

2/3rds of pre-school children spend at least part of their week in nursery schools.

Growing number of mothers opt for full time work – is this economics or desire?

64% of all 3-4 year olds enrolled in nursery care. This is the norm compared to the norm in 1971 of 21%.

Aggression studies in those in full time nursery care. Does this affect later behaviour of children – increased percentage of exclusion noted, in addition to exclusion of those with special needs.

3,273 state nursery schools and subsidies

Multiple tasks expected of a nursery site including education, child-care, health promotion, family support and child protection. How does the staff respond to these different conceptions and tasks.

Specific needs surrounding every child. Is the importance of this recognised. Are they given the attention they need to blossom creatively, confidently and with a feeling of being secure and being loved.

If these foundations are in place we can hope for these children to move into primary level with confidence. If their early needs are not met is it then harder for these children to integrate into full time, formal education comfortably?

Peter Elfer talks about attachment and the need for the highest quality care – whenever a young child is away from home. If he or she has a key-person who the child can associate with the transitional period between home and nursery setting could be a great deal easier and more positive. I would suggest this should be in place at any school or centre offering extended care. This can only come from management down. If the management concedes that priorities of extended schools should include:

- highest quality activities
- highest quality support team
- separate ethos from the schools timetable - more of this in a moment
- Predictable and familiar routine
- Appropriate space

My concern with extended care stemmed from response at ground level:

Evidence in recent weeks from a number of schools providing after school care suggests the following:

- Parents and carers will use extended care as an alternative and cheap method of child-care

- Parents and carers will use every extended care option open to them without child consultation

Comments that arose from three key sites:

Highest quality care and activities come with a price. Parents should pay appropriately for after school care and not expect free or heavily subsidised.

Extended schools and breakfast clubs should be treated as a business if they are to survive.

Extended schools and breakfast clubs should be kept separate from the schools' daily activities where possible. This includes site of extended care, staff and workshop facilitators.

Extended school care appears to build on what middle class families traditionally offered for their children. This should be explored more closely since, as a matter of choice families largely only want the best for their children.

We should and can build on partnership ethos of creative learning between schools and extended care – that is extend more fully the quality options of activities such as

Sport

Music

Drama

Art

With the well publicised creative partnership initiative and the many different financial pots available for different projects these can be linked into extended care, supporting children who can then make a choice to engage further in their favourite activity.

Questions:

How young is too young?

How old is too old?

Transitional period s:

Nursery – reception

Foundation Stage – KS1

KS 2 – KS3

Are we helping by keeping children in extended care during these transitional periods

Are we endorsing disengagement of the family unit – particularly with Saturday options now available

Another point raised was: Does the child want after school care? A comment was made that whilst two children in a family of three enjoyed extended care, the other did not. More attention should be made to the child not engaged or should more attention be made to families to encourage (paying them to) stay at home? Company policy?

Excluded children – they getting younger. Is this because

Their specific needs were not met initially – are we exacerbating this with extended care and the governments 'vision to have ALL schools' – where's the vision of promoting the family unity? Why is this vision not along side the vision of extended care? Why promote one without the other? What are the government's core beliefs if this vision is the primary vision.

Extended care does indeed provide a much needed support for working families. I would say that it also provides a much needed community based support for families with personal and social issues (displacement, disability, disengaged). In conversation with three examples of extended care providers those in great need value this services.

A great many more families however, balance on the edge of being needy and being hand-held. They see an opportunity for space, food, activities, and time out from their children whereas the children may see home as all of those things because it is home.

It is this edge that concerns me – the fact that if our focus is so greatly on the need to make 'all schools extended care schools by 2010' (a much documented sentence) then that is all society concerns itself with is extended care, the provision of – whatever the community requirement in any locality.

Let me try to clarify this with an example:

One primary school with a new centre attached is serving three primary schools from three different localities including a special needs school. Geographically all three schools serve different communities.

These communities involve to a large degree affluent families, families in rented accommodation and third generation families who continue to live and work in the area.

There are pockets of high unemployment, refugees, displaced or families with disability support, or on the borough's register for particular needs.

The provider school's head teacher is running extended schools provision as a business to try to sustain all provision and support.

### **Discussing the vision of extended schools – for who?**

Can the government's **vision of effective extended schools** at the centre of the community be realised? Are all schools **on target to become extended schools** by 2010? What effect do **enrichment activities such as breakfast clubs** have on a child's academic attainment, behaviour and attendance? What **additional services would communities like to see offered** at school venues? Who should take **responsibility** for the running of extended schools **outside school hours**?

I'd like to present my views on extended schools with an angle on the younger age groups. I have met and discussed at length with heads of three extended care sites in London. Each one offered a telling insight to the achievement and difficulties faced with running extended provision.

All three came from different angles:

#### **The power of balance**

Within the family community and school community

Provision of extended care across the board with internal links to children's centre (on site), early years centre (on site) and special needs unit (on site).

Providing a service but making sure the service is excellent from top down – and consistently reinforces the importance of families being together.

Family learning is encouraged

#### **The power of involvement**

Sign up chart where parents/carers had to sign up for an activity to encourage engaging with their children. This takes place within the school time. They run no extended care provision because of the following reasons:

Sustainability – financially extended care would last a very short time

Not enough uptake

Who was benefiting?

#### **The power of business**

recognising the different values and communities within every schools venue and locality.

Locality – supporting three main localities

**Charges are implemented**

Run as a business in order to sustain provision and care for the long term AND to prevent abuse of facilities offered. This includes:

Leaving a child daily before and after school

Collecting late (in some cases up to an hour)

Expecting everything else to be free (clubs, activities within school time)

**Provision**

More about clubs than extended care. Families sign up because there are enough fun activities that their children want to do and it is supporting their own work schedule. By the time they have enjoyed an activity, had a snack and chatted etc. it is time to go home.

**Workforce** has been kept completely separate from the school's teaching team.

Playworkers (from local play association) get involved (another partnership scheme which evidently works and provides jobs).

**Space** – keep children away from classrooms and areas of perceived work.

By endorsing community based activities we must in the same breath endorse family unit and the home place.

Family time and the family environment is and should always be our first priority for supporting. On this basis creating hubs of community based support within school premises can strengthen, grow and be a positive influence on a child's development and well-being.

There is documented evidence to suggest that young children in particular are displaying negative responses to those around them due to being passed from nursery to extended care, and not seeing their immediate family in many cases for 10 hours.