INNOVATION IN SECONDARY EDUCATION – THE ADDED VALUE OF A COMMUNITY DIMENSION

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This paper argues that a key feature of the specialist schools programme in England is that a significant proportion of work undertaken by specialist schools is concerned with aspects that relate to learning in the school's local community. It argues that the development of the school's role as the hub of learning within the community has contributed significantly to, or even, in some cases driven, the transformation of the school itself.

Much of the evidence to support this proposition has, to-date, been anecdotal or subjective. This paper draws from the experience of specialist schools in England to develop, and test, criteria for assessing the added value of the community dimension to the agenda for transforming secondary education.

The Specialist Schools Programme helps schools, in partnership with private sector sponsors and supported by additional Government funding, to establish distinctive identities through their chosen specialisms and achieve their targets to raise standards. Specialist schools have a special focus on their chosen subject area but must meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils.

The programme promotes school improvement by providing opportunities for schools to work to their strengths, enabling them to deliver effective teaching and learning in their area of expertise, as well as across the curriculum, and to drive innovation. From September 04 1956 secondary schools in England are specialist schools.

> 545 Technology Colleges
> 305 Arts Colleges
> 283 Sports Colleges
> 224 Science Colleges
> 203 Language Colleges
> 154 Mathematics and Computing Colleges
> 146 Business and Enterprise Colleges
> 35 Engineering Colleges
> 18 Humanities Colleges
> 5 Music Colleges
> 38 Combined Specialism

The aims of the programme are to:

- Raise standards- specialism subjects & whole school

- Strengthen/develop Teaching and Learning strategies

- Extend vocational learning & enrichment including via HE, business etc (1)

- Develop specialist identity and ethos

- Collaborate with other schools to enhance Teaching and Learning (2)

- High quality learning opportunities for wider community including local business (3)

In the context of community the main aims are to:

1. extend opportunities for vocational learning and enrichment activity through the specialist subjects, including through links with sponsors, business, further and higher education institutions and organisations related to the specialism. This contributes to raising attainment by encouraging a broader understanding of the specialist subjects and their links to other parts of the curriculum, and by responding to pupils'

2. strengthen collaboration with partner schools to provide or facilitate high quality learning opportunities and outcomes in the specialist subjects - by sharing specialist facilities and resources, enhancing further the quality of teaching and developing and disseminating good practice; and

3. To provide or facilitate high quality learning opportunities and outcomes in specialist subjects for members of, and groups within, the school's wider local community, including local businesses and employers.

To achieve specialist school status all schools must submit detailed plans for approval by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) that include their work to meet the aims that relate to both the school and the community. Applications will not, and are not, approved if the community plan does not meet the required standard even if the school plan is deemed to be successful. Similarly, at the point of re-designation every four years, all schools must re-submit new community plans for approval by the DfES.

There are two 'bidding rounds' each year and those schools not short-listed are provided with letters from DfES to explain the reasons for their failure. An analysis of these letters over the past four bidding rounds continues to show that a significant number of schools fail to gain specialist status solely on the basis of poor community plans. Once designated the community dimension continues to prove a challenge for many schools.

"With few exceptions…..the community dimension was the weakest element of the specialist school work. Most schools have found their community role challenging to define and pursue" (HMI Survey "Specialist Schools: an evaluation of progress" OFSTED October 2001). It is anticipated that a new HMI report on the specialist school programme soon to be published will confirm that, while some progress has been made, there is still more to be done to ensure that the community dimension is delivered effectively by all specialist schools.

"Most people now agree that schools need to be accountable for the standard of education which they provide. Such accountability is important not only to their parents and pupils but also to the taxpayer who funds them." (Educational Outcomes and value added by specialist schools, David Jesson, January 2004)

It is widely agreed that such accountability should be fair and transparent, using measures that allow for the widely different intakes of ability of secondary schools at age 11. Therefore the concept of value added is widely accepted, although a number of different measures are used to judge that value added.

Raw league tables cannot easily take account of the fact that:

- many inner city schools have a large proportion of pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties upon entry at Year 7;

- many schools receive a large number of excluded pupils from other schools with many having severe emotional and behavioural difficulties;

- many have a high degree of mobility or a high concentration of socially and economically disadvantaged families;

- many schools also have a large number of pupils whose native language is not English

The Specialist Schools Trust believes that using a poverty indicator such as Free School Meals or the number of single parent families does not go far enough. It is fairer, it believes, for all schools to be judged on outcomes having reference to the previous educational attainments of their pupils.

The Trust has been able to match the results of 96% of all state secondary school pupils who took their GCSEs in 2003 with their 1998 Key Stage 2 point score five years earlier. By using a simple, yet powerful, regression formula, the Trust was able to predict what each school might be expected to achieve at GCSE and compare this with its actual results. This is how they derive a 'value added' indicator of each school's performance.

In 2003 specialist schools again performed exceptionally well, both on an absolute basis and on a value added basis:

- In absolute terms, 56% of pupils at 938 specialist schools achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE compared with 47.1% in the other 1993 non-specialist schools.

- On a value added basis, specialist schools had a net value added of +4.2 compared with other schools

Type of School	Avg per pupil KS2 points in 1998	Predicted % 5+ A*-C GCSE in 2003	Actual % 5+ A*-C GCSE in 2003	Value Added
Specialist Schools (non-selective)	25.7	53.3%	56.0%	+ 2.7
Other schools (non-selective)	25.3	48.6%	47.1%	- 1.5
Net value added				+ 4.2

"This is arguably the most significant development in secondary education to be found in any system of public education" (Dr Brian Caldwell, "Re-imagining the self-managing school", Specialist Schools Trust, iNet, 2004)

The focus on the success, or added value, of specialist schools is almost entirely on school improvement as reflected in this kind of analysis of results at GCSE. The questions should be asked "does this total emphasis on the added value of the specialist school programme through school improvement reflect fully the aims of the whole programme?

For example, the current figures for the additional recurrent grant for specialist schools would suggest that on the basis of there being 1956 specialist schools a total of approximately £2.4 billion is provided per annum. Of that figure, approximately £82m is spent on the community element of the specialist school programme.

However, it is important to look at the potential relative importance of the community dimension on educational as well as financial grounds.

"Transformation is change – especially under challenging circumstances – that is significant, systematic and sustained, resulting in high levels of achievement for all students in all settings, thus contributing to the wellbeing of the individual and the nation." (Caldwell) The work of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and its Schooling for Tomorrow project led to the formulation of scenarios for the future of schools in the context of 'transformation'.

The six scenarios described the possible strategic directions for schools over the next 10-15 years. Two maintain the status quo, two involve re-schooling and two more result in de-schooling. These summaries are taken from a revised version of the initial formulation (Instance, D. in "The OECD scenarios" – from the "Handbook of Leadership and Management", Davies, B. and West-Burnham, J 2003). Of particular interest are the two scenarios that relate to re-schooling.

The re-schooling scenarios see and increase in public support for schools and a new status for the profession. The 'schools as core social centres' scenario would see the school playing an important role in building a sense of community and creating social capital. A range of cooperative arrangements between schools and other agencies, institutions and organisations would be self-evident. There is a clear similarity here with the 'Every Child Matters' agenda in England.

The second re-schooling scenario sees a strengthening of schools as 'focused learning organisations', with emphasis on a knowledge rather than a social agenda. Specialisations and diversity would flourish as would research on different pedagogies. There is much use of ICT and partnerships with tertiary education and other institutions involved in knowledge creation and dissemination. There is a clear similarity here with the 'Specialist School' agenda in England.

However the reality of the specialist school programme is that it brings together the 'schools as core social centres' and the 'focused learning organisations' scenarios. Taken together the development of specialist schools, Academies, public private partnerships in the refurbishment or replacement of schools and the growth of networks of social entrepreneurs to support the work of public schools provide a strong argument for the growth of schools as core social centres.

"Schools acting alone cannot achieve change on the scale of transformation under conditions that prevail in most societies at the start of the 21st century" Caldwell talks of the need for 'synergy' rather than partnerships. 'Partnership' he believes does not capture the complexity of relationships that should be created and the benefits that should accrue to all parties. Webster's Online Dictionary explains that synergy is "the phenomenon of two or more discrete influences or agents acting in common to create an effect which is greater than the sum of the effects each is able to create independently" (i.e. added value)

Caldwell argues that there are five arguments for a new synergy across public and private sectors. One of these argues that partnership (synergy) with a non-public entity draws on and enhances the social capital of the school or school system. Fukuyama defined social capital as the 'ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organisations' (Fukuyama, F. "Trust:

Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity", 1995). The social capital line is evident in the involvement of non-public non-profit entities in the support of schools.

"What is clear is that high social capital enhances academic success; therefore, one answer to academic under-achievement might not be just to strive to improve the efficiency of schools but rather to increase social capital" (John West-Burnham and George Otero, "Educational leadership and social capital", Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, Seminar Series No 136, August 2004.) The paper goes on to argue that "if educational success is a function of high social capital, then educational leadership has to make capital development a high priority. The change is from an emphasis on the school as an institution to the school as an agency".

Burnham-West and Otero argue that the shift is from institutional improvement to community transformation given that, in their view, it is doubtful as to how much more capacity there is to improve in the school system. By focusing on and improving relationships schools can begin making a contribution to developing the entire community's capacity to learn.

One example in England is CAN, the Community Action Network.

CAN and its partners are creating a model that seeks to assist both in the transformation of education and community regeneration through networking, collaboration and innovation. The focus is on improving education attainment through a new integrated approach to public service delivery.

1. SHOTTON HALL ARTS COLLEGE – A CAN ACADEMY

Shotton Hall is a large secondary comprehensive school with pupils aged from 11 to 16. It is based on the edge of a large council housing estate on the outskirts of Peterlee, a new town established in County Durham mainly to serve the needs of local mining communities. Pupils are mainly drawn from families living on the council estate usually on a very low income. Other pupils are brought in by bus from the more remote former pit villages that are spread around the edge of the town. Unemployment is rife in the local area and job opportunities for skilled workers are much harder to find than elsewhere in the UK. Shotton Hall became part of the CAN Academies initiative in 2002 and also became a Performing Arts College in the same year.

The aims of the CAN Academy model are to:

- improve the quality of educational achievement in schools by developing partnerships beyond the classroom with local social entrepreneurs, voluntary groups, health and social services, further and higher education, business, crime prevention and others

- tackle the causes and effects of poverty by integrating education, health, welfare and employment opportunities

- integrate schools with their communities by building on these partnerships to tackle disadvantage

- support schools to become a visible and positive force in the local community and develop the infrastructure they need to manage community links and programmes

- connect failing schools with a support network of both successful, enterprising schools and less successful schools beyond the local boundaries

- develop strong leadership teams who are committed social entrepreneurs

- establish in all schools an enterprise culture that creates a flexible workforce ready to respond to a changing job market

- create a pathfinder model that can be replicated across the country and share best practice between partnership schools

Changes at Shotton Hall progressed as a result of an 'alliance' forged between the three key organisations that were brought together to address the issues the school faced. The school itself was central to the development – the recognition that there was a need to transform the experiences of the children attending the school made the subsequent changes possible. Secondly the school became aligned to the East Durham Partnership (EDP), a local voluntary organisation that had been providing support to unemployed adults in the area for many years, as well as offering adult education. And finally, CAN which was able to provide a network of social entrepreneurs and provide an overview of national policies and developments.

Various elements of change have been part of the subsequent transition at the school. Of relevance here are:

- through CAN the school was able to develop partnerships not only with CAN itself, but also with a range of associated organisations including social services and youth groups;

- EDP was instrumental in providing training in new skills for people from the local community particularly in ICT – using the EDP's centre on the school site unemployed adults are able to come in to use computers and access training in using the internet and basic IT literacy;

- opportunities for post 16 learning – EDP created opportunities for post 16 learning for amongst the most excluded pupils in the school, delivered through locally based social enterprises specialising in, amongst other things, regenerating office furniture for re-sale;

- creating change in the community – parenting classes are now offered onsite.

- partnership with other schools – transition activities to support Year 6 children moving into secondary education are also based at the school

A range of evidence is offered as 'added value' from their new 'synergy'. Improved outcomes for pupils include:

- in the first year of the project there was a rise from 13% A*-C at GCSE to 36%

- the number of pupils progressing to other training opportunities or continuing in education have risen

- the range of extra curricular activities has increased substantially – these are a direct result of both the Arts College status and an increased input from people outside the school community

- pupil behaviour has improved

However, a recent report on Shotton Hall (Shotton Hall School: a case study of a CAN Academy, 2004) by Demos (an independent think tank) argues that the added value is mutually beneficial " Improvements in pupil learning at Shotton Hall provide a sufficiently compelling case for the on-going success of the school. But benefits have not been limited to students alone. The EDP has reported growing number of adults interested in accessing their training courses both to gain formal

qualifications and also to engage with the other learning opportunities for 'softer ' skills' such as parenting courses."

In addition:

- the governance of the school has changed to better reflect the synergy between the pupils' and the community's needs – for example the 'family of schools' share a single governance structure;

- opportunities for school leavers to become involved in volunteering programmes within the local area have also had a very positive reception;

- the CISCO IT centre, which is under development, will provide learning opportunities for local adults as well as for students at the school itself outside of school hours.

The Demos report concludes that Shotton Hall "offers an approach for successfully bridging the gap between engaging with the wider community in which a school operates, whilst also remaining focused on the achievement of individual children within the school itself"

However, far too many schools are not able to achieve this synergy – they still belong to the "Mont St Michel" model of education – two separate areas joined by the causeway but more often than not kept apart by the tide.

David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools speaking at the "Partnerships for Learning" Conference in Birmingham on 14th September 2004 on "OFSTED and the Future of School Education" said "Gone are the days when we could publish reports which do not, specifically and overtly, evaluate schools or colleges firmly on the basis of the value they add to the achievement of children and young people. Every report on a college or school will help us build up an assessment of whether, in every area of the country, the education service is delivering what parents want and children and young people need." Once again the reference to added value – but how does the community dimension of the specialist school add to this?

The revised standards for headteachers (National Standards for Headteachers, Organisation and Management, Department for Education and Skills, October 2004) reflect the evolving role of headship in the early 21st century. The standards are set out in six key areas. From October 2004 one of these key areas is "Strengthening Community".

 "Headteachers share responsibility for leadership of the wider educational system and should be aware that school improvement and community development are interdependent"

Thus headteachers are expected to be able to (amongst other requirements):

- recognise and take account of the richness and diversity of the school's community

- listen to, reflect and act on community feedback; and

- build and maintain effective relationships with parents, carers, partners and the community, that enhance the education of pupils

The emphasis again here is on engagement with the community for the benefit of the school population and not on the learning needs of the community (as compared with the potential requirements of being an extended or a specialist school) but it would be possible to develop the criteria that could be used to monitor progress by headteachers in taking the necessary actions to meet these requirements.

Educational leaders are very well placed to provide leadership in the community. However, as Burnham-West and Otero argue," it would be wrong to pretend that such a change is easy. Educational leadership to build capacity in communities requires a range of qualities and strategies, which are implicit to running schools but which need different horizons and priorities"

These include:

- a vision for the community, based on consensual values and aspirations

- building capacity, through dialogue, conversations and engagement

- highly developed relational skills, rooted in trust and respect

- commitment to democratic processes

- the ability to work with networks

- commitment to shared learning, through experience

A recent study of the specialist school programme by the **Institute of Education, University of Warwick, ("A Study of the Specialist Schools Programme", Alma Harris November 2004)** set out to identify the key components of success within Specialist Schools and to explore the extent to which Specialist Schools Policy is making a positive impact upon schools and the wider community. The study looked at 18 specialist schools and 30 feeder and partner schools.

The study explored community links in two categories – schools working with other schools to share facilities, good practice and activities, and working with local businesses and with community groups. The study aimed to identify more and less effective ways of doing this and the added value of such community work.

The report states that "all schools in the study had forged new links or enhanced existing community links through achieving Specialist School status"

However, the data suggests that while there is evidence of positive benefits to the community from Specialist school status, there is less evidence that these activities are directly related to specific learner outcomes for pupils and teachers in partner schools or for schools and wider community groups.

What did the report see as the main hurdles to overcome for the development of positive 'community links'?

- the nature of the subject – some subjects were viewed as more accessible to the community and easily converted into community activities;

- the nature of the community – for some schools the low levels of parental involvement in the school meant that establishing links and securing involvement was a challenge;

- priorities and time-scale – for some schools the community was not the chief priority in the short term;

- schools in the study with well developed community links tended to be in their second or third year of specialist school status reinforcing the fact that community links take time to forge and develop;

- engaging with business and industry proved difficult for some schools – while schools are able to secure business support at the application stage, it appears that extending and deepening the involvement of business has proved difficult

While the study shows that specialist schools actively seek community involvement and that the most successful forms of community partnership tended to be programmes of activity that were well established it also shows that **the most successful partnerships are where they are mutually beneficial.**

But what does it tell us about the added value? This still appears to be anecdotal.

"There are now much higher community expectations for children and parents because the school has raised aspirations"

"The school has broadened its horizons and has encompassed other schools in the area. We now have a mutual relationship. There was a healthy ethos prior to the school getting specialist school status but it has now a greater community presence"

Mulford and Silins ("Leadership for organisational learning and improved student outcomes", Research Matters 2001) found there was not a direct causal relationship between high community involvement and improving student outcomes.

"On the basis of our results, and if a choice needs to be made between working with and being sensitive to the community and improving home educational environments, then the latter will have more direct and immediate 'pay-off' for student outcomes.. Of course, having a strong community focus may be important for other reasons such as for the development of social capital in the community, especially in poor inner city and rural communities"

A specialist school's engagement with learning for parents within the local community is likely to be the clearest example of the 'mutual benefit' derived from the community plan. Recent research from the Department for Education and Skills confirms that where schools engage parents in the education of their children standards are raised in the school ("The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education", DfES, 2004). Some of the key points highlighted are:

- parental involvement has a significant effect on pupil achievement throughout the years of schooling;

- educational failure is increased by lack of parental interest in schooling; and

- in particular a father's interest in a child's schooling is strongly linked to educational outcomes for the child

For example, therefore, in a recent report, to Birmingham City Council ("Schools as an integral part of the Community", May 2004) by the Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was argued that "whether it is an adult education class, a breakfast club or a mother and toddler session, schools quite regularly extend their provision way beyond that of the pupil to now include parents, their families and their local communities. In doing so they have grown to become and important focal point of activity for many neighbourhoods"

The model is a simple one. Schools offer a wide range of opportunities for parents and the wider community to engage with the school. Many offer leisure courses which are then followed by courses to develop basic skills in, for example, numeracy and literacy, which can then help parents

understand the requirements of the National Curriculum. For many parents this will then lay the foundations of continued studies that will lead to qualifications for themselves in their own right.

It is suggested, therefore, that we need to be able to test the hypothesis that:

- the community dimension of the specialist schools' development plan is raising standards of learning in the three sectors of the Community Plan;

- the ethos of all participating schools is being enhanced by the provision;

- the standing and reputation of the Specialist School in the community is being improved; and

- the community dimension of the specialist school programme does, directly and indirectly, contribute to school transformation

The Warwick report begins to address the impact on ethos and on the standing and reputation of the specialists school in the community. But in comparison with the 'hard' evidence as typified by Jesson we lack the criteria and the analysis to even take the tentative steps to substantiate the first and last parts of such a hypothesis. A similar methodology as that used by Harris (i.e. an in-depth qualitative approach with some quantitative interrogation through semi-structured interviews) could be used to move this forward.

For example, a small scale piece of action research was undertaken on behalf of the Specialist Schools Trust by consultants (Snook, J and Maltby, M) in the autumn of 2004. The research (unpublished) was built around an initial attempt to test the hypothesis through the use of a range of audit tools that could measure the added value of the community dimension to:

- partner primary schools – staff, pupils and parents

- partner secondary schools – staff, pupils and parents

- wider community groups

- the 'host' specialist school – staff and pupils

For example, the draft audit tools for partner primary school staff and for groups in the wider community were:

Partner Primary Schools

1. How did the Specialist School consult you about your needs?

2. Was the final provision what you really wanted or needed?

3. How many pupils and staff are / were involved in the projects and over what period of time?

4. How much involvement did you have in the initiative and did you receive training? If so, who delivered the training, where did it take place and what was the frequency and duration?

5. How much more skilled are you in delivering/sustaining the development yourself as a result of this training?

6. How have you been involved in evaluating the success of the project and what monitoring tools were used?

7. What hard evidence would you point to for pupils' development and learning outcomes?

8. Have you any hard evidence to show that the ethos in your school has changed with your involvement with the Specialist School?

9. Is the project sustainable? If not, why not?

10. How has it influenced your perception of the Specialist School?

11. Are the children's attitudes to the Specialist School more or less positive or are they the same?

12. What barriers, problems or issues did you encounter?

13. Was there any external feedback and what were the findings

The wider community

1. How did the Specialist school consult you about your needs?

2. Was the activity what you really wanted and was the content appropriate to your needs? In what way?

3. What was the activity? Where was it undertaken and how long and how often was the activity?

4. Did you enjoy the activity and has it enriched your life style and how

5. What skills or accreditation did you gain

6. If appropriate has it helped you to gain employment/promotion

7. How has it affected your attitude to learning and would you take part in another activity or further training?

8. How has this project changed your perception of the Specialist School?

9. How have your views on the success of the activities been solicited?

Through the use of these draft tools in semi-structured interviews at five specialist schools (three technology colleges and two arts colleges) in the North East of England a range of evidence emerged that began to confirm the validity of the hypothesis.

School A focused on the development of CAD CAM techniques with Year 6 pupils in 10 partner primary schools. Five sessions were provided for the schools led by the technology teacher in the specialist school. The teacher indicated that:

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- Each lesson pupils take away evidence of progress in that session. For example, this can takes the form of print offs of computer-generated designs that they have produced themselves, experimentation with 3D forms and shapes, through to finished artefacts that have been made by them from their designs.

- Examples of the complete design and make process are displayed in the Primary School and attract interest and enthusiasm amongst pupils, parents and visitors.

- Pupils use ICT applications with confidence.

- Pupils' independent learning in this mixed ability class is enhanced. Pupils are keen and anxious to attend the sessions, and this motivation and enthusiasm is carried back to their work in the Primary School.

- Pupil listening skills have noticeably improved. Because the ICT work is complex, the pupils have to listen carefully to each new phase. Because the motivation to participate is strong, thus the ability to listen and concentrate is improved so that pupils can participate as individuals. This has spin off benefits in other subjects at the Primary School.

- Because the pupils are very used to attending the sessions at the Specialist School, and will continue to do so with the Sport initiative, and have enjoyed such positive experiences, they have few fears at KS 2 -3 transition stage."

In the Specialist School

"standards in Technology have been raised for 6th form pupils as a result of the Community work. A group of 15 students has been involved in helping with the classroom delivery of the Pro Desk Top training for Primary children, together with demonstrations of the use of Whiteboards. This has meant that the 6th form students have had to review and update their own skills in order to deliver teaching to the younger children, and, of course, they have also gained insight into the issues involved in teaching others"

There is also evidence that the ethos, standing and reputation of the specialist school has been enhanced in the following way:

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- The value and benefit of the Master Classes in Technology are still remembered by Year 11 pupils from their Year 6 experiences.

- The feedback from pupils, staff and parents at both KS 2 and KS 3 / 4 are very positive.

- The progression to the Specialist School from KS 2 is seen as a natural route for all but a very small number of pupils each year."

School B is linked to 3 Middle Schools and therefore takes its pupils from the age of 13. Support given to each Middle School includes: mathematics input from the specialist school on one afternoon a week for the whole of the last year in the Middle School; weekly visits from the specialist school's Technology AST (Advanced Skills Teacher); regular visits of the Technology Trailer, a mobile classroom. Once again there are 'hard' outcomes identified by one middle school teacher

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- Pupils develop research skills that they can use in other areas of their learning.

- Pupils can generate their own ideas independently, a skill which is also transferable to other areas of the curriculum.

- Using the specialist equipment they are able to produce more sophisticated pieces of work with a professional finish. This encourages then to produce higher standards of work in other subject areas.

- Pupils are able to evaluate their work and assess the KS 3 level at which they are working in each stage of the Technology project. They are able transfer these evaluation techniques to other pieces of work.

- Confidence in the use of ICT programmes is greatly enhanced, again with spin-offs for work in their other subjects.

- Pupils enjoy working with the specialist equipment provided by the Technology trailer and their motivation and enthusiasm is transferred to their other curriculum subjects".

The Community Education Coordinator was able to offer the following clear evidence of added value from the specialist school programme:

- From 1999 to 2004 the total number of Community learners has increased from 803 to 1199

- 1099 of these learners are enrolled on courses with accredited outcomes

- 700 of these learners are involved in ICT courses with accredited outcomes."

A sixth form student had been helping the AST with work with Middle School students. He explained that although he had no evidence to suggest that the standard of his own work had improved as a result of his work with the younger children, he did know that his ability to communicate and discuss his work with other people had definitely improved.

Another pupil had been an underachiever in the school and had lacked motivation in his studies. He discovered a talent for filming and making videos. The Technology AST asked him to join in the Middle School and Community activities and to film them for him. This has led to the student being asked by other members of staff to make videos of a variety of activities. With a pupil, this student has now set up an Enterprise Business, making films and on the evening of the interview was competing with other enterprise groups in the school for funding from the school's enterprise budget.

He told the researchers that since being encouraged by the technology department to work with them in delivering their Community activities he has increased in confidence, has expanded his expertise in film making, recognises the importance of planning, has a renewed interest in his other school subjects and wants to do well in his examinations.

In **School C** the Headteacher of the specialist school was able to add his thoughts.

- He stated that links established with the Partner Primary Schools as a result of the Specialist School Community Plan have contributed to the raised standards both in the Secondary School and the Middle Schools.

- The 2004 results were the best in the history of the Specialist School.

- The year 11 students who achieved these results were the first students to be engaged in planned liaison activities as a result of Specialist School targets.

- The KS 3 results have also improved.

- Five years ago the school also started to conduct 'First Family Interviews'. All parents and pupils are invited to an interview at the School prior to admission.

- He recognises that it is difficult to prove links with standards and there are so many contributory factors but he believes that you can measure attitudes.

- The standing and reputation of the School has improved dramatically, with

  Primary links being seen as key to progress in an unstable and volatile catchment area

- 90% of pupils in the Feeder Primary Schools transfer to the Specialist School and the School is always greatly oversubscribed.

In **School D** the focus was on an Annual Summer School organised by the Arts College for gifted and talented students from the six secondary schools in the LEA. Each secondary school is able to select students with exceptional ability for the one week summer school.

Of the 14 students that attended from the 'host' specialist school all achieved their predicted GCSE grade or better – 4 of those who attended bettered their predicted grades.

One of the partner secondary schools is a school that has in the recent past had 'serious weaknesses' but here the Head of the Art Department was able to confirm that:

- in 2003 and 2004 all students attending the summer school had met or exceeded their predicted GCSE results in Art

- in 2004 4 of the students successfully studied GCSE art in a weekly twilight session plus the Summer School

- one third of the students who attended the summer school transferred to the sixth form in the specialist school to study AS level Art and Design

Finally evidence from **School E**

The Art for Everyone class started with three mature students who had no formal qualification from their school days and who had not used a paintbrush except for DIY activities since they left school. Their ages ranged from 56yrs-80yrs.of age.

The numbers attending this afternoon class rapidly increased and the quality of work produced was so good that at the end of the first year, the art teacher suggested that in the second year they would follow the AS level Art and Design syllabus and that perhaps some of them might enter for the examination. This was received with hostility from some of the mature students who declared that they would not continue with the Course if they had to do an examination. Nevertheless, they all returned for a second year and followed the AS Course.

16 students were entered and achieved A*-B grades at AS Level. Following this success these mature students continued their studies working towards A level examinations. While the others then decided to work towards their AS level. The last 5 students achieved their GCSE in 2004.

The greatest thrill for these mature students was when they received their certificates along with the School's A-Level students at a Celebration of Success Evening with their families in attendance.

It was then decided that they might wish to continue to study art but to do so by distance learning supported by tutorials in the School.

A member of the Art Department who is studying for a Middle Leadership qualification decided to write an on-line course which would meet the needs of her own course requirements, and one which would provide a progression route for those mature students who had already completed an A-level Art and Design course and had the necessary skills to embark upon a Fine Art A-Level Course.

Following this pilot year, the course will be rolled out to other sixth form students in the Specialist School and to other Schools and Community Groups.

But, as this paper has argued, value for money cannot be judged by examination results alone. The story of one mature student speaks for itself. When asked how it has affected his attitude to learning, he replied that there was not an apple big enough to give to the teacher. He said he had been 'blind' for 70 years and now saw the world in a different light and had, through this Art Course, discovered the 'joys' of learning and that he and several others on this Course had enrolled at the school for other evening classes.

It is acknowledged that the schools used in this initial research were well established and 'successful' specialist schools. The need now is to visit a further range of schools in a wider geographical area and embrace a wider range of specialisms. The focus also needs to be widened to include schools that have been more recently designated as specialist schools as well as those that have

been less successful in engaging with their partner schools and the wider community. After more extensive trials such tools could be used alongside other self evaluation tools (see Appendix A) to measure the impact, quality and range of the specialist school community dimension. Failure to develop this line of reasoning further may, ultimately, jeopardise both the perception and the reality of the concept of the specialist school at the heart of learning in the community.

APPENDIX A: DRAFT COMMUNITY SELF EVALUATION TOOL

Classification	Basic	Developing	Developed	Advanced
Family of Schools	Curriculum liaison/activity with the family of schools exists for some subjects, instigated by individual subject leaders/teachers	Curriculum liaison/activity with the family of schools becoming more consistent across the curriculum encouraged by whole school policy	There is an established programme of liaison/activity with the family of schools for all National Curriculum subjects and curriculum aspects, including ICT	There is a seamless transfer from KS 2 to KS3 due to extensive cross-phase arrangements
The co-ordination of teacher awareness and curriculum continuity extends from familiarisation and threads across-phase by a comprehensive arrangement to ensure that student transfer is managed and progressive				
Indicative Criteria	• subject cross phase meetings • teachers make cross phase visits • bridging units in place • summer schools run for Year 6 prior to entry to Y7 • KS 2 teachers visit pupils in Y7 to monitor progress • Special subject events held e.g. Maths competition	• agreement between schools to ensure curriculum liaison • named teachers in each subject responsible for curriculum liaison • joint training days across phases • portfolios of work for all subjects with e.g.s of work at each KS, identifying levels of achievement • curriculum liaison is monitored and evaluated	• all teachers engaged in formal programme of cross phase work - training - lesson observation - planning for curriculum continuity • all Y6 and Y7 students have cross phase activities to enhance transition • the work at the outset of KS 3 is known to be pitched at right level for each student	Quality provision across the primary and secondary 'divide' is ensured by having comprehensive arrangements agreed as policy, combining knowledge, expertise and practice from both phases, including: curriculum policy; common practises and procedures; schemes of work and assessment procedures; on-the-job-training; use of specialist facilities; fast track groups for the able and less able; teachers timetabled to teach across phases
Sources of evidence (suggested starting points)				
Issues for action:			Current Level	