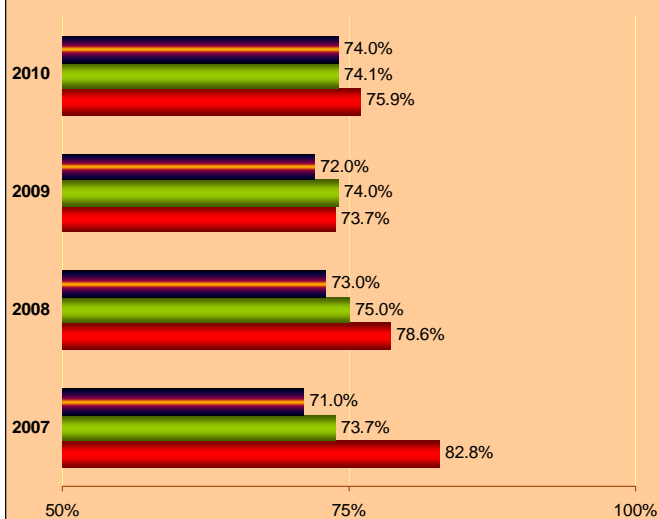
Change in percentage of pupils attaining 4+ in E&M at KS2

Small Schools - ENGLISH & MATHS 4+

• 2007 ○ 2008 ● 2009 ○ 2010 — WB 10

Group Attainment compared

■ Group ■ West Berkshire ■ National



Catchment Area Attendance Data of Schools in Review					
Schools	Total living in Catchment	Attending Catchment School	Attending Other	Percentage of Catchment Children on Roll	Percentage from Outside Catchment
	May-09	May-09	May-09	May-09	May-09
Beedon CE Primary	31	23	8	74	26
Beenham Community Primary	67	56	11	84	16
Brightwalton CE Primary	41	40	1	98	2
Brimpton CE Primary	48	21	27	44	56
Chaddleworth St Andrews CE Primary	80	33	47	41	59
Enborne CE Primary	50	14	36	28	72
Hampstead Norreys CE Primary	72	56	16	78	22
Inkpen Community Primary	35	33	2	94	6
Purley CE Infant	176	37	139	21	79
Shaw cum Donnington CE Primary	71	16	55	23	77
Shefford CE Primary	85	34	51	40	60
Stockcross CE Primary	81	59	22	73	27
The Ilsleys Community Primary	71	46	25	65	35
Welford & Wickham CE Primary	38	29	9	76	24
Woolhampton CE Primary	78	28	50	36	64
Yattendon CE Primary	69	48	21	70	30

Small Schools Accommodation

- Use of village halls for PE and Performance, sometimes providing a stage which would otherwise be unavailable
- Creative solutions developed by schools using devolved capital, including saving up for “bigger” solutions, including recent development of “log cabins” (Beedon and Brimpton)
- Importance of site size, hard play and parking spaces
- Buildings to be DDA compliant
- Mindful of energy usage and carbon reduction, particularly in relation to older buildings
- Sometimes disproportional cost of fire compliance
- Importance of broadband access and appropriate ICT solutions
- Making Victorian designs fit for modern teaching and learning
- Often schools find themselves managing difficult shaped and sized rooms
- For some schools planning restrictions pose significant problems through such issues as listing or AONB
- Important to recognise the requirement for appropriate adult space – Head/Staff/Office/loos/PPA facilities
- Need for appropriate security and obvious and attractive entrance area
- Accommodation for SEN including small withdrawal areas
- Important that spaces reflect the current curriculum, but remain flexible so they can be turned to a variety of uses
- Hall size in relation to delivering the PE curriculum
- Recognition of school meals both in terms of preference and practicalities e.g. cooking on site
- Size and number of classrooms
- Colleagues present then described two project case studies:
 - Welford and Wickham – Florence set out how the vision for accommodation at the school had been developed and the practicalities of a year of building work which had seen the school hall double in size. Space is still at a premium within the school and a further project is planned which would include the attached school house.
 - Beedon – Sue George explained the school’s current project which aims to significantly increase and improve accommodation using the latest timber construction technology which is delivering an advantageous cost effective solution
 - Both projects have required significant time and energy and this input should not be under-estimated.
 - Another point raised was the ability of small schools to access facilities at other schools, either through primary partnerships or working closely with partner secondary schools. Kathryn cited the

positive opportunities provided for Yattendon pupils at Mary Hare
via the Primary Schools Partnership.

- Small areas for withdrawal

Small Schools Contribution to Community

Community Links

Heart of the community goodwill towards school

Awareness of the community in which they live – day to day involvement, local history, traditional events, local enterprises

Community Cohesion

Community supporting school

Children engage with all generations through the community

Local community planning – parish plan Parish council links Parish magazine

Local people provide services to school at good rates

Use of local amenities – village hall, green

Extended services – after school clubs supported by community members

Volunteers support the school with reading, and after school clubs, community governors

School supporting community

Local community events held at school – Fayre, Fetes, polling station

School is an employer of local people

Community lunch in school

Old peoples' homes, links with community harvest baskets

Using school as a base for other services – Police, Fire service, support groups for parents and educational opportunities for life-long learning – use of ICT

Transport for local children

Notice board and website to advertise community event

Community presentations e.g. Corn Exchange, Arlington arts

Links with preschool provision

Church links

Church links

School uses church for celebrations and services

Church benefits from school involvement in local services – school choirs etc

Whole school community benefits from pastoral links with parish priest