

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

EDUCATION EXTRA

POLICY REVIEW: SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

Background

Education Extra is delighted to be invited to give evidence to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on the 'School of the Future'.

Education Extra is the leading UK wide educational charity which supports out of school hours learning (OSHL) in all its forms as a way of promoting success and social inclusion for young people, their families and communities. Over the past 10 years education Extra has been a key player in the development of policy and understanding of OSHL across the UK by informing and developing the area with the 4 government departments.

We have been working in Wales with the support and encouragement of committed and innovative schools and LEAs since our beginning 10 years ago. It has always been our ambition to enable schools, children and young people in Wales to have the maximum opportunity not only in view of reaching their potential but also in view of the complex social and economic needs. Our ambitions and achievements have been very much put to work in Wales, enabled and enhanced by support from the Assembly.

Education Extra helps and supports schools, local authorities and other partners, and through this thousands of young people to access out of school activities which have enriched their educational and social experience. This is done through:

- the creation and delivery of the only national award scheme for OSHL
- the creation of the only national membership network for OSHL
- project and programme development, for example breakfast clubs, reading clubs, sporting/creative opportunities
- the provision of high quality good practice advice and materials
- training and awareness raising for teachers and other adults involved in this field
- policy development at local and national level
- partnership development and facilitation

Education Extra continues to work closely with the Assembly and has produced a Code of Practice and training materials for OSHL and manages a range of OSHL projects across Wales. Our work in Wales has been key to informing our development across the UK and has played a role in developing some of the best and most exemplary projects. This is guided by the focus and emphasis as in

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the Learning Country, the approach to needs/rights/responsibilities of young people and the appointment of the Childrens Commissioner, for example. Therefore OSHL finds a particular and fertile home in the educational aspirations and future for Wales.

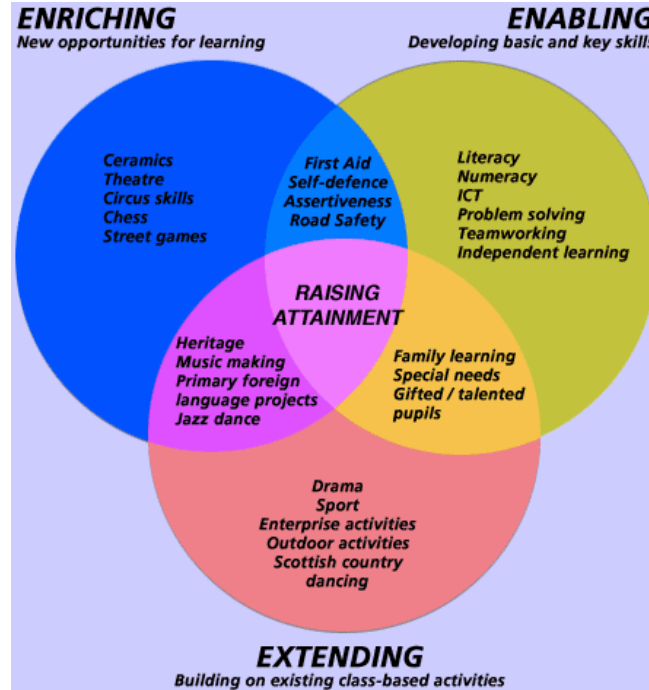
In addition to the Assembly support, continued funding from the Community Fund and a small grant from the Lloyds TSB Foundation have enabled us to launch Education Extra Cymru to better meet the needs of OSHL in Wales. Education Extra Cymru is an integral part of Education Extra and will have its own base in Cardiff with staff located in north and south Wales.

Across the UK schools, local and national government and partner organisations are looking to develop new ways of enhancing the learning opportunities not only for children and young people but also for families and local communities. Much has already been done in Scotland through the New Community Schools and in England under the 'Extended School' development. In America the full service schools are also working in this way. It is recognised that schools can only do so much on their own and in traditional school time – and to make further significant improvements in education then we need to look for new ways of working and delivering the education that young people need for 10 and 15 years hence.

OSHL provision has increased dramatically over the past 4 years with the significant funding from the New Opportunities Fund. Many LAs, schools and partners have developed wide ranging programmes that offer enabling, enriching and extending opportunities for thousands more children and young people.

The following diagram has been used and amended over the past 4 years and is included within the Code of Practice for OSHL. As we move into a new era for education we see this diagram developing further.

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OSHL, whether before school starts (eg breakfast clubs), during lunch times (eg positive play), after school (eg homework clubs), at weekends (eg residential outdoor experiences) or holidays (eg Summer literacy, XL Wales) is providing the extra time and extra opportunity to offer a greater range of learning opportunities. These opportunities are not only supporting the in-school learning of children and young people but are giving them opportunities to develop lifelong interests and love of learning. Many of these OSHL opportunities are also involving families and the wider community, proving that generations and different groups can learn alongside and together.

However, we believe that this is only the start. What is being understood from OSHL is already, and will continue to provide ideas for developing the school of the future, including even more possibilities in the way that learning is developed, offered and delivered.

Wales is well placed to take the good practice already happening in Wales, to look for additional good practice from a wide range of sources and to use the very best of this to develop a true 'Learning country' that will offer new opportunities in the future.

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The Policy Review: School of the Future

Schools represent four walls around the future – we want to help to make that 3 walls - with one removed to ensure that the school and the community meet each other on equal terms.

What is it that we dream of seeing for our children for the years ahead? Do we continue down the well trodden path or open up the possibilities that a global economy and ICT are offering?

Will the learning of the future and the schools of the future be the same thing?

Some of the important questions are:

- How will people learn?
- Where will they learn?
- Who will the learners and the teachers be? Will they be the same people?
- When will the learning start and finish?
- Who will support the learner?
- How will the learning be recognised?

We will attempt to offer some answers to these questions in the context of OSHL and in a way that expands the idea of the school, the concept of learning without boundaries and fully includes the community.

The unique and innovative aspects of OSHL can help define the learning and the school of the future:

- Voluntary learning
- Individual learning
- Creativity
- Participation
- Responsibility

The review wishes to focus on a range of areas – our belief is that we need to look at these in the broadest context and be prepared to think ‘blue sky’, to think the unthinkable and ask why we need to be confined by the walls of school buildings and the inherited times of the school day and school year!

We recognise that our view is that of a voluntary organisation working across thousands of schools across Wales and the UK. We offer it as a contribution to the blue sky thinking needed to really radicalise learning and teaching but based in practicality as demonstrated through OSHL. We are also aware that others

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will have to take the vision and turn it into achievable reality – taking account of their experience and knowledge of the day-to-day needs and economics of the education system.

School as a community resource

The Education Act 2002 will enable schools to provide a wider range of opportunities and activities not just for their own pupils but for other children and young people, families and communities. In many areas schools are best placed to offer a wide range of opportunities – not just a building and resources. Where families value the school as part of the community and the school values the community as part of the learning resource for pupils then the possibilities for sustainable development are enormous. However, these opportunities should just be a step on the way. We should ask ourselves:

Do we need 'schools' as we know them – or can we look to offer new and different learning opportunities across a range of learning bases? Can we bring provision for children, young people and adults together? Do we want learning provision that is geared to age rather than ability, aptitude, interest?

Can we offer a range of school buildings or learning spaces? What other services/provision can be made available from the base?

Can we adjust the timing of learning? Who learns best in the morning – or the evening – why do we all need to start learning at 9.00 am and finish at 3.30?

We need to think about wider society – what are the real reasons for the school day, the school year – how much of this is geared to the needs of working parents?

Many schools are already looking to provide for more than their pupils alone. OSHL has opened up schools outside the school day and helped to develop partnerships between schools, other organisations, families and communities. These developments must not be lost. Sufficient resource must be made available to schools and partners to continue this work towards the school of the future, and to ensure that these principles are enshrined in long term development.

School as a community resource will need to think about developing better learners for the future – and not just about raising attainment in the shorter term. This is essential for:

- individual life chances and choices
- the good of the wider community

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- the economic and socially cohesive and inclusive future of Wales

This means every young person leaving school with the:

- knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens and employees/employers
- demonstrable evidence and recognition of that learning
- attitudes to learning, making sense of the unknown
- confidence to know that they can learn and embrace the unknown
- desire to face the future and establish their place within it

We would like to emphasise the need for partnership working. The need for communities to work together to meet local need and ensure sustainability is essential. However, partnerships do not develop, nor are they sustained, without tremendous hard work by dedicated individuals. If we are serious about partnership working then time/resource/funding has to be made available for the school of the future. The 'extended' or community school model must be developed to allow all schools the opportunity to work in this way.

Use of and developments in information technology

Developments in this field could, as much as anything else, provide the key to opening up learning at different times, different places and facilitated by a range of different people. On the way we need to be aware that many communities are not able to access high quality ICT provision and we must ensure that children and young people are not doubly disadvantaged by this lack of access.

OSHL has enabled many more children and young people to access ICT outside the school day through specific ICT activities and by making resources available to children, families and communities outside the school day.

Teaching methods – teachers of tomorrow

Teachers are critical to the education of children and young people. They are trained for a specific role that over the years has developed in many ways. Teachers are called on to be for example, counsellors, coaches, administrators, social workers, examiners, friends, technicians, finance and funding experts, librarians, site managers, cleaners, subject experts, dancers, story tellers, facilitators, trainers and much, much more. Some of these roles are part of teaching but many do not have to be.

We recognise the issues of recruitment, retention and capacity and the need for teaching to be seen to have higher status, be more creative and more focussed.

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OSHL offers many opportunities for teachers and also acts as a route into teaching for others such as classroom assistants.

The new learning needs will require new approaches to learning management or teaching rather than didactic learning and will need a range of individuals offering differing roles in supporting learning. Teachers will become more strategic in their role, more focused on long term outcomes – while not forgetting the important milestones that chart the path. Teaching and learning will become a team effort engaged in an active process. The range of support includes:

- local and national governments
- learners – across the age range
- families
- community members
- learning champions, mentors
- learning assistants
- other professionals – librarians, childcarers, playworkers, coaches, artists, etc
- colleges and universities
- business, employers

OSHL enables many teachers to deliver different aspects of learning outside the formal requirements of the national curriculum. Many facilitate areas of interest rather than subject specialism, they are able to work with pupils other than those they teach on a regular basis. Many also report that they can develop different relationships, get to know pupils in ways that are not possible in the classroom and make and develop links with families and other organisations.

Teachers tell us that they are invigorated by the flexibility of OSHL and for some this is what they went into teaching for. There is also recognition that teachers themselves are learners – they bring methodology and ideas from OSHL back into the classroom to inform teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis. One of the exciting roles for OSHL is that it allows the development of a learning environment where the teacher can be the role model for learning, for example, everyone together investigating a new way of solving a problem rather than directing operations. There is more here to be captured and disseminated in a co-ordinated way.

OSHL shows that different approaches to teaching and learning can work outside the school day and can be seen as the 'experimental' arm of the school and will be an essential part of developing the school of the future. A great range of people are involved in the delivery of OSHL, for example, musicians, students, business people, engineers, scientists, play workers, learning assistants, youth workers, parents, siblings, older pupils, librarians, childcarers – and the list goes on. In many cases they support teachers but in an increasing number they plan,

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provide and deliver OSHL themselves. Good practice can inform the way in which this can be developed in the School of the Future.

There needs to be recognition that a range of other people and professionals can be involved in learning. Good practice from associated fields can be brought to bear and the right people for the right roles trained and supported to offer the right experiences. This is already being demonstrated in OSHL where, for example, artists, engineers, retired people are offered awareness raising and training to enable them to work outside the school day. The training materials we have prepared for the Assembly will enable this work to grow,

Curriculum

The present curriculum meets the needs of many young people – but also fails some. In the school of the future we want to see a ‘core’ curriculum that meets the needs of all individuals and offers a wide and broad based range of extending opportunities. The curriculum needs to be developed taking account of the potential and possibilities of learning outside the school day. It also needs to be developed and delivered taking account of the needs and views of children and young people themselves. OSHL demonstrates how, when you consult and involve young people in planning, delivering and evaluating provision, their ideas and aspirations lead to programmes that attract and retain participants who recognise and value their own learning.

New research on how the brain works and how individuals learn, eg multiple, emotional and social intelligence is opening up new opportunities for developing learning to greater meet the need of individuals. Many of these ideas are being piloted in OSHL.

If we are to consider the individual needs of children and young people then we have to produce a curriculum that is meaningful and offers active learning opportunities. Vocational learning, citizenship, life skills and a range of different subjects and skills must be on offer if we are to ensure that all young people can find something for them. OSHL has helped to demonstrate some of these options and has engaged many disaffected, disinterested and disappointed young people to become turned back on to learning.

Associated with this is the need to recognise, in ways that have real currency, the range of skills and knowledge that young people gather. The concept and definition of achievement need to be broader and more generously recognised. The development of the Baccalaureate in Wales is one opportunity for this.

Funding or resourcing

Resources for development can be looked at it in broader ways – not just financial resourcing but also human resources.

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Whenever there is new development there is the issue of finance. There will always be the need for more money for learning but more coherent provision where buildings, people and resources are made best use of could ultimately offer a more cost effective service.

It is not just money but how to harness and make better use of varying professional, parental and community talent and seeing partnerships as ways of developing this aspect that will make a lasting difference.

In the interim period it is essential that non-statutory provision such as OSHL, family learning, community opportunities, is given sufficient funding to enable all communities to have a range of opportunities to meet their identified need.

Partnership working offers new ways of accessing a wider range of funding from different sources. However, looking for and accessing funding takes time and many schools struggle to find this and the expertise needed to make bids and applications. The school of the future will need the time and resource to work in partnership and access appropriate funding.

OSHL demonstrates how schools and other partners can work together to access funding to support and sustain their programmes. However, it also demonstrates the difficulties associated with funding and resourcing.

Widening opportunity and participation

By changing the way we look at education and focusing on teaching and learning at different times and in different places then we may truly widen opportunity and increase participation.

OSHL has offered many young people and families opportunities to be involved in new activities at different times and in different places, for example archery, fly fishing, ceramics, equine studies, farm accounting, story telling/writing, breakfast clubs, circus skills, languages, outside the school day. Different approaches outside the school day have enabled many schools to bring back into the learning fold those pupils who had found difficulty with the curriculum and the school day.

The school of the future can bring together different generations, different partners as mentors and models and bring the world of higher and further education and work into the life of the school. By working in this integrated way there are numerous benefits to all partners.

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Adding value to the education and school experience

If we agree that learning is the responsibility of everyone then learning opportunities must be available for everyone and we must recognise the roles and added value that can be brought by them. Estelle Morris speaking at the Education Extra conference in 2002 echoed this sentiment – ‘for every single citizen, no matter what they get paid to do, no matter what their day job is, we want them to say “I’m an educator as well”

OSHL is demonstrating the ways in which many citizens are impacting on the learning of young people. It is essential to harness this potential and develop ways of integrating it within the school of the future.

The Assembly’s 3 main themes:

Sustainable development

For opportunities to be developed and sustained there needs to be sufficient levels of funding. However, this is not always about large new sums of money but about looking at the best way of using what is already available.

The school of the future will need to be guided by a set of principles that identify a ‘basic’ requirement and this requirement will need careful costing taking into the real circumstances in which the school delivers.

By developing and growing a range of partnerships there will be increased potential for sustainability:

- Appropriate funding that recognises the costs of accepted levels and standards of provision
- Funding that is co-ordinated and encourages partnership working to meet local need.
- Capacity building within local communities providing skills and expertise to make communities healthy and places where young people want to stay and not escape

Key to the success of the school of the future will be the concept of ‘quality provision’. If the opportunities for learning are to be inclusive and broad based there will be a need to identify and develop indicators for quality across a range of provision. There are quality marks available that will offer something. However, for radical new provision we must ensure the right approach and availability of non-bureaucratic, workable systems that have real meaning for the delivery on the ground.

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Equal opportunities

The school of the future must offer real opportunity and ensure that children, young people, families and the wider community are not excluded because of:

- Income/poverty
- Location/transport/access
- age
- gender
- culture/ethnicity
- disability/special need
- educational attainment
- or other reasons

This links directly to social inclusion.

Social inclusion

Many families face exclusion from society for a range of personal and economic reasons including poverty, poor housing, unemployment, ill health, criminal activity, poor educational achievement. The school of the future must have a specific capacity for promoting inclusion within society by allowing individuals a sense of belonging and of being valued.

OSHL has demonstrated how such provision, by not excluding anyone from taking part and by offering a wide range of activities and ways of engaging can foster these feelings.

Blue Sky - conclusions

What sort of provision would we make for children and families now if we were starting from a blank piece of paper?

- An emphasis on learning
- Learning provision from early morning to late at night
- A 'core' provision for all and flexibility of additional opportunities for all
- Choice of when, where and what to learn
- Greater pupil control of their own learning
- Consultation and involvement in planning, delivering, evaluating
- Provision that can be accessed by children and adults of all ages – together and apart
- Learning that doesn't depend on how old you are and addresses individual need
- Learning that takes into account new research
- A range of spaces and bases – not just buildings but eg forest school

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- Partnership provision and services eg health, employment, entertainment, leisure
- Teachers and other professionals able to support and facilitate learning
- Demonstration of and recognition for the wide range of learning that takes place
- Different courses, subjects, skills and experiences – vocational and academic, citizenship, community involvement
- Complimentary provision that meets the needs of working families
- Local provision and progression routes
- ICT and links to other learners locally and world wide
- Provision that is of high quality no matter where, how, or by whom it is delivered

However, blue sky must become clear vision and focus. The school of the future has to take account of:

- Social and economic factors, including sustainability
- Research and good practice from UK and further afield, including quality
- Positive learning experience for all - both 'teachers' and 'learners'

Our vision of the school of the future is one, therefore, where in school and out of school activities and learning are fully integrated and inclusive, where schools are always 'open' if staffed by different people, where learning is taking different shapes and forms in terms of activities, auditing, and supervising etc and where each child has many different opportunities to shine, where parents are not only welcome, but fully involved in different aspects of school life and their child's learning, where partners in health, the arts, sports etc, are familiar, comfortable and invigorating partners in building healthy children and communities and where school is at the centre and not at the margin of the community.

Education Extra has a wealth of expertise and knowledge and would be pleased to offer further support for the development of :

- A vision for the school of the future
- A strategy and plans

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Education Extra

January 2003

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