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Promoting Inclusion by Addressing the Needs of Local Communities:

Working Together to Promote Social and Educational Cohesion

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Abstract

Efforts to create more inclusive education systems which are adequately equipped to manage a diverse range of learning and social needs have focused largely upon models of school improvement (Ainscow, 1997; Giangreco, 1997; Skidmore, 2004). Schools have been at the centre of debates about how those students who are perceived as difficult to educate may best have their needs met in classrooms, and in many countries legislation aimed to promote inclusion has focused upon changing schools in order that they may become more accessible to all students. However, such approaches, which concentrate efforts upon within school factors can be seen to have had limited success in areas of high socio-economic need. This paper, which draws upon research conducted in the UK (Rose & Jones, 2007; Rose, Smith, & Feng, 2006) suggests that a more holistic approach to inclusion, which addresses community needs and places schools at the hub of activity aimed to promote change may be beneficial. In particular it is argued that the successful promotion of inclusion must be predicated upon a more cohesive commitment to involvement of local communities to ensure positive attitudes to schools and their place in society.

Discourses for Understanding and Developing Inclusive Schools

During the past twenty years debates around the nature of inclusive schooling have been characterised by a series of discussions centred around the rights of individuals described as having special educational needs and how these might be more appropriately addressed. The movement towards a more inclusive approach to education, which recognises the rights of all learners to gain access to schooling which is equitable and relevant to their needs, owes much to a discourse of human rights. Several writers (Barton, 1997; Cummings, Dyson, & Millward, 2003; Hehir, 2005) have discussed the need to contextualise inclusive schooling within a wider agenda of societal reform which is dependent upon the removal of established social injustices. The democratisation of education must inevitably be a concern for any teacher or researcher who has an intention to improve the situation for learners who have been marginalised. The drawing of parallels with other rights agendas associated with issues such as race, poverty, or gender is inevitable and necessary. Indeed it is impossible to separate many of the factors which impede human rights and which often combine to perpetuate the very educational disadvantage which most writers on inclusion would wish to see addressed. This symbiosis between post-modern society and schools, and the impact which they have upon each other has been widely acknowledged. Rao (2003) has discussed the complex relationship between poverty and the provision of education. He demonstrates how poverty and social exclusion are major inhibitors to the development of education which is often resource led and dependent. With a cruel irony the absence of adequate educational provision is a significant factor in the perpetuation of poverty and marginalisation and leads to further exclusion of the very populations in greatest need. Rao proposes that the breaking of this vicious circle through a range of radical actions is essential if the currently widening gap between society's wealthiest and poorest populations is ever to be bridged.

This discourse of rights is important and has served to achieve a momentum for inclusive schooling as an international concern. Indeed it is this focus upon rights more than any other which led to International conferences such as those held in Jomtien (World Conference for Education for All; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1990), Salamanca (World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality; UNESCO, 1994) and Dakar (World Education Forum; UNESCO, 2000) where a desire was expressed to harness the potential influences of education as a positive force for good in effecting change and challenging the marginalisation of people from disenfranchised communities. Global concerns for a changing direction in education recognise an increased inter-dependence across nations and the necessity to act in unity in order to equip future generations with the skills needed to confront the many potentially catastrophic challenges ahead. The statements emerging from these important international gatherings have each emphasised the need for change and the potential which exists within education to become a vehicle for improving the lives of marginalised and excluded groups. The intentions to improve opportunities for the recognition of all individuals within their communities and to ensure that they receive an education which is both relevant to their needs and guarantees the same access as their peers is clearly articulated within these documents. However, in too many instances these honourable intentions have failed to move beyond rhetoric and improvements have been slow to materialise (UNESCO, 2004).

The reasons for a slow response to the proposals made at these prestigious conferences are, of course many. The obvious link between poverty and poor educational development, and the need to challenge long establish educational customs and practices are clearly factors here. However, a further inhibitor of inclusion may be related to the zealous pursuit of a discourse of rights which has given insufficient consideration to the ways in which these rights might be translated into actions.

Ware (2004) has emphasised the necessity to effect significant cultural reform in schools if inclusion is to become accepted as the norm rather than an exceptional aspect of schooling. She discusses those values, rituals, routines and initiations within schools which may explicitly lead to exclusion and which conversely when challenged and addressed may promote the development of more inclusive learning environments. Within her work Ware emphasises the need to shift discourses of inclusion according to the situation within schools and education systems. Her research led her to believe that for many teachers the persistence of deficit models has resulted in an overemphasis upon a search for 'technical solutions' for dealing with student centred problems. The necessity to move from this position to an acceptance of a discourse of rights is expressed within Ware's work. She illustrates how a transition from a situation in which some students are seen as problematic and challenging to the school system, to one in which school adjustment is essential to ensure the rights of students and an essential stage in the development of inclusion. Ware's analysis, however, of the ways in which schools may move forward, whilst helpful does not provide the holistic view of current developments which may be essential for our future progress.

Ware's notion of shifting towards a discourse of rights, whilst emphasising the importance of this concept tends to separate it from a possibility that a need to address multiple paradigms may be important. Dyson (1999) has discussed the complex relationships between what he perceives to be a number of discourses of inclusion. As with other writers cited above, he sees a discourse based upon rights and ethics as providing an essential underpinning of the emerging philosophy of inclusion. However, Dyson develops his ideas further by suggesting that further discourses around efficacy, politics and pragmatics may require similar consideration. A discourse of efficacy, he proposes must be built around an understanding of the place of inclusive schooling as an efficient way of addressing the needs of all learners. He challenges the rationale behind segregated school provision, arguing that

there is little evidence for students learning more effectively in special schools or units, and that such provision is neither cost effective nor capable of delivering the social justice which has been lacking for many students.

Dyson's (1999) discourse of politics is framed within the language of a struggle which has become an inevitable process in order that marginalised peoples can gain their rights. Within these terms the mobilisation of individuals or groups of people who may be described as being disabled or having special educational needs is an important part of both bringing to the attention of others, and challenging the oppression of being segregated within society. Such a discourse is clearly aligned to that of rights but moves the agenda forward through challenging those inequalities which persist within education systems and making demands upon both producers and managers of policy.

A final discourse discussed by Dyson is what he identifies as pragmatics, that is, concern for what works in inclusive schools. This has received considerable attention from writers and researchers in recent years (Ainscow, 1997, 1999; Giangreco, 1997; Rouse & Florian, 1996, Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998) who have examined those schools which have achieved success or made progress towards becoming more inclusive. The proposal that changing school cultures and ethos and implementing systems which welcome all learners into schools, has driven an agenda of school reform and led to the development of school improvement materials such as the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) and the Inclusion Quality Mark (Coles & Hancock, 2002). These instruments and the theories which have driven them have found favour with schools and education authorities alike and have served to effectively raise awareness thus supporting school staff in taking actions to develop policies and practices which are more conducive to an inclusive schooling approach. This technocratic approach to developing inclusion is one most likely to find support in schools because of its intention to offer practical solutions to what are still perceived as 'problems'.

The approach to developing inclusive school climates through models of school improvement has adopted a positive approach and encourages schools to build effectively upon their strengths, yet I still perceive that schools see the development of inclusion in terms of having to overcome problems. I would contend that the language of deficit persists within schools and is unlikely to be overcome unless teachers are provided with the kind of support with which teachers can identify and feel most comfortable. This may well require a more intensive focus upon pedagogy in order to ensure that teachers are equipped with those teaching skills which will enable all students to learn effectively in their classrooms.

The evidence that a distinct and discrete form of pedagogy can be applied to students described as having special educational needs is at best tenuous. Whilst research conducted in this area has, to date indicated that those aspects of effective teaching which have been long recognised are likely to benefit all learners (Lewis & Norwich, 2001), there is a suggestion that the intensity of teaching provided and the use of multi-methods approaches may be beneficial (Davis & Florian, 2004a, 2004b). The introduction into mainstream schools of approaches which have been designed for specific pupil groups or to address individual learning needs have proven efficacious in some instances (Cooper, Arnold, & Boyd, 2001; Mesibov & Shea, 1996; Howley & Arnold, 2005), and are at least worthy of further investigation. This is an idea which does not sit comfortably with some writers about inclusion as it tends to individualise learning needs and suggest that some students need to be treated differently within schools. A denial of this situation, though, may actually serve to exclude the very pupils for whom the voyage towards inclusion was begun. Few teachers would wish to deny a blind student access to Braille simply because it involves singling out their difference from sighted peers. Similarly I would suggest that if other forms of adapted teaching, such as the use of visual structure to assist a pupil on the autistic spectrum, or nurturing processes to provide support for a pupil with emotional difficulties can reap

rewards, we should indeed pursue them. The challenge may well be more about how we adapt classrooms to enable such systems to be used rather than whether they should be used at all.

Reviewing an Understanding of the Issues

An examination of discourses of inclusion is helpful but can take us only so far along the road towards ensuring that marginalised students are accepted into their schools and beyond. As researchers continue to explore those conditions which assist in facilitating inclusion it is equally necessary to review the impact that the measures taken so far have made. That progress has indeed been made is beyond doubt. Reports from many of the world's countries indicate the development of policies for inclusive schooling, improvements in professional development opportunities, which increase awareness of successful practices in working in inclusive classrooms and increased academic successes for pupils who have previously underachieved (Meijer, 2003; Peters, 2003). If we return to the overarching theme of inclusion and the motivations which have driven so many groups and individuals to embark upon a journey towards a more equitable society, we need however to look beyond the successes achieved in schools.

Whilst schools can undoubtedly play a significant role in influencing change within society any initiatives which schools take in isolation are likely to have a limited impact. Björnason (2003) has written of the opportunities afforded through good inclusive schooling which have enabled young adults to gain confidence with their peers and to advocate on their own behalf. She describes inclusive schools as the "fountains for strong supportive networks" which enable young people to gain friendships which can extend beyond the school years. She is however also conscious that not all facets of society have advanced to a point where they are so willing to engage in the positive relationships which are being established in schools. Björnason has a conviction that students leaving inclusive schools will play a leading

role in demonstrating what they can offer to the communities in which they live and that they will thereby effect change. Her optimism is well founded and based upon her personal as well as professional experiences of attitudes towards disability. Not all young people with special educational needs or disabilities though have had wholly positive experiences on leaving school. Some graduates (Noble, 2003; Sainsbury, 2000) report school as having provided them with opportunities which they are denied when entering adult life. Schools are perceived to have made progress whilst other institutions and adults within the community may have failed to keep up.

If inclusion is to become the accepted norm within our societies it is essential that it not regarded simply as an educational issue and that its development is not solely the responsibility of schools. Schools have been at the forefront of an emerging understanding of inclusion and have an opportunity to take a lead in helping communities to engage with those issues which have been discussed by educators for several years. This will only happen if our conception of schools and their relationships change. Examples of how this might happen are beginning to emerge and within this paper I intend to discuss how the discourse of inclusion may be broadened and indeed strengthened by ensuring that schools engage more closely with the communities in which they are located.

Establishing Schools which Serve Communities

The impact of establishing closer links between schools and the communities which they serve is only just beginning to be formally researched. Whilst the idea of community schools is not new, indeed Dewey (1916) proposed that schools at the hub of the community could and should make a major contribution in the stabilising of democracy, for the most part the formalising of school and community relationships has been the exception rather than the rule. Schools have undoubtedly served their communities by providing access to learning for children within their immediate neighbourhoods. In so doing they have prepared young

people to become citizens in the communities in which they will live. The relationship between schools, however, and the communities which they serve has often been one which exists largely at the level of contact with immediate service users, that is, namely the students and their families or carers. Certainly schools have opened their doors on specific occasions, possibly sports days or fund raising events, to welcome the wider community, but the participation of this community in the life of schools has often been at best tenuous and in some instances non-existent. The first priority of teachers is, of course, to provide an education for the students who comprise their school population. It is true to say that that this responsibility alone is great and that it makes enormous demands upon the skills and energies of the teachers concerned. It is also worth exploring the notion that an increased engagement between schools and communities may actually provide support for teachers and alleviate some of the difficulties which they currently experience with students who are perceived as presenting a challenge.

For the remainder of this paper I wish to explore two specific initiatives from the UK which have endeavoured to bring communities and the schools within them closer together. In particular I will draw upon two small scale projects which have explored ways of supporting students who have been deemed to be at risk of exclusion from, or failure within the education system. The first of these initiatives, the *Full Service Extended Schools* program has been supported and in part funded through a government led scheme and has been adopted nationally, though not consistently, throughout England (Department for Education & Skills, 2005). The second project which makes use of community volunteers in supporting young people at risk of exclusion is funded by a government backed scheme, *The Children's Fund* and is a locally based initiative. The two research projects to be described here were both conducted in the same area of England. This location, a former coalfield area, has poor socio-economic indicators including high unemployment and a higher benefits

dependency rate than the national average. Government statistics indicate that the location in which the research was conducted is in the top 18% of most deprived areas in the UK. Whilst the two research projects, both of which were led by myself, were conducted independently, many of the same schools and young people were encountered during the investigations.

Project 1 – Full Service Extended Schools

In the USA the concept of Full Service schools has been established for a number of years (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 1998; Cahill, 1996). Dryfoos (1994, 1996) has described initiatives which bring together health, education and social welfare services in one school-based centre which provides support for all members of the local community. By locating these services together, she suggests that the school gains a greater focus within the community and people living within the area have far greater opportunities to engage with the school and with those based within it. Dryfoos and others (Carlson, Paavola, & Talley, 1995) have also emphasised the advantages to students, and particularly those seen as being at risk of disaffection or exclusion, of having a range of professionals working together within a school to provide immediacy of support. In many of the schools studied within the United States improvements in communication between professional colleagues from differing agencies based within one school have been cited as a significant factor in the successes of Full Service Extended Schools.

In England, The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2005) describes an Extended School as one which provides activities and services, often beyond the school day, in order to address the needs of its students, their families and the wider community. An imperative of collaboration between health service professionals, social services, the voluntary sector and community groups is seen as an essential feature of a Full Service delivery, which is available within a single school location. This approach in England builds upon two significant pieces of legislation, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) and *The*

Children Act (DfES, 2004) both of which have recognised that in too many instances a lack of cohesion across services has failed children, sometimes with tragic consequences (Department of Health, 2003). The first cohort of Extended Schools established in England were located in areas of social disadvantage with an anticipation that they would concentrate attention upon developing support to communities and families who have often perceived themselves as being disenfranchised from those essential services which can aid social and educational inclusion.

Early reviews of the English Extended School process (Cummings, Todd, & Dyson, 2004; Dyson, Millward, & Todd, 2002; Wilkin, Kinder, White, Atkinson, & Doherty, 2003), revealed some lack of consistency with regards to the development and procedures within Extended Schools, but acknowledged that improvements in inter-agency working had been significant and in many instances had provided greater support to students and families and had also changed community perceptions of schools. However, it does seem to me that there is an inevitability that different schools and regions will adopt a variety of procedures to defining the development of Extended Schools. A core principle of this initiative is that schools should be able to respond to the needs of local communities, and as these tend not to be uniform across the country, neither is it likely that the response will always be the same. Similarly, in social welfare systems which have developed over many years through separate education, social and health services to provide support to young people and families, it will inevitably take time to break down customs and long held practices and establish a new and more cohesive service.

The research into Extended Schools which informs this paper was conducted in a single Local Authority in the North Midlands of England. The research was commissioned in order to examine the efficacy of services provided and in particular to examine the impact of Extended Schools upon individual students deemed to be at risk of failure or exclusion, their

families, the professionals working within the system and the wider community served by the schools. At the core of the study were two secondary schools for students aged 11 to 16 years. Both had populations of around 900 students and had been operating Full Service provision for approximately two years at the outset of the research. The schools had worked closely together and had established a clear set of aims which were articulated in policy documents as: (a) bringing services closer to the community, (b) facilitating multi-agency working, (c) establishing a community-based approach, (d) integrating the Extended School into established school systems, and (e) developing core work with vulnerable children and at-risk families.

In addition to the two secondary schools, primary schools within the community were closely involved in the development and delivery of support services and in working alongside professional staff to ensure consistency of response.

Research into the provision was conducted over a year by a team which included two senior academic staff, a research assistant and two seconded teachers from the area in which the schools were located. The researchers visited the schools for one day every two weeks throughout the period of the investigation. An initial questionnaire given to all staff, teaching and non-teaching, within the schools ($N = 274$) was used to gauge opinions with regards to the Full Service Extended Schools model, how it had impacted upon their professional practices and what, if any effects they had noted in respect of students and families. The data gathered from this initial survey were used to inform the development of interview schedules and to identify key issues for a more in-depth inquiry. Interviews were conducted with 73 individuals (see Table 1) and with the school councils, comprising representatives from students in each year group across the schools. Additional data collection was managed through a scrutiny of school documentation including attendance and exclusions records and pupil academic attainment results.

Table 1

Sample of Interviewees for the Extended School Research

Types of Interviewees	Number
Students	14
School staff	26
Parents/carers	14
Professionals from other agencies	16
Head teachers	2
Local authority education officers	1
Total	73

As part of the research process narrative case studies were generated as a means of providing illustrative exemplars of the impact of actions taken under the Extended Schools approach and to enable the research commissioning agency to see how existing procedures might be further developed.

Following a year of intensive activity by the research team a number of conclusions could be made which are, I would suggest, significant with regards to the future development of inclusive schooling. In particular, within this paper, I will draw upon the research to discuss three important factors which do, I believe, influence the success or otherwise of attempting to develop inclusive schools, these being; the involvement and commitment of families, the collaboration and cohesion of professional support services; and the ways in which schools are perceived by the students who attend them.

Involving and Supporting Families

The schools within this research recognised that for some students and indeed for some families, schools are not seen in a wholly positive light. Interviews with parents, carers and students revealed that school was often perceived as something of a burdensome

necessity to occupy early life before going into the real world. Many of the parents interviewed described their own school years in fairly negative terms and often had little regard for teachers, though they did acknowledge that they had a difficult job to do. When questioned about the changes which had taken place within the schools as they had taken on an Extended Schools role over the past two years there was a clear understanding amongst parents and carers that families and schools had been brought closer together and that this was a positive action of which they approved. One of the significant factors here was the appointment of family workers, based in the schools who would spend time with families in their own homes helping to sort out difficulties. In particular, those parents who had children who were regarded as difficult or at risk of failure or exclusion often spoke favourably about the changing patterns of support. The benefits accruing from closer home school liaison through a professional other than a teacher or social worker were described by several parents.

Well what it was is my son, he wouldn't open up to no-one, he wouldn't talk to no-one. But [the family worker] managed to get through to him and it did, although it took a while with him, she did get through to him and he did find it helpful with her... I mean, you know, he wasn't seeing her like every week but she was there if he needed her and he did seem to open up to her, and at the moment one of my other children sees [the family worker] just on – it could be every month or so, just to see that she is alright, if she has got any problems in school. And [the family worker] has helped her to sort out a few things as well. So to me the whole project was really helpful because without it I didn't know where else to go. (Parent/carer)

[the family worker] has actually stopped me from going around the bend, you know, she has phoned me and sat and listened to me yawn on, you know about all my worries and I have felt 100% better after, just knowing there is somebody on the other

end of the phone who will give me an ear, you know? And that is brilliant.

(Parent/carer)

The very personal nature of the relationship between family workers and the families they are supporting raises important questions about professional identity and image. A relationship of trust is clearly important here. There may however be something even more significant as illustrated in the transcript extract given here:

School looks upon me as a very manipulative person and I can understand why they are saying it because I have been. But [the family worker] has helped me to open my eyes and realise just what it is that everybody has been saying to me, they have made me really question everything I do. I have a social worker that is really, really too hard. I can understand why she is doing what she is doing because I do need a shove, but not to the extent that my social worker has made me. [The family worker] has been there to support me with that. She puts it in a different way but still gets the message across, where I felt with my social worker I am some sort of criminal. [The family worker] has put that differently so she has made me understand that I am not actually opening my mouth for my social worker to see it, she is not there at home with me so I have never, when she says to me is everything OK, I say yes, everything is fine, but I don't tell her of the achievements I have done. [The family worker] I can speak to. I can tell [the family worker]. I know that I can trust her. (Parent/carer)

The family worker referred to here works very closely alongside social workers within the school, but the parent/carer quoted above makes a clear distinction of role and demonstrates an appreciation of both the intensity and nature of the support provided. All of the parents/carers quoted here had children who had were seen to be at risk of exclusion from school. Each had reported an apprehension with regards to figures of authority who represent professional agencies but also expressed the view that their understanding of what the schools

were trying to achieve and their appreciation of the support provided through the schools had changed.

The liaison between school and families was equally valued by staff in the school who in some instances recognised that it was not always easy for parents/carers to have a positive view of schools or people in authority. The comments of this head of year in one of the schools typifies many of the responses which were obtained through interviews with teachers and describes the impact which closer work with a family had achieved:

She [student] now fits in and she is a lot happier and she attends well. And it has just changed her whole life in that sense, because she was going down the route of non attending and that school held nothing. So by [the family worker's] work, she has actually been able to speak to mum. Her mum wouldn't speak to me and she wouldn't speak to any teachers because in her eyes we are a waste of time, you know? So just the different aspect and [the family worker] being ... that knowledge from the social services background meant putting mum in touch with other things that she can access or ways in dealing with it. (Teacher [Head of Year])

Professional Support Services

Any agenda for inclusion must recognise the differing perspectives and professional understanding of the issues surrounding young people described as having special educational needs. The Extended Schools within this study had adopted approaches whereby professionals from differing agencies were established within bases in the schools. These services, including education welfare, social services, child and adolescent mental health services and police officers formed co-ordinated teams in the schools, meeting regularly and sharing professional insights. An important aspect of this model was the degree of trust which built up between professionals. An example of this is the situation of a police officer who had a base in one of the schools and spent much of his week working alongside teachers and

students in class. He described how he knew some of the students within the school and their families through their negative image within the community. Prior to his intensive involvement at the schools he saw these individuals as troublesome and believed that one of his prime responsibilities was to keep a close eye on them in anticipation that they would cause difficulties in the neighbourhood. After a period of more than a year of working in the school his perceptions had changed. He described how before his involvement some of the students from the schools would, on encountering him in the town, cross the road to avoid him. Now the same students would greet him in the street and stop and have a conversation. The level of trust between the police officer and other professionals was also seen as important. His earlier perception had been that teachers and social workers were often “do-gooders” with a limited recognition of the problematic nature of youth in the community. His view had shifted to a point where he could say:

I mean, certainly one of the benefits of the Extended Schools that I can see is the fact that it gives you the ability to develop relationships with key members of staff, where you can happily exchange information knowing that it's not going to be misused.

(Police officer)

Other professionals, far from protecting their own professional traditions, recognised that through working closely with schools and basing services there it was possible to engage more closely with families of students at risk who might otherwise avoid professional input.

I think it [the school] is one of the sort of fundamental places you can look at delivering the service because what you are looking for is a front door that people are happy to use and quite often people, well certainly people wouldn't use the Social Services door because it has so much stigma etcetera. attached to it and it is not a universal service, it is an access service so you look to an extent about where your front door might be. School is one of them, not everybody likes school, some people

wouldn't choose to use school but then you, if you then sort of thread it out that maybe the school also has different outlets as well so you might have an attachment from the school to the community centre or somewhere else, potentially you can build up links across the community but if you have a core potentially that is legitimate I suppose then I think that is the way to go. (Social worker)

This concept of the school as an acceptable venue was one endorsed by many of the parents/carers who admitted that they would never visit a social services office or a mental health service because of the stigma attached to dealing with such services in the community. They saw schools though as a safe option, visited by parents for all kinds of reasons, many of them positive and therefore a favoured venue for locating other services.

Within the schools, teachers who admitted to some apprehensions about multi-agency working at first, were also able to speak positively about having access to a broader range of professional expertise. Indeed, many teachers saw the multi-agency aspect of Extended Schools as the most important in terms of their own changing working practice.

Extended School is multi agency working, there is lots of support for the pupils and the families of pupils at the school and also support for the staff in school, I think it supports my job, my role in school, because you have got key people such as a family worker, and educational social worker, CAFTS, somebody that can deal with health issues and there is Connexions to deal with, careers, careers advice and higher or further educational advice, things like that so it is actually working. There is a lot more people that can offer help, support, assistance in specialist areas, you know, that would be beyond my expertise, whether that be behaviour management, anger management. You get help and assistance with monitoring and looking after the attendance, it could be a child protection issue, it could be a bereavement in the family, there could be financial assistance needed for families, some pupils or families

may be using drugs or something like that, they may be homeless, all that type of thing, there are these agencies, there are people and agencies that we can actually link into and access and speak with and deal with them and get them to help us to help the students and the families of students in our school. (Head of Year)

Concrete examples of the impact of multi-agency working upon the lives of young people with special educational needs and their families were often recounted as these two examples demonstrate

Well if we take David [not his real name] for an example, his attendance had been, at the start of the year his attendance was quite poor, I am working with our education and social worker and he has been in touch, been in contact with the family by telephone, I think he has probably visited, he has probably written. We, Education Welfare Officer and I meet every three weeks to discuss this issue and David has benefited because his attendance has improved greatly and I do believe, I think I have just signed a letter that will go out to David informing him that his attendance has been improved greatly and although we will still monitor him, you know, we are not actually setting him specific targets any more, we will just continue to monitor his attendance like any other pupil, so that is one example. (Head of Year)

It has meant that we have been able to target support for a range of services a lot quicker. This particular deaf student was having problems being bullied on the bus, he was making inappropriate friendships within the community and his mother was very, very worried about that. And it meant that we could within about five days, we could target resources, human resources to actually solving the problem and getting support in for that student... the outside agencies that we would normally have to wait a long time to get access to are based in schools which meant that within a short space of

time we have had access to those services that would have taken us a long time to do.

(Teacher)

Student Appreciation of Support

In order to appreciate the real impact of the Extended Schools in this study it is appropriate that the opinions of students should be encouraged and respected. Student views of teachers in general were often negative, and those who had poor attendance records often saw school as an imposition rather than a positive experience. However, many did appreciate the ways in which their schools had changed and teachers had increased efforts to meet their personal needs. There was also a recognition that through breakfast clubs and after school activities this involved a considerable commitment on the part of staff.

There is always courses, things to do after school, the teachers are dedicated to you, they like gives you work on the plate, it is not like some teachers where they are just not really bothered about your education, most of these teachers are bothered about your education. (Student)

Students regarded this commitment to activity after school as an indication that teachers and other adults cared about them and had their best interest at heart. As an indication of this, the comments of a student who had been encouraged to bring a friend from outside of the community to attend a summer club event was seen as an important recognition by the school of something which was personally important to the individual.

I actually went to the trip along with my friend from Cambridge. He was coming down for the next day, he was coming over the Friday, so we rang my friend up, see if he wanted to come and he said yes, I would like to go quadding (*riding quad bikes*) for the first time. (Student)

The significance of these out of school hours activities also found favour with parents who demonstrate how these impact upon both their child and themselves.

He goes to homework club and that, I mean when he first come to school he was getting lots of homework and I couldn't deal with it, I couldn't help him because he gets stressed, therefore it makes me stressed and we end up shouting and crying at each other and it got to the point that his homework built up that much then and at one of the meetings, because I have to come to school to do and I mentioned this and they said did you know there is there homework club and he goes to this homework club now and he does the homework, I mean he doesn't do it all but he does a lot and it does help ease the situation at home because I am not he is not getting angry, I am not getting angry and he is, you know, he is like other, he does music lessons and that is through school, he does guitar and he is really enjoying that. (Parent/carer)

The interventions of specific staff, such as the family workers were appreciated and students could often identify how this had changed their behaviour and improved their situation in school. This transcript extract also indicates the view which a student has about the difference of life style between herself and her teachers.

Well, something she said to me, [family worker] it stopped me being naughty, she was saying that there is no point in shouting back at teachers, 'cause at the end of the day you are going to go home and you are going to be right upset with thinking about it, but they are going to go home and laugh about it, sit down nice and warm and forget about it next morning. Just going to be laughing about it. It is you that is going to get into trouble for it, so that stopped me mouthing back at teachers, 'cause I don't want teachers to feel good about having a go at me. (Student)

The research conducted into Full Service provision through the Extended Schools in this study clearly demonstrates the positive views of both students and community members

when they are brought more closely together. Documentary evidence indicates that the schools involved showed improvements in attendance and that sanctions for the management of behaviour, including exclusions had decreased. Teachers reported feeling more confident that there would be an appropriate response at times of stress or when requesting action to address pupil needs. Parents had renewed confidence in the school and felt more comfortable in accessing the services on offer.

Project 2 – Community Members Supporting Learners at Risk of Exclusion

The findings from the research into Extended Schools described here are well endorsed by a further study conducted in the same area in which members of the local community who had no formal qualifications for working with children were engaged as volunteers in supporting students at risk. A project to investigate the efficacy of volunteers who were assigned to work with individual students was conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews with mentors, students, parents/carers and teachers and has been reported by Rose and Jones (2007).

Volunteers were provided with training and were paired with young people through an initial meeting where, if both were in agreement, a contract would begin for the mentoring to commence and to continue for six months. Volunteers and mentors met together usually once a week and through a small financial allowance the mentors were able to encourage their young person to participate with them in a range of activities. These varied considerably but included visits to the cinema, cafes or bowling centres, walk in the countryside or visits to local places of interest. The relationship between volunteer and student was not pressured and the student could end the association at any time should they so wish.

The researchers asked critical questions regarding the efficacy of the scheme and were also interested to gauge whether this had any impact upon the interface between the students and their communities. The young people interviewed after a period of six months mentoring

($N = 9$ out of a total of 49 who had received this support) were, without exception positive about their experiences, their only negative comments concerned the time limited nature of the scheme and the fact that the mentoring ceased. Teachers of young people who had been in receipt of mentoring reported improved behaviour and attendance and more positive attitudes towards school. Parents/carers also saw the scheme as beneficial and felt that it had demonstrated a new commitment to both their children and themselves.

Of more relevance to this paper is the engagement of young people who were often described as disaffected with their local community and with adult role models within the area. Several described learning things about their communities, the people who lived in them and the facilities available which they had not previously known – this despite most having lived within the area all of their lives. They similarly described how they saw school as being within the community but detached from it, recognising for example that teachers often lived outside of the area and travelled in and expressing the view that adult professionals had only a limited understanding of what the community was really like.

The volunteers were seen as a genuine link between the lives of the students and those individuals in schools and other institutions with whom they had a more formal relationship. Volunteer mentors were able to provide the kind of non-judgemental positive regard (Rogers, 1980) which professionals often are unable to achieve. They were also seen as being a part of the local community and thereby, able to empathise with the situations in which the students and their families themselves lived. The link between volunteer mentors, schools and families was seen as critical by the students who believed that they could trust their mentor to speak on their behalf with teachers, but that they would also give an honest appraisal of the behaviour of individual young people in return. The mentors themselves sometimes commented that before their involvement in the project their appreciation of the realities of everyday life in the schools which were located in their own communities had been limited.

What Have We Learned and

What Does This Mean for the Development of Inclusive Schools?

The two projects briefly described in this paper have focused upon the relationships which exist between school and the communities which they serve. In both projects it became clear that perceptions of young people, of teachers, of families and professionals of the purpose of schools and how they might operate were limited and in some cases distorted prior to the establishing of interventions which brought them closer together. The inclusion of students who feel that there is a lack of relevance in schools when considered alongside their out of school lives is, I would suggest likely to present a challenge to the inclusion movement. The young people involved in the two albeit small scale studies discussed here, demonstrated how a closer alignment between schools and communities has had a beneficial effect upon their attitudes and appreciation of these schools and the people within them. Furthermore changes of the beliefs about schools in parents/carers and other agencies can be seen to have had a positive influence upon change for students both at home and in their communities.

I must conclude this paper by returning to the notion of the discourses identified by writers such as Dyson and Ware referred to earlier. A positive regard for the rights of young people remains a constant factor in promoting inclusion. When discussing these rights it is essential that we adopt a more holistic interpretation of what these are and how they might be addressed. It is clear from the research discussed here that whilst many of the professionals interviewed were well focused upon the rights of students, their appreciation of the ways in which these could be articulated to others, including families, and acted upon was often limited. Similarly, the ways in which parents/carers interpreted the term rights, in respect of both their children and themselves were not necessarily consistent with the views of professionals. Ware's (2004) view of the need to change school cultures and values is important here and may hold an important key in enabling other discourses, of efficacy and

pragmatics to be addressed. Discourse will move forward more easily when it is founded upon dialogue, a critical factor I would suggest in achieving the successes which were evident in both the Extended Schools and volunteer mentors projects.

In the examples provided within this paper we see how a discourse of rights has itself become more inclusive by seeking the views of all concerned parties. Dyson (1999, p. 48) has suggested that a discourse of efficacy, when joined to a discourse of pragmatics can be a powerful tool when operating within a commitment to social justice. This is a belief with which I would strongly concur. For long periods of our educational history the dominant voices within any discourse have been those of authoritative figures, including teachers, policy makers and researchers. Dewey's concept of education as a democratising process demands that this power structure is challenged (through political discourse) in order to ensure that rights are truly recognised. When efforts are made to achieve this, as seen in the examples given in this paper, it is possible to embrace a series of discourses which rather than remaining at an ideological level can move forward towards encouraging inclusive schooling in inclusive communities. To consider inclusion in narrow terms of changing schools without an examination of their place within society is unlikely to reap rewards. Communities need to be embraced as partners for the promotion of inclusion if we are to truly move towards a more just society. As the Indian philosopher and teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1953) reminds us "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted in a profoundly sick society (page 23)."

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