

**Church Lawford C.E. First School.Governors submission to the Working Party
for Primary Development August 1988**

Introduction

As with any village school, Church Lawford First School is an integral part of the life and culture of the village. Since the introduction of the middle school system when the education of the over eights was transferred to Long Lawford the effects on the village have been increasingly evident. Parents, especially mothers who did not have independent transport, found it too difficult and inconvenient to visit that school and so they lost the contacts which encouraged them to take an active part in the education of their children.

Four years ago, as provision was not available at Henry Hinde First School, parents were pleased for their children to attend Church Lawford First School. Initially the children were only coming for one year. Active liaison between school and home encouraged parental involvement, and the families funded transport. The majority completed their first school education at Church Lawford, being followed by younger siblings. The school role in July 1988 stood at 36. The recent sudden fall is due entirely to the demise of the coach hire firm which was used, there being no economic alternative. The present situation is likely to be temporary, as the school has proved attractive to families in the area. The anticipated intake for 1989 will increase the role.

The School as a Community Provision

The Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils (1978) with reference to links between the village school and long term viability of villages states:

"It is the link between the retention of the village school, with the attendant opportunities for natural growth of the community, and hopes of maintaining a balanced age and social structure in the village, that makes this facility one and the most crucial under consideration in this report".(page 17)

For parents of young children considering moving into the village, the availability of a small school within easy reach must be an important factor in making their decision about joining the community. The school is the most important facility in the village, since all children must be educated from the age of five the most appropriate place for them to receive this education is at their own village school. At Church Lawford our school hosts a playgroup for preschool children. This results in not only the children, but also the parents using the school as the hub of their social contacts.

The children take part in village events. Links with older members of the community include the Christmas concert. During the summer, a playscheme is held at the school. This attracts many of the children who attend the school and those who are past pupils. The school is the only suitable venue. All village children benefit from the recreation ground which forms part of the school. By means of an arrangement with the Parish Council this is available for their use. The school building is also used by the community on occasions. The proposed County Structure Plan has now designated Church Lawford as being a area suitable for limited development. Together with a high proportion of rented 3/4 bedroom houses within the Parish this strongly suggests a continuing need for a school within the community.

Many people from the local community contribute to the children's education enabling them to receive a rich and varied curriculum which incorporates first hand experience with the development of basic skills. It is felt to be of the utmost importance that children receive an education which relates to the whole of life, particularly in the early formative years. Their activities in school should help them to realise the importance of religion. It is essential that church, home, school, and community need to be intimately related. In a village school such as ours the church is brought into and involved in the school and visa versa in a way that is an integral part of the child's life. We believe that the church has a responsibility and unique opportunity to be involved in the education of the children of the parish and that the foundations of the past should be cherished and built upon for the sake of the quality of life

in the future. The development of our village school is essential in maintaining the life of the community. School and community exist to mutual benefit, as is pointed out by C.A.R.E.(1978):

"The loss of a village school from closure can deter people from remaining in or moving into rural areas, thereby accelerating the process of population decline".(page 11)

Educational Considerations

The school offers a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which incorporates use of the local rural environment into the development of basic skills for life. Through a wide range of activities, all children have exposure to practical experiences, which provide a balance between skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. The emphasis on the individual within his/her community, together with personal high standards of performance are encouraged through a curriculum where the foundation of the educational needs of the rural community in future generations can be laid in a relevant way.

The curriculum is supported by excellent facilities and resources which have been enhanced by parents and friends of school, and by the school taking the initiative through holding community fund raising events. Facilities include a large playing field and excellent, well maintained school buildings. The playing field is furnished with goal posts, and all children have the opportunity for the development of games skills. Links with other schools ensure that the children have experience of co-operating with larger groups. In such situations the children respond with confidence and enthusiasm.

Environmental science is well developed and the surrounding area provides a rich resource for stimulating projects. These facilities are used both by the children in the school and also by those from the town, providing opportunities for interaction between rural and urban children.

Conclusion

Evidence of the school's potential, and the governors' commitment to its development is clear. The governors pledge that the school will, over the next few years, actively seek to develop the quality of the curriculum. The National curriculum framework offers opportunities for the school to further develop its core work. The nature of the school enables staff to engage children even more in their own learning, through curriculum development on a community basis. The recent involvement with the elderly in a local residential home could be extended by the proposed 'Grandparent' project. The rural science curriculum will be further developed, as will the playgroup which meets a very obvious need in an area where pre-school services are scarce.

We firmly believe that the school can grow and develop. All children of first school age within the community attend the school, and there is a balance between attendance from within parish boundary and from outside. This suggests that the school is attractive to parents, both within and outside the catchment area.

In conclusion, we endorse Bell and Sigsworth (1987)

"Equality of educational opportunity is best served by recognising differences that inevitably exist and seeking ways of responding to them rather than by endeavouring to impose a common educational experience on all children. To identify and bring together the potentials which the small rural primary school and its community together possess, is to address the matter of quality in relation to the social foundations on which, in the end, any worthwhile education exists." (page 205)

References:

Bell A. and Sigsworth A.(1987)

The Small Rural Primary School - A Matter of Quality
Farmer Press,London

Cumbrian Association For Rural Education (1978)

The Case For The Small Rural School

Cumbrian Association For Rural Education.

Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils (1978)

The Decline Of Rural Services