

Human Scale Education

The Management of Change

Becoming a Human Scale School:
a Case Study

Stanley Park High School

By David Taylor



This is the fifth in a series of Occasional Papers published by Human Scale Education that has arisen out of the Human Scale Education Seminar Programme which ran from November 2009 to May 2010. The publication of these Occasional Papers has been supported by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

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David Taylor is Headteacher of Stanley Park High School, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3HP.



ISBN 978-0-9567858-1-7

Introduction

This occasional paper will not look at the arguments for a Human Scale Education, as they have been already eloquently portrayed in a plethora of books, papers and articles. Its starting point is that Human Scale Education (HSE) is a given. This paper's core purpose is to look at how change has been managed in a school choosing to adopt its values, principles and experiences. Whilst not attempting to be a blueprint to be copied, it is hoped that the change management issues raised may be beneficial to others considering our journey.

Stanley Park High School is a unique 11-19 mixed community comprehensive school in a relatively small Local Authority. A significant number of the other schools in the LA are either totally or partially selective. We are a Lead School for Human Scale Education and have combined Specialist Status in Applied Learning and Mathematics & Computing.

In 2005 we were the least favoured school in the Authority. Achievement and attainment were low and we were recognised as a 'School in Challenging Circumstances', mistrusted by the local community and in particular by the parents in our local feeder primary schools. Historically there have been high levels of deprivation amongst our intake and attainment on entry has been well below the national average. Our school population has also been highly mobile.

Since 2005 rapid improvement has been achieved. Changes have ensured that achievement and attainment have risen. Confidence has increased in the local community and we are significantly oversubscribed in our lower years. Our current roll is approximately 940 students, including a specialist Autism Department that accommodates up to 35 students.

Purpose in Reverse

The introduction clearly highlights a school in difficulty in 2005. External pressures were gathering with the standards agenda, league tables, Ofsted reports and more recently the National Challenge. We knew we had to change. We had, although unknown to us at that stage, values and principles that

were similar to those of HSE. We liked the thought of being a small school. There were enough members of staff who had been at the school in the 1990s who remembered the immense benefits prior to another school being amalgamated with us. We wanted a holistic approach to education. We wanted all to have respect for - and be proud of - themselves and others in our community. We wanted all of our community to be involved in and benefit from their schooling. We wanted a curriculum and assessment that met the needs of our students and not one that was centrally imposed. Most of all we valued the need for positive relationships, despite it being a time when there were strained relationships between the various stakeholders because of the range of issues the school faced.

During 2005/2006 the management of change would often set us against the above values and principles. Yes, this was to ensure our survival but ultimately it was to provide us with the launch pad to pursue our Human Scale values, principles and experiences. In practice during 2005-2006 this 'going back' meant:

- Little dialogue – Structures imposed vertically from the Senior Leadership Team.
- Learning and Teaching that was organised in inflexible ways with over-emphasis on behaviour management and a tightly structured approach to lesson planning

- Little co-operative and collaborative learning with experiential, active learning under emphasised
- Targets, monitoring and intervention, with an emphasis on the small group of students that would make a difference to the measures by which we would be judged
- Little consideration given to building effective relationships except with the parents of potential students in our feeder schools.

If one considers the pure attainment driven measures by which a school is assessed, it can be argued that this management of change was successful. But were we? Were we nurturing socially and emotionally well adjusted and happy individuals, who were able to effectively take their place in the community in a rapidly changing world?

Our conclusion was that we were not. To do this we needed to review our values and then manage the changing experiences that would be necessary to achieve them. We hoped, in so doing, to hit the external measures by which we were judged.

Recovering our Purpose

'Thinking outside of the box' is an overused phrase in education, but receiving the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) One School

Pathfinder status provided us with the opportunity to do so. At its heart was the need for the school to develop a vision for education that offers real innovation and enables learning and teaching to be transformed. We were charged with being ambitious and farsighted when considering:

- School organisation (Status/Leadership and Management/ School workforce reform/School Roll)
- Curriculum, including 14-19 provision
- Learning and teaching including the spaces in which they operated
- Healthy schools, PE and school sport provision
- ICT provision
- Inclusion, behaviour and attendance
- Continuing professional development (CPD) and change management
- Extended schools and community provision.

Seeking out Good Practice

As an initial response, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) researched innovative practice at home and abroad. We visited numerous schools that were in the early stages of developing learning programmes. Consequently, we became aware of initiatives like: the RSA's *Opening Minds* curriculum project, the Young Foundation's *Studio Project*, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's *Learning Futures*, the *Learning to Learn* or *Building Learning Power* pioneered by Professor Guy Claxton and pilot

programmes initiated by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Innovations Unit at the DCSF.

Whilst SLT found visiting schools in this country useful, many were either at an early stage of developing their ideas or had short term/peripheral innovative learning programmes that were not seen as central to the experience. There were exceptions, such as Bishop's Park in Clacton, that was pioneering the Schools within Schools approach and an alternative themed curriculum at key stage 3.

We needed to broaden our research and also involve Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff and the LEA in the decision making process. A visit by 70 members from these groups was arranged in 2007 to four schools in Copenhagen: Hellerup, Heindalesgades Overbygningsskole (HGO), Ordrup, and Søndergaard. They were given a simple brief: tell us the things you like and tell us the things you don't like. In order to ensure that our views were open to challenge we subsequently took a group of 12 students to Hellerup and immersed them in a week's schooling. Two teachers acted as observers for the week. Students kept diaries and reported their findings back to a full staff and governors' meeting.

From this we drew the following conclusions about experiences within the school:

- Small is beautiful
- Excellent relationships are

essential

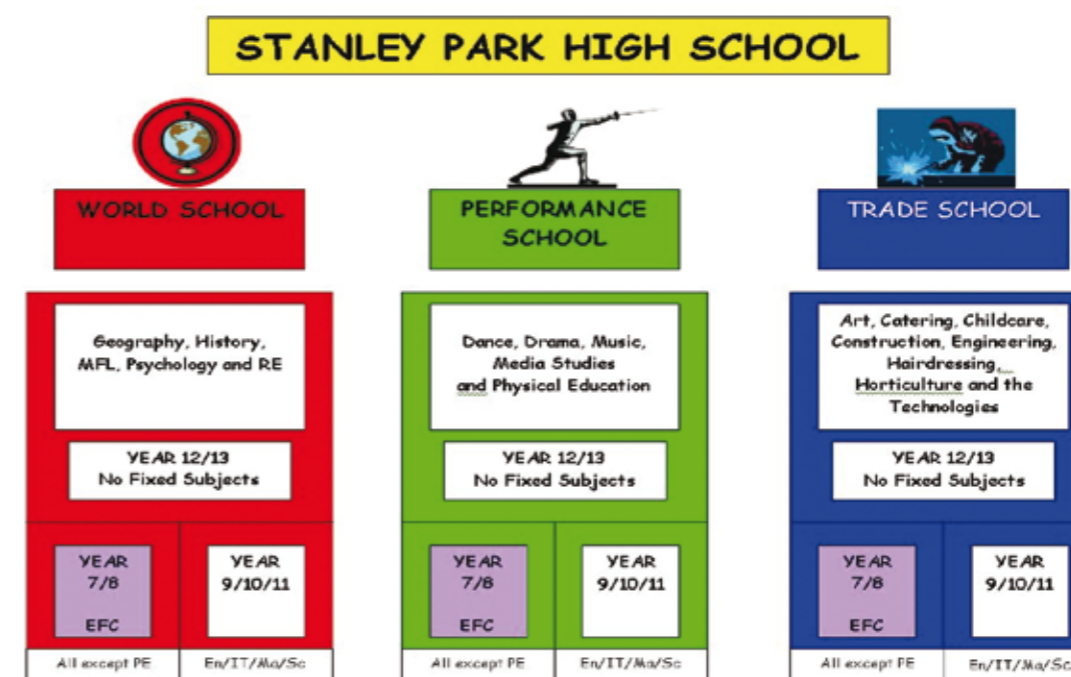
- The teaching of traditional subjects at KS3 was open to interrogation. We needed learning that allowed for greater depth than was suggested within the National Curriculum. It had to be meaningful, with 'real-world' contexts and relevance to their current and future lives. It had to be motivational, in that it was task/outcome orientated, inspiring them to explore further learning. It also needed an assessment regime that was fit for purpose.
- Learning and Teaching needed to be organised in flexible ways. We needed to question our assumptions about the environments in which learning takes place, whether that was in school, at home, online, or in the community.
- Co-operative and collaborative learning needed to be emphasised
- Pastoral and academic roles needed to be integrated so that students were seen as whole people.

Creating a Smaller School

Creating a smaller school in one that has limited space and increasing student numbers due to our increasing popularity is challenging. These challenges were magnified by the requirements of BSF that would take us from 180 to 210 in a cohort and a larger Post 16 Centre. Consequently, we would eventually be accommodating 1400 students, a rise of over 50% on our roll in 2005. For our new school we decided to create a 'Schools within Schools'

approach in a similar way to which Stantonbury Campus has done with its Halls and Brislington Enterprise College with its big cat - named small learning communities. Three of our 'mini schools' – Performance, Trade and World – can basically be seen as parallel in years 7 and 8 but they provide breadth in the optional subject offer from year 9 and throughout key stages 4 and 5. Seventy mixed ability students will go into each of these mini schools on entry. The fourth school, Horizon, will provide a specialist experience for 35 students with a statement of Mild Autism and 56 with Moderate Autism. The degree to which these students will integrate into the main school will be based on individual need.

Whilst smaller schools do provide the opportunity for more positive relationships, radical changes rather than a remedial reworking of existing actions needed to be undertaken within them. To us this meant that on a weekly basis teachers must be interacting with fewer students and students with fewer teachers. Critically we knew we needed this investment in our lower years. Effective relationships had to be created from the outset. The solution for us lay in an Integrated Curriculum. Not one that was lifted 'off the shelf', but one that was specifically designed to meet the needs of our students in our community.



An Integrated Curriculum (EFC)

In response we created a multi-disciplinary voluntary working party, largely drawn – but not exclusively - from the foundation subjects. We provided them time and refreshments and set them the challenge of re-engaging with creativity in order to develop a two year skills based Integrated Curriculum. Working during a weekly two-hour Professional Development slot that we created by cutting a period from the timetable on a Tuesday afternoon, they worked in consultation with students to develop a learning programme that is centred on 12 'home grown' core skills, each of which have 5 sub-skills:

- Being a Team Member
- Problem Solving
- Managing Time

- Showing Initiative
- Taking Risks
- Being Creative
- Gathering and Managing Resources
- Presenting Information
- Understanding and Using ICT
- Understanding and Using Skills for Writing
- Financial Understanding and Numeracy
- Social and Emotional Intelligence

These 12 core skills form our Excellent Futures Curriculum (EFC) throughout years 7 and 8. The EFC forms 12 of the 29 weekly timetabled periods. Students learn the 12 core skills through a curriculum that has 12 Themes; each one is half a term in duration. Each Theme contains the key knowledge within one or two lead subject areas but this knowledge, although seen as an essential component of the learning, very much supports the

learning of the skills. This knowledge was identified as important by the students and staff. Each theme has a special Launch Day and Outcome that the students work cooperatively and collaboratively towards. In all cases parents and the community share these experiences via an invitation to the Outcome Day at the end of each theme in order to celebrate the learning of the students.

Staffing the EFC

The students, in unsegregated groups, are the responsibility of mainly one Teacher, who also acts as Tutor, and one Learning Support Assistant. In the first year we did not have to 'Press Gang' when selecting teachers/tutors for the EFC. By chance they represented the broad range of foundation subjects, which helped to overcome some of the concerns regarding lack of expertise and subject knowledge. Consequently, the teachers were able to learn from and support each other in preparation for working with the students on any particular theme. Where this was not possible we utilised other teachers and external experts to lead 'Masterclasses'.

Despite this mutual support, overcoming the teachers' concerns regarding expertise and subject knowledge was necessary. Philosophically it required teachers to be comfortable with the fact that they didn't have to be the font of all knowledge. There would be gaps. Fundamentally, it required them to

realise that we were no longer operating in the 20th century. The font of all knowledge is no longer the teacher with a text book in a classroom for a set number of hours, over five days for three-quarters of a year. Whilst they are clearly still important, teachers have to be considered alongside the fact that students have 24/7 access to knowledge in a rapidly changing high-tech, multi-media based world. Once this issue has been accepted then it becomes a matter of professional pride. This is soon negated if teachers realise that students do not think anything less of them if they admit to not knowing. Indeed, it can be argued, the students value seeing them as fellow learners.

Investing in Learning Spaces

We realised that creating an innovative approach and shoving it into a traditional classroom shape with traditional furniture and resources would not work. EFC is experienced in a specialised area of the school and has its own outdoor play/performance space, satellite learning resource area, small animal area and allotment. Two of the eight rooms have been made more flexible by the inclusion of flexible walls that fold back to create a space large enough to have half year group Master Classes. Much of the furniture was selected following our Danish experience, with smaller more flexible tables, ergonomic fully stackable chairs, reading circles, settees and large square cushions. All of this furniture can be

configured in a variety of ways to allow for differing pedagogical approaches. From June 2010 flexibility will be further enhanced with the arrival of our Mobile Learning Facility (12 tonne lorry!) that has a two pods that open out to form a classroom that facilitates innovative and experiential learning styles through access to state of the art technology.

Furthering our Purpose

During our journey and the introduction of EFC there were issues that had to be overcome. Initially we had to deal with the fact that it was so different, visually and acoustically. The transition from the main part of the school to the year 7s in the EFC was, at times, alarming. At best, thoughts were 'this is different', at worst, it was 'what have we done' and 'can we go back'? In those early stages our psyche could cope with group work with tables configured in a collaborative way, providing it was quiet, but we had a real problem with the increased volume and students seemingly learning in a whole variety of different positions. The most disconcerting amongst these being lying across the floor of corridors and slouched on settees as if watching your best movie on TV. Get up close, however, and you soon appreciated that the students were learning as well, if not better, than through the more traditional based approach. But how was it to be assessed?

Real Assessment

A constant area of debate was the whole area of assessment. We were a profession obsessed with National Curriculum levels in virtually all of the subjects students studied in KS3. Where they didn't exist we had created them, as was the case with RE and Drama. Outside of the core area they were, and are, totally meaningless. Ask a student in a school what level they are. They will probably be able to tell you if it is a core area. Ask them what it means and what they need to do to get better and you will more than likely draw a blank. Ofsted reports are becoming littered with such findings.

The issue is made worse if you attempt to apply them to a skills based integrated curriculum. They become worse than useless. We needed to find assessment that enabled young people to be informed and affirmed in a variety of meaningful ways. We needed assessment that informed learning and crucially provided a link with assessment procedures when the students embarked upon traditional subject based curricula in year 9 and throughout key stage 4 and 5.

On visiting schools around the UK it became apparent that this was a common problem. Virtually all of them were conscious that assessment needed a further debate and that they hadn't got it right. The solution for us came when we visited four schools in Boston and New York in October 2008. We were particularly struck by the RICO

(Refine, Invent, Connect, Own) assessment processes of Boston Arts Academy under the leadership of Linda Nathan.

Self- and Peer- assessment is now an ongoing part of the EFC. As the tasks centre around regular presentations and group work tasks, students are regularly asked to make judgements about their own performance and that of their peers, giving constructive feedback initially in the form of WWW and EBI (What Went Well, Even Better If). At the end of each week, students are required to reflect on their learning regarding 'subject knowledge' and the three key skills that they have been practising. Their self-assessment is completed in an EFC Learning Journal. At the end of the unit (each half-term) students are then required to give themselves a final assessment (on a scale of 1-5) of their ability in the skills. Reflections on how to improve are considered and parents read and sign this.

Every half-term during year 8, students share their self-assessment with their tutor and an EFC Skills Tracker is completed by negotiation between the student and their teacher. Students assess themselves according to three areas:

- Working Towards the skill Bronze
- Consistently achieving the skill Silver
- Being proficient in the skill Gold.

The Skills Tracker is used as a guiding document towards awarding the student with a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award at the end of Year 8. This assessment tool is combined with a formal, twenty minute 'final summative assessment' to a panel that includes the teacher/tutor, parents, an undergraduate and a member of the local business community. For their overall assessment students can produce: a portfolio, an exhibition, a performance or a presentation. Here, students offer a final evaluation of their achievements over the two year period of the EFC – demonstrating strengths in significant skills areas. Their self-assessment is open to challenge by the panel. Students graduate from the EFC in a formal ceremony that includes the giving of a scroll and the wearing of a mortar board.

Managing the Assessment link to Year 9 and beyond

On leaving the EFC students have a full appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses in the 12 skill areas. Supporting this is centrally produced documentation that provides each student with a view of the skill or skills that are required to pursue Taster Options in the Autumn Term of Year 9 and Full Options from the Spring Term. Students can choose subjects that support their skill set, or indeed, look to immerse themselves in options that may enhance those that they are less proficient at.

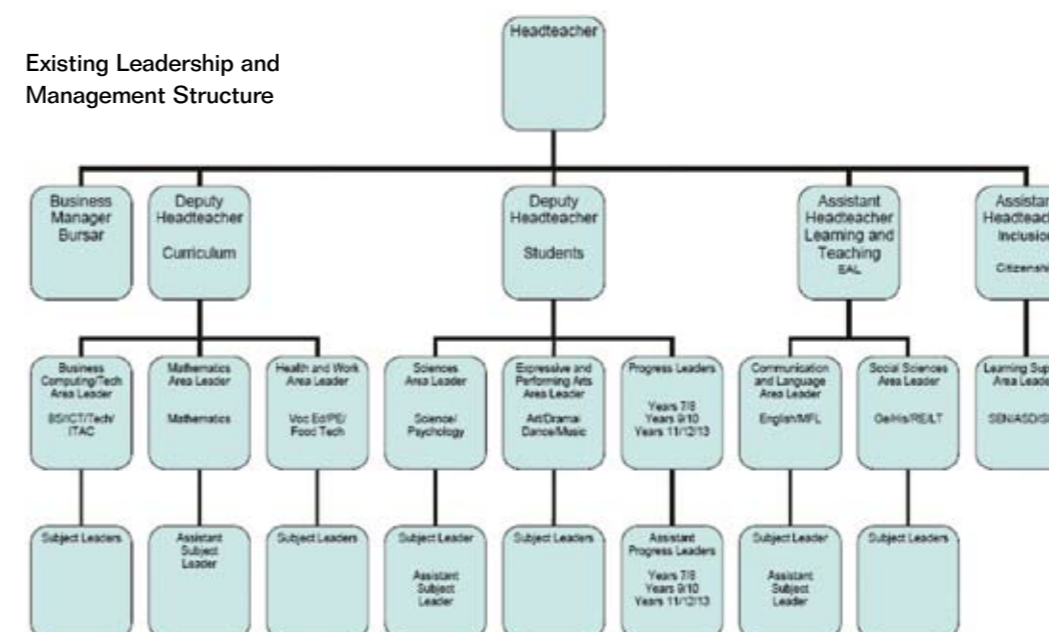
Widening our Purpose

Restructuring

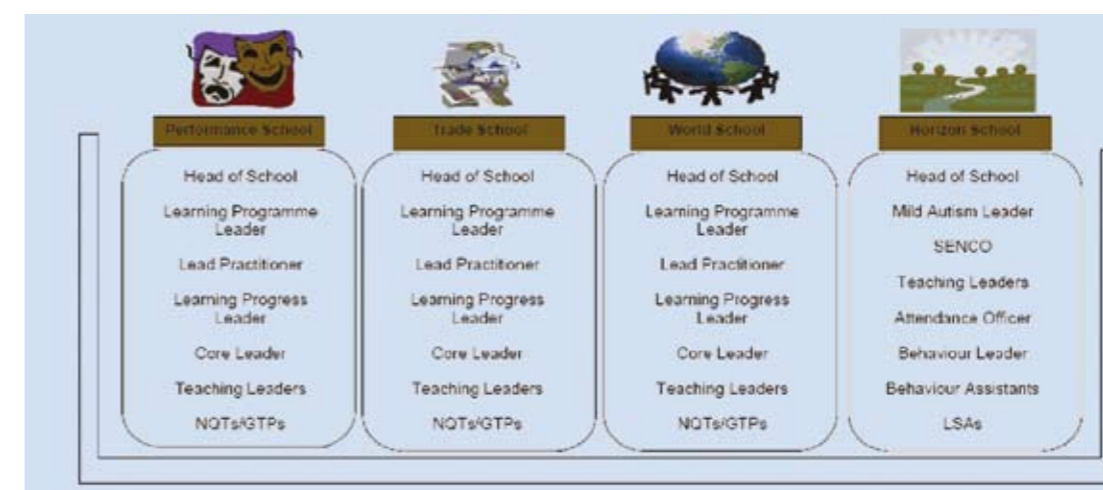
We knew that our practices needed to go beyond 30% of our staff. Others were aware of our values and the experiences being provided by the EFC teachers, but they were not by any means universal throughout the school. Some started to develop similar practice, almost by osmosis. However, we had to provide a more

concrete foundation to allow this to happen. This took the form of restructuring and the movement from a traditional hierarchical model to a more distributed model of leadership. At the core of our distributed leadership is the fundamental notion that leadership is not the preserve of an individual but results from multiple interactions at different points in the organisation. Significantly it emphasises the active cultivation and development of leadership abilities to improve learning.

Existing Leadership and Management Structure



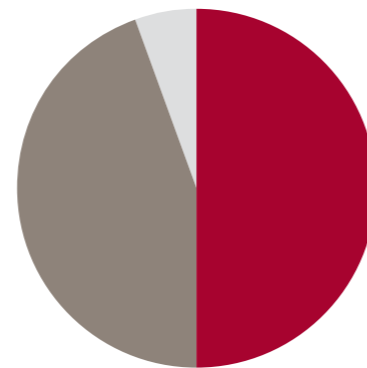
New Leadership and Management Structure



Although the roles in the 'jars' in our new model could be interpreted as hierarchical, they are not. An exemplification of this is the role of the Teaching Leaders. All teaching staff that don't have other responsibilities are Teaching Leaders remunerated with a Teaching and Learning responsibility (TLR) after the completion of their NQT year and one further additional year. Incumbent upon each of the post holders is the fact that they will be held accountable for leading the development of learning programmes in small consultative groups.

external judgement markers relating to achievement and attainment.

Excellent Futures Curriculum – In Comparison to year 5/6 are you



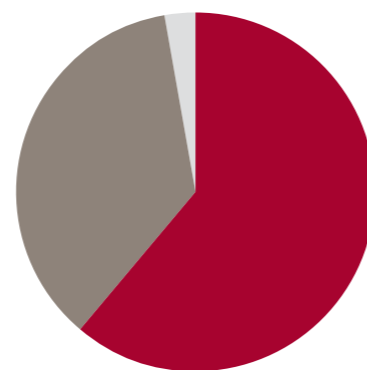
- More happy
- About the same
- Less happy

Securing our Purpose

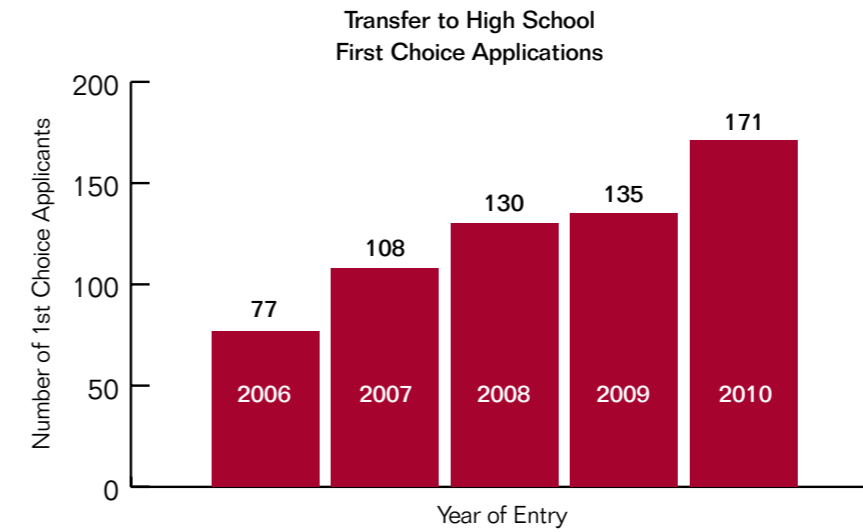
Successes

When we decided that we were going to embark upon a journey to become a Human Scale School, there were few exemplar outcomes that existed within the English Educational System. So has our Management of Change been successful? Against many measures we can say that it has been a success. Attendance and punctuality have improved. Exclusions, both fixed term and permanent, have fallen drastically. Approval ratings from parents regarding the EFC are very high. The number of first choice applications from year 6 students in our feeder primary schools has increased by approximately 150%. We have also hit, as hoped, the

Excellent Futures Curriculum – In Comparison to year 5/6 are you



- More confident
- About the same
- Less confident



Achievement Data 2005-2009

| YEAR | KS2-4 CVA | Percentile | KS2-4 VA | Percentile |
|------|-----------|------------------|----------|------------------|
| 2005 | 982.8 | 87 th | 946 | 93 rd |
| 2006 | 983.2 | 86 th | 970.1 | 89 th |
| 2007 | 999.1 | 55 th | 974.6 | 89 th |
| 2008 | 1009.3 | 27 th | 1005.8 | 46 th |
| 2009 | 1022.6 | 12 th | 1006.1 | 33 rd |

Achievement Data 2005-2009

| YEAR | 5+ A*-C | 5+ A*-C inc. En/Ma | Capped | Uncapped | 5 A*-G | 1 A*-G |
|------|---------|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|
| 2005 | 33% | 15% | 223.2 | 264.8 | 82% | 95% |
| 2006 | 37% | 18% | 245.7 | 296.1 | 90% | 98% |
| 2007 | 46% | 22% | 249.9 | 320.6 | 86% | 96% |
| 2008 | 60% | 26% | 287.5 | 372.4 | 95% | 99% |
| 2009 | 78% | 39% | 309.2 | 432.4 | 93% | 98% |

Where Next?

We need to secure our purpose for the future. To do this we are considering how we train our next generation of teachers to meet our different approach. This is not meant as a criticism of existing teacher training provision. However, we are in the early stages of forming a relationship with an ITT provider with the intention that we are able to influence provision on some of their teacher training courses.

Alternatively we may consider the options offered within the Training School scheme. Connected to this is our recruitment processes. Are they fit for purpose? Are the traditional methods of written task, lesson observation, presentation and formal interview appropriate? Does it afford us the opportunity to appoint the best candidate for our school? Significantly, does it allow us to determine if a candidate is able to form effective relationships?

Manifesto

A Practical Manifesto for Education on a Human Scale

Human Scale Education suggests the following seven key practices that schools might follow. These practices are facets of educating on a human scale and were planned originally to represent the seven sides of a fifty pence piece.

1. Smaller learning communities.
2. Small teams of teachers of between 4 to 6 teachers, learning mentors, learning support assistants who will see no more than between 80 to 90 learners each week.
3. A curriculum that is co-constructed and holistic.
4. A timetable that is flexible with blocks of time which make provision for whole class teaching, small group teaching and individual learning. Teacher planning and evaluation timetabled.
5. Pedagogy that is inquiry-based, experiential and supported by ICT. Assessment that involves the Assessment for Learning approaches of dialogue, negotiation and peer review and develops forms of Authentic Assessment such as portfolio, exhibition and performance.
6. Student voice involving students in the learning arrangements and organisation of the school.
7. Genuine partnership with parents and the community.

human
SCALE
education

Human Scale Education
Unit 8, Fairseat Farm
Chew Stoke, Bristol
BS40 8XF

Tel/fax: 01275 332516

Email: info@hse.org.uk

Website: www.hse.org.uk

Further copies are available from
the Human Scale Education office.

© David Taylor January 2011

ISBN 978-0-9567858-1-7