

# Human Scale Education

Human Scale by Design

By Mike Davies

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This is the second in a series of Occasional Papers published by the Human Scale Schools Project, a partnership between Human Scale Education and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

## Human Scale by Design

By Mike Davies

The first in the series was:  
Human Scale Education.  
History, Values and Practice by Mary Tasker.  
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# Introduction

In 1993 Human Scale Education published its first set of Occasional Papers. The series was launched by a contribution from James Hemming, a teacher and educational psychologist who had previously written a highly influential book, *'The Betrayal of Youth – Secondary Education Must Be Changed'*<sup>1</sup>, a title that has as much resonance today as it had thirty years ago, and whose analysis and ideas have remained chillingly relevant.

Hemming ended his Occasional Paper<sup>2</sup> with this statement:

'Children are born intellectually curious, socially motivated and eager to make the best of themselves. At the heart of it all, the warm, participant community assures self-discovery and social effectiveness. Formative, satisfying community life is the shape of things to come. Educationally, it is time to move towards that future. Human scale education is giving us a model.'

This Occasional Paper, 'Human Scale by Design,' attempts to explore how the ideals of Human Scale Education can be expressed explicitly through the £45bn Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, especially by a bold commitment to reculturing large comprehensive schools and academies into a series of schools-Within-schools.

## Building Schools for the Future

BSF is claimed to be the single most ambitious scheme to either rebuild or remodel every secondary school in England since Victorian times. It is a rare opportunity to recast the experience and achievements of thousands of learners. According to Diane Haigh, Director of Architecture and Design Review (CABE), 'BSF is about transformational education – pupil-centred education tailored to individual needs.'<sup>3</sup> In the first set of 'waves' of new schools to be planned and opened within the BSF programme, the descriptor of 'transformation' has mainly applied to encouraging designs to be more responsive to a wider repertoire of pedagogies, supported through emerging new technologies. This trend reflects the reality that in an era when so much more is known and understood about learning and

<sup>1</sup> *The Betrayal of Youth – Secondary Education Must Be Changed*, James Hemming, Marion Boyars, London, 1980

<sup>2</sup> *Self-discovery within a Community*, James Hemming, page 12. Human Scale Education, Bath, 1993

<sup>3</sup> 'Don't waste money on hi-tech gizmos', Diane Haigh, *Guardian*, 2nd September 2008

when information technologies are ubiquitous, to continue to reproduce strings of cellular classrooms as containers to transmit knowledge is utterly inadequate. The emphasis is on designing spaces that are agile, capable of being physically reconfigured into different sizes and shapes and sufficiently flexible to allow furniture and fittings to be easily rearranged to host a variety of activities aimed at making learning more effective.

But in all this activity are we clear about the 'purpose' and the desired 'ends' of the realignments and new flexibilities? A survey by Building Design in the autumn of 2008 suggested that even architects were bemoaning a lack of clarity over purposes, a feeling encapsulated by one respondent who was quoted as saying: "We are throwing away the opportunity to have an intelligent dialogue about the future of schools."<sup>4</sup> It was, in part, in response to such sentiments that Mary Tasker wrote the first Occasional Paper in this series. In 'History, Values and Practice'<sup>5</sup> she eloquently sets out the range, ambition and unifying ideas of human scale education and how those ideals can begin to animate the debate about the future of education and the contribution that human scale principles and practices can make in helping to fill the void and forge a better future.

Nevertheless, despite the absence of any significant debate, learning spaces have become more open

and more public, as well as more intimate and private. Scores of images are available to demonstrate the new flexibility. There can be few conversations on school design that do not include a reference to the stairwells at Hellerup Skole in Copenhagen which serve both as a circulation space and as a place to sit and watch a performance or simply gather and chat. Equally the vibrancy of the images of T K Park in Bangkok show how a family learning centre located at the top of a shopping complex, full of the latest technology and contemporary furnishings, can bring learning to all in an informal setting. This theme of creating a series of different learning zones, housing different activities – some quiet, some practical, some discussion-based, some solo research, some instructional – is repeated in the design of the learner-driven Saltire Centre in Glasgow and in Warwick Universities Learning Grid.

In addition to flexibility and the use of technology, another common theme of these new learning places is that they entice the learner to linger and sample, as well as to become absorbed in deep learning. They are part of a new era that acknowledges that places of learning have to be motivational and promote engagement. They reflect the view that much of our learning is social, that many of us are 'kinaesthetic' learners, that we live in a culture of 'just in time' which for the learner means that all resources need to be readily

'A survey by Building Design in the autumn of 2008 suggested that even architects were bemoaning a lack of clarity over purposes...'

<sup>4</sup> BD website, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=426&storycode=3128633>, 28th November 2008

<sup>5</sup> 'Human Scale Education. History, Values and Practice', Mary Tasker, Human Scale Education, Bristol, 2008

accessible and available. They support a variety of pedagogies through which to learn and share. They challenge the current academic stranglehold and the assumption that the 'delivery' of reified, simplistic packages that 'school subjects' too often represent, is really passing on our 'intellectual heritage'.

## Schools-within-Schools

Within this maelstrom of challenge, transition and transformation there can be little disagreement with the suggestion that scale has become one of the predominant 'big ideas' of our time. Over the last four decades the great factory sheds and warehouses of the industrial age have all but vanished from many parts of the country. Steel plants, car factories, ship yards – sites that once dominated the skylines of many towns – are replaced by industrial and business estates where the unit size is much smaller. The isolated assembly line worker has morphed into a team player, sharing in the responsibility of the quality of the whole product.

The trend to smallness – to design and provide on a more human scale – has its echo in the school system, albeit a discordant echo. The move towards creating smaller schools, or, more realistically, the move towards creating clusters of sub-schools, or schools-within-schools, has taken a variety of forms. Each form can be seen as the manifestation of a set of core beliefs about the nature of

'There is a paradox, however, in that while across the globe schools are being reorganised and recultured into smaller and more coherent communities, there is a parallel move in the UK to create larger and larger schools.'

community, power, learning and the role of adolescence in our society. There is a paradox, however, in that while across the globe schools are being reorganised and recultured into smaller and more coherent communities, there is a parallel move in the UK to create larger and larger schools. There may be a risk that we are returning to the early days and dangers of comprehensive education when the relatively small scale (certainly by current comparisons) secondary moderns and grammar schools were replaced or amalgamated into much larger unsegregated and bilateral schools. The reason usually cited for this trend was the perceived need to accommodate the different approaches of the selective system and secondly, the need to provide for sufficient 'ability' streams so that the academic routes would be preserved while offering greater choice of courses for those who needed more practical pathways. This emphasis on choice resonates with current times and with increased recognition of the

'In the late 1960s, Countesthorpe College in Leicestershire was one of a batch of pioneering comprehensive schools planned and built as a series of 'pods' and 'clusters'...'

necessity to engage and be more responsive to the expressed needs and interests of students.

'Personalisation' is a wonderfully seductive tag, but in an era of 'choice' it has too often become a proxy for the number and variety of courses in the prospectus or for the match between the learner and a range of preset 'pathways'. This rather than meeting the expressed needs and interests of students and enabling them to take part in the co-construction of the curriculum. A sense of the social and cultural 'person' is substituted by a market choice-based 'consumer'. The need to deliver a burgeoning range of courses and provide 'value for money' is frequently used to justify 'hyper' schools. In many towns such institutions are now the largest buildings, frequently on a scale at odds with the experience of all who live in that community. It does not have to be like this.

Alongside the move to create larger and larger schools there has been an equally powerful move to create smaller, more coherent, learning communities. The desire to offer choice in ever increasing diversity while maintaining 'economies of scale', has made for gargantuan school sites. Increasingly, these large schools are being broken down and remodelled as a series of schools-within-schools – a pattern reflecting a global trend that is neither new, nor one that has a clear definition. These schools-within-schools range from a series of autonomous schools, sharing the same building, to a series of mini-

schools, which share the same overall ethos and leadership, but work in distinct physical spaces with dedicated staff and student teams.

## Antecedents

In the late 1960s, Countesthorpe College in Leicestershire was one of a batch of pioneering comprehensive schools planned and built as a series of 'pods' and 'clusters' – which we might now term 'learning communities'. Interestingly, this innovation was just part of a raft of reforms that attempted to forge a new comprehensive identity based on new ways of associating, new ways of learning, new adolescent/adult relationships, new ways of constructing the curriculum and a recognition that research and autonomous learning and 'learning to learn' would be the future. John Watts, Principal of the College 1972-1980, wrote about democratic schooling:

'..... a form of school in which teachers and school students have been able to enjoy an increase in dignity which results from their sense of determining, to a large extent, the conditions under which they work and grow.'<sup>6</sup>

He talked about the need for 'an open and continuous debate that recognised and respected the dilemmas and contentions' in society and the legitimacy of the experience of students, and the communities in which they lived, as having a central place in their

<sup>6</sup> John Watts, 1977, p129 *The Countesthorpe Experience* London, Allen and Unwin

studies and reflection. Watts also wrote of the similarities he found in his own experience at Countesthorpe and in a number of other pioneering schools that were committed to:

‘the expressed aims of fitting the curriculum to the child, rather than the reverse, of maximising choice for the learner, of reducing formalities so as to encourage teacher-student dialogue...’<sup>7</sup>

Most significantly he noted their shared commitment to the facilitation of what he termed ‘sub-schools’, the breaking up of the monolithic school into smaller units. In a review of the development of sub-schools in 1980, he found that they were taking a variety of forms – some organised in year groups, others vertically arranged, some linking a particular specialism with each sub-school. These specialisms might relate to a number of distinct curricula or to different ways of working or pedagogies. He quoted a school in Adelaide, South Australia which had opened ‘with four sub-schools, each with an identifiable mode’ that was fully explained to parents and offered to them as a choice for their youngster. The offer was described in the following way:

‘One sub-school offered a Formal Mode, with conventional classroom methods, teacher-directed, short term goals and regular testing. A second offered an Open Mode, with greater latitude of choice in both subject and style of work, flexibility of grouping and on-going

assessment. The third was an Autonomous mode, designed for independent study with staff as reference tutors, recruiting students who were well motivated to work in this way, but accepting the whole ability range. Fourth was an Alternative Mode for those who had already been at odds with school and needed...to work out their own solutions to their own problems’.

Staff at the school were anxious to emphasise parity of esteem between the modes and avoid any hidden streaming. What is interesting in John Watts’ commentary is that while the Formal Mode was initially the most popular with parents, once the school was established he reported that ‘...greater numbers started to apply for Modes Three and Four, thus shifting the balance...’.

At roughly the same time as John Watts was collating ‘*The Countesthorpe Experience*’, Ted Sizer in the USA was researching A Study of American High Schools which he articulated in his seminal book ‘*Horace’s Compromise*’, and

...‘the expressed aims of fitting the curriculum to the child, rather than the reverse, of maximising choice for the learner, of reducing formalities so as to encourage teacher-student dialogue.’

<sup>7</sup> John Watts 1980, p 17-23 A Further Consideration of Sub Schools in *Prisenews*, Winter

**'The creation of smaller learning communities is not an end in itself but rather an enabler.'**

led to his establishing The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) in 1984. CES is a network of schools throughout the United States that seeks to enact the ten educational principles that Sizer saw as holding the potential to transform American education. Essentially CES schools are a loose federation bound by a set of commitments among which several relate to scale. For example:

'Personalisation. Teaching and learning should be personalised to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalisation, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff'<sup>8</sup>.

It is this recognition of the primacy of relationships and mutual trust as a precursor to support and challenge, together with the setting of high expectations that are authentic, that lies behind commitments to create schools on a human scale. The creation of

smaller learning communities is not an end in itself but rather an enabler. They make possible fewer bureaucratic organisational structures and processes, less reliance on externally set targets as a means of monitoring progress, fewer mechanistic control measures and tariffs for those who offend, less hierarchical dependency on 'one size fits all' national strategies for change. And above all, less reliance on a single source of curriculum legitimacy – a single measure of the worth of a young person on the basis of their reaction to a pen and paper test in an airless room.

## **Drivers For Design**

The schools-within-schools movement is a powerful restatement of comprehensive education where communities and individuals matter and where purposes and curriculum renewal are taken seriously. It has explicit implications for the design of schools, implications relating to the scope of the vision and the integrity of the purposes. These design drivers are built around principles of greater equity of provision:

- an emphasis on high quality, agile areas for learning throughout rather than a palatial front of house and impoverished interior
- a variety of differently and interestingly shaped and sized spaces to support a range of learning encounters and groups rather than lines of identical 56 square metre classrooms as if

<sup>8</sup> Details of the CES 10 key principles can be found on the web at: [www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces\\_docs/about/phil/10cps/10cps.html](http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/about/phil/10cps/10cps.html)



along an assembly line

- the provision of resources, some mobile, throughout the mini-schools to support a range of learning styles and needs rather than a rigid demarcation between heavily resourced workshops and empty classrooms
- a recognition that a curriculum can be built from a number of perspectives, including community and student interests and cross-curricular themes, rather than an unfounded assertion that the only way to build a curriculum is around a range of subjects
- a range of high quality furniture and furnishings that will appeal to a variety of learner needs and tastes rather than leather sofas for staff and wooden benches for pupils
- a variety of facilities, such as eating areas, designed to avoid queuing and maximise the social experience rather than industrial-scale eating areas
- spaces that can be reconfigured and used in a variety of ways to

...‘a recognition that a curriculum can be built from a number of perspectives, including community and student interests and cross-curricular themes, rather than an unfounded assertion that the only way to build a curriculum is around a range of subjects.’

ease the appropriate and flexible use of time rather than shackling all staff and students to a pre-set ledger of lessons, all of a fixed time period

- individual toilet cubicles scattered throughout the estate rather than elephant-sized toilet blocks, often in isolated areas
- a series of work areas and meeting rooms to support CPD and interagency working rather than a remote and largely abandoned staff room
- internal connections that can also serve as gallery areas rather than hidden stair-wells where bullies can mark their territory
- suites of rooms that are interconnected, often around an atrium, rather than long and anonymous corridors threading between rows of rooms
- the incorporation of the outdoor space as a vital curriculum element and pedagogic tool rather than the seductive satisfaction of building a floodlit Astro turf pitch while ignoring the rest of the grounds as vital places of learning and practising sustainability
- a commitment to consult and listen to the voices of learners in the planning of the total estate rather than inventing a false hierarchy between formal and informal learning areas and ignoring the centrality of social space
- incorporating a range of community facilities and resources together with a welcoming reception area rather than the mixed message of welcoming the community while enclosing the estate in high wire

fences and walls

- a total commitment to the inclusion of all young people in a common school, including where necessary, co-location, to admit a maximum range of SEN students, rather than the continued isolation of some within the community
- an appreciation that we are in a new era of personalisation and problem/project based work which is often multi-disciplinary rather than the appeasement of vested interests which might range from claims for the need to retain and expand the number of dedicated ICT rooms to subject departments that insist that each teacher needs their own room
- learning spaces and places that invite the young person to stay, work in depth and accept responsibility rather than respond to the demands of the school bell – an overt symbol of control and containment as was the factory hooter
- the use of contemporary technologies to break learning boundaries, tap into community resources, share the fruits of student and staff endeavours and enable parents and carers to become partners in the learning journey rather than the pretence that the school is **'the'** place of learning.

Just as Countesthorpe College in its day was a Trojan Horse attempting to break with the past and introduce the new, so the move to schools-within-schools can be seen as a similar attempt. It is an attempt at rescuing young people

**'It is an attempt at rescuing young people from the complex and frequently alienating experience that many urban schools and academies have become...'**

from the complex and frequently alienating experience that many urban schools and academies have become in their relentless adherence to nineteenth century forms of organisation and control. These are places where obsolete knowledge is poured into pupils, where the lives they lead are never the focus of the curriculum, where the style of learning is too frequently pre-prepared and pre-set, ready to be delivered. Schools-within-schools represent not simply a matter of cutting 'hyper' schools down to size: they radically recast the nature of learning and being in the new century.

If the simple CES principle of 'no teacher working with more than 80 students in a week' was adopted as a major driver for BSF, then we would be talking of 'transformation' rather than 'tinkering'. We would then banish the too frequently heard comments that we are 'building new old schools'. The move to create schools on a human scale is not claimed as a panacea. As the various formats shown below suggest, the concept has several forms but what is claimed is that they represent a courageous

and bold way of reconceptualising the experience of school and the purposes of learning. They model a more participative, socially democratic society, gentler but no less robust or less determined to work for the benefit of all.

## A Range of Possible Models

While the commitment to human scale is a common feature of each model, there are some crucial differences in the autonomy accorded to each mini-school. Flowing from this, the models vary in the extent to which the curriculum is fixed for all, negotiated, student-centred or offered as a range of alternatives for parents and students to choose. Similarly there are differences in the degree to which specialist/heavy resources are located within the mini-schools, shared or located as separate entities. There are examples where dining is retained centrally, others where it is dispersed to the mini-schools. The same variation is occurring with libraries, with a move to disperse provision into the mini-schools, partly in response to the move towards multi-media, to students as researchers and to more active pedagogies. In some cases the sub-schools gain their identity through offering an emphasis on a particular way of working. It should be possible to envisage the same offer being made to students and parents on the arrangements for assessment. Thus, mini-schools would offer students a range of assessment regimes and processes

that best capture the strengths and talents of the learner. Leadership and management also lie at different points on the continuum of devolution, trust and professionalism through the models.

Throughout the range of models there is a commitment to fewer hierarchical structures, more empowerment and the taking of decisions at the point and context of action – that is, decisions taken by those directly involved which frequently includes the students. It is, however, the commitment to relationships, to reducing alienation, to promoting identity and to recognising that personalisation will remain a seductive political slogan whilst in practice an empty concept, which unites the schools. This will not change until the learner is known and known well, otherwise we condone our ‘impact’ as being superficial, with students compliantly schooled, rather than educated as life-long enthusiastic learners and citizens.

‘While the commitment to human scale is a common feature of each model, there are some crucial differences in the autonomy accorded to each mini-school.’

## Summary of the Main Dimensions Identified in the Models

While the creation of smaller learning communities is a thread running through all the models, each school achieves its core purpose through a series of tactics (short term), strategies (medium term, behavioural shifts) and embedders (longer term, cultural shifts), which will vary according to local context and need. These dimensions suggest some of the key variations between the ten models that follow:

<b>CURRICULUM:</b>	externally set ————— locally negotiated ————— co-constructed
<b>LEADERSHIP:</b>	single campus ————— (small/mini) school specific ——— collegiate
<b>STUDENT GROUPING:</b>	fixed by age/stage ——— small, stable learning groups ——— interest/task
<b>STUDENT VOICE:</b>	school councils ————— peer mentors ————— learning negotiator/researcher
<b>PARENTAL ROLE:</b>	monitors performance ——— raises funds/profile ————— partner/resource
<b>TEACHER ORGANISATION:</b>	subject departments ——— cross-disciplinary teams ————— learning tutors
<b>LEARNING/TEACHING MODE:</b>	exposition/didactic ————— mixed/multi-media ————— mentoring/facilitating
<b>SITES OF LEARNING:</b>	teacher rooms ————— home bases/grounds ————— community/virtual
<b>ICT IN LEARNING:</b>	interactive white boards — individual learning programmes — blogs, MSM, chat rooms
<b>MULTI-AGENCY:</b>	external ————— area teams ————— school-based, with partner primary and special
<b>ASSESSMENT:</b>	de-contextualised tests — portfolios/exhibitions ————— embedded in simulation 'games'/Assessment for Learning
<b>SPECIALIST RESOURCES:</b>	separate ————— interwoven ————— mobile
<b>STUDENT FACILITIES (eating):</b>	central café ————— dispersed to schools ————— student-making facilities
<b>USE OF TIME:</b>	long blocks (days) ————— organised by teaching team ——— negotiated according to needs according to needs of theme of task and student

Within each model description a box has been included that illustrates how four of the above dimensions – leadership, teacher organisation, sites of learning and use of time – might be applied. The turquoise marker shows where the school or learning centre might lie within these four dimensions.

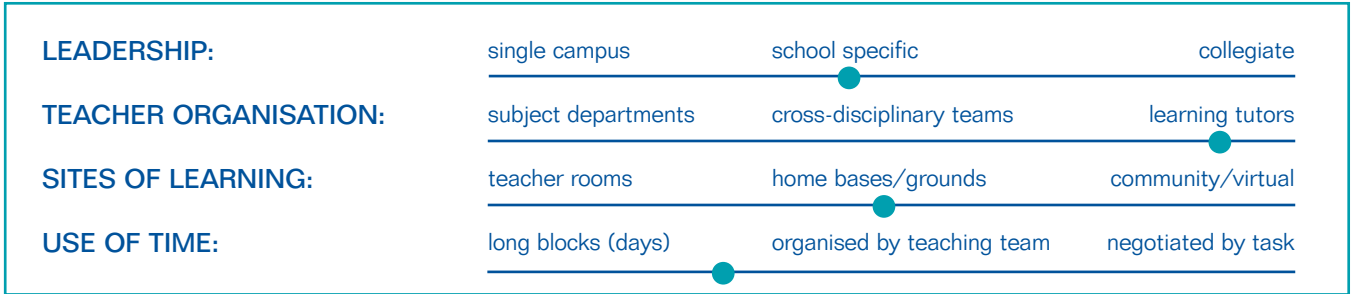
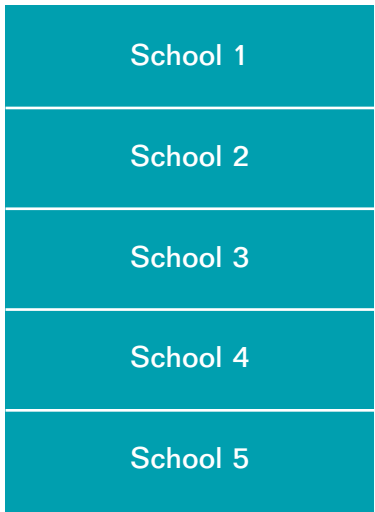
In the set of diagrams below the right hand column is based on the assumption that a school with 1500 students has been created as, or remodelled into, five mini-schools.

### Model A: Five autonomous schools share a building

In this model each of five schools occupies a different floor of the building. Each school is an autonomous entity with responsibility for its own leadership, staffing, governance, reception, secretariat, organisation of students, recruitment, prospectus, entry/admission arrangements, pedagogy, curriculum and ethos. There might be some sharing of facilities such as library/resources, café/restaurant, sports fields/ sports hall.

An example of this type of schools-within-schools is The Mission Hill School in Boston, USA, serving children in grades K-8. It is a small community, with approximately 170 students, distributed in multi-age groups of no more than 20 students; most children spend two years with the same teacher.

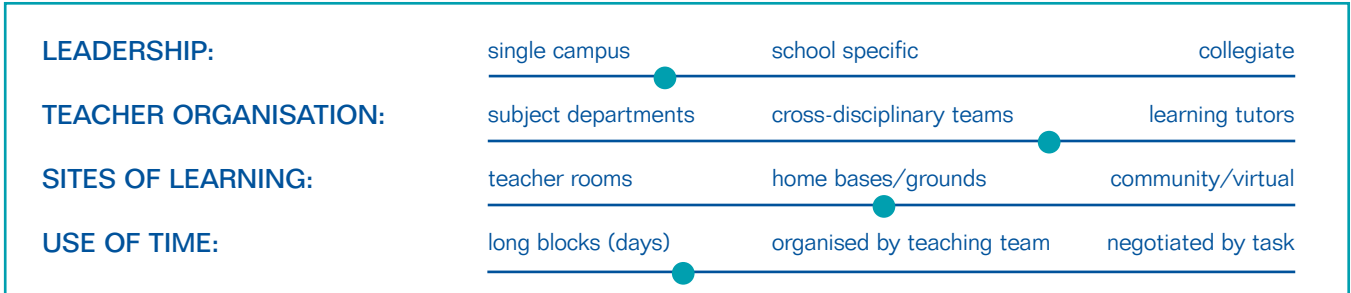
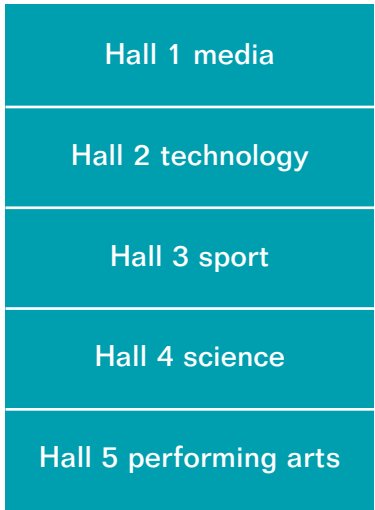
The school is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools.



### Model B: Series of mini-schools, each with a specialist element

Each of the schools has its own suite of generic, home-base rooms and resources, its own cohort of students and staff, including additional resources to support a specialist area of the curriculum. Overall admission arrangements, pedagogy, common curriculum and ethos are set across the campus. There is some sharing of facilities such as library/resources, café/restaurant, and leisure centre. Each of the schools is organised vertically to support a move away from age related classes,

Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, was reorganised into a series of mini-schools, locally known as 'Halls' in mid 1980's. (Influenced by the development of 'Magnet Schools' in the USA at that time, the idea of each mini-school having its own distinct 'offer' was debated but not taken up).



## Model C: Series of specialist areas used on rotation by student/staff cohort

Each of the schools comprises a fully comprehensive cohort of students with a core group of staff, especially teachers and mentors. This group stays together throughout its school careers. While this stable learning community ensures continuity, personalisation and progression it does not have a permanent physical base. Rather it rotates through the specialist curriculum areas shown on the diagram. Each area is a mix of generic and specialist space. Different ways of working and experiences are encountered in each area for a semester. Overall admission arrangements, pedagogy, curriculum aims and ethos are set across the campus. Administration is centralised.

Cocentra<sup>9</sup> developed this model of Schools- within- Schools while working on the Derbyshire BSF scheme. It was triggered by the Australian Science and Maths School, Adelaide.

Learning Zone 1: language  
media & community

Learning Zone 2: technology

Learning Zone 3: sport and  
performing arts

Learning Zone 4:  
maths and science

Learning Zone 5:  
English & expressive arts

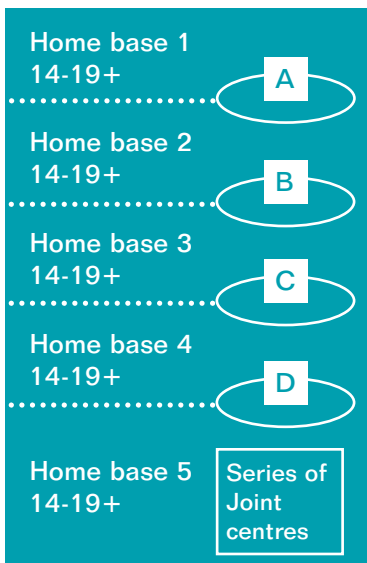
<b>LEADERSHIP:</b>	single campus	school specific	collegiate
<b>TEACHER ORGANISATION:</b>	subject departments	cross-disciplinary teams	learning tutors
<b>SITES OF LEARNING:</b>	teacher rooms	home bases/grounds	community/virtual
<b>USE OF TIME:</b>	long blocks (days)	organised by teaching team	negotiated by task

<sup>9</sup> Cocentra is an innovative educational consultancy working with schools, local authorities and commercial groups committed to using BSF as a powerful lever of change and development.

**Model D: Series of generic home base areas with access to a range of authentic, multi-provider, experiential centres**

This model combines the intimacy of a series of small home-base teams with the opportunity for more intensive work. It comprises a suite of rooms that are varied in shape, size and furnishings – to support a range of pedagogies, from rich ICT to mobile sciences. A core team of staff works with students in the home base and negotiates/arranges specific courses and classes in/with the range of specialist placements (mainly) on site – a set of additional contexts provided by the co-located authentic learning centres. These are joint initiatives between the state, private enterprise, the third sector and the school. They include a theatre, leisure centre, post office/bank, recycling centre/ DIY repair, computer clinic, nursery, sustainable house, film centre.

Although not a series of schools-within-schools, and with a total student population aged 14-17 of under 150, this model has been well developed at SPF/Youth Town in Copenhagen for the past thirty years.



- A** ~ Theatre Centre
- B** ~ Finance Centre
- C** ~ Media Centre
- D** ~ Sustainability Centre

<b>LEADERSHIP:</b>	single campus	school specific	collegiate
<b>TEACHER ORGANISATION:</b>	subject departments	cross-disciplinary teams	learning tutors
<b>SITES OF LEARNING:</b>	teacher rooms	home bases/grounds	community/virtual
<b>USE OF TIME:</b>	long blocks (days)	organised by teaching team	negotiated by task

## Model E: Series of 5-14 all-through schools with applied post-14 provision

Each of the schools has its own suite of generic rooms and resources, cohort of students and staff. Within each 5-14 mini-school there is extensive wireless networking and mobile provision to allow practical and experimental work, for example, in science, although there is also the availability of more specialist resources in the 14-19 school. Overall admission arrangements, pedagogy, curriculum and ethos are set across all schools. Staff are an integral part of the stable learning group and stay with the young people and their families throughout the school. There is some sharing of facilities such as library/resources, leisure centre. There is a strong emphasis on locating facilities e.g. a galley kitchen, in the home bases.

This model builds on the traditions of the Danish Folk Schools. Hellerup in Copenhagen is a contemporary example of the use of home bases.

School 1	nursery
School 2	5-14
School 3	5-14
School 4	5-14
School 5	14-19+

<b>LEADERSHIP:</b>	single campus	school specific	collegiate
<b>TEACHER ORGANISATION:</b>	subject departments	cross-disciplinary teams	learning tutors
<b>SITES OF LEARNING:</b>	teacher rooms	home bases/grounds	community/virtual
<b>USE OF TIME:</b>	long blocks (days)	organised by teaching team	negotiated by task

## Model F: Series of self-contained mini-schools within an 11-16 college

Each of the schools has its own cohort of students and staff, staff bases, student reception, lockers and toilets. A variety of different sized generic rooms and a range of specialist workshops/studios/laboratories and resources are located within each school. Overall admission arrangements, pedagogy and ethos are set across the college. There is an agreement that 85% of the curriculum will be common across all schools, leaving room for innovation and particular school needs. There is some sharing of facilities such as library/resources, café/restaurant and central atrium/ performance space. The Heads of School, working with their communities, have considerable short and medium term autonomy.

Bishops Park College in Clacton, Essex is an example of this type of schools-within-schools.

School 1
School 2
School 3
School 4
School 5

<b>LEADERSHIP:</b>	single campus	school specific	collegiate
<b>TEACHER ORGANISATION:</b>	subject departments	cross-disciplinary teams	learning tutors
<b>SITES OF LEARNING:</b>	teacher rooms	home bases/grounds	community/virtual
<b>USE OF TIME:</b>	long blocks (days)	organised by teaching team	negotiated by task

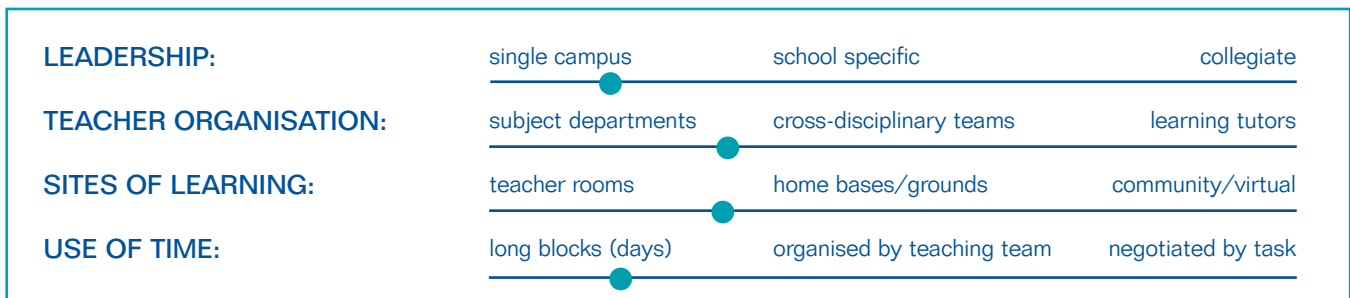


### Model G: Series of self-contained home-bases adjacent to specialist facilities

Each of the schools has its own cohort of students and staff, staff bases, student reception, and a variety of different sized generic rooms all richly serviced with wireless ICT. School leaders are responsible for teaching and learning, pedagogy and assessment, while admissions, external special needs, ICT maintenance, grounds, cleaning and catering are at a college-wide level. The specialist, heavily resourced areas such as science, technology and the arts are provided on a whole campus basis, beyond the home bases. Facilities such as library/ resources, café/restaurant are shared between the schools. The school is seen as a resource and social hub within its community, a dynamo of regeneration, raising aspirations.

Brislington Enterprise College in Bristol is an example of this type of schools-within-schools.

- School 1
- School 2
- School 3
- School 4
- School 5

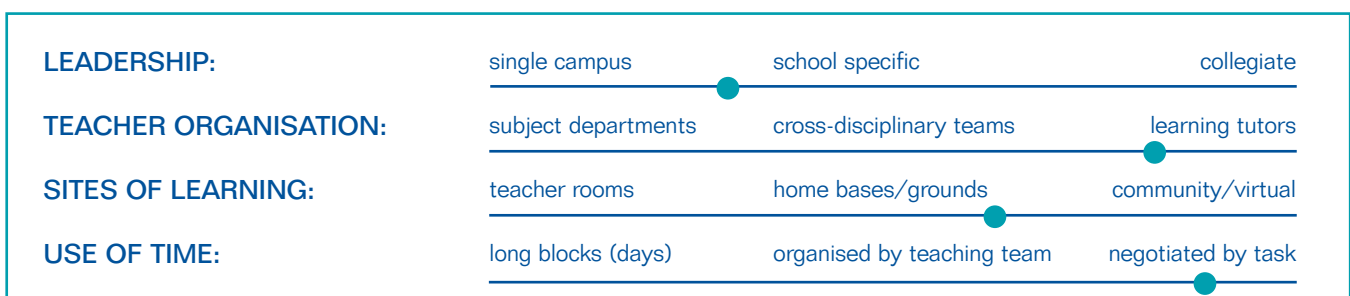


### Model H: Series of self-contained student communities centred around learning zones

Each of the communities has its own cohort of students and staff, staff bases, student reception, toilets, a variety of different sized generic rooms. What is critical in this model is that the driver for allocating space is not subjects but learning studios, or home bases, in which to explore, experiment and reflect on learning. Strings of cellular classrooms are replaced by learning zones, integrated with different pedagogies and types of media. For example, Da Vinci for cross-curricular inquiry, Einstein for reflective learning. There is a strong emphasis on using ICT to promote autonomous learning as well as group-researched project work.

John Grey High School in the Cayman Islands is an example of this type of schools-within-schools. The schools have a strong commitment to making use of students' familiarity with ICT.

- Student learning community 1
- Student learning community 2
- Student learning community 3
- Student learning community 4
- Student learning community 5



## Model I: Series of multi-mode mini-schools

Each of the communities has its own cohort of students and staff, staff bases, reception, a variety of different sized generic rooms. What is critical in this model is that the driver for allocating space is not subjects but pedagogies, which focus especially on the strength of the learning styles of the student. There are distinct Home Bases, in which to listen, explore, enact, experiment and reflect on learning. Parents are able to express a preference for the pedagogic mini-school they feel best meets the needs of their child. A series of learning zones and appropriate rich resources facilitate the modes of learning.

Morialta High School in Adelaide, Australia adopted this approach in the late 1970s.

Learning Mode 1  
exposition

Learning Mode 2  
enquiry based

Learning Mode 3  
performing arts

Learning Mode 4  
mantle of the expert

Learning Mode 5  
community/applied

### LEADERSHIP:

single campus      school specific      collegiate

### TEACHER ORGANISATION:

subject departments      cross-disciplinary teams      learning tutors

### SITES OF LEARNING:

teacher rooms      home bases/grounds      community/virtual

### USE OF TIME:

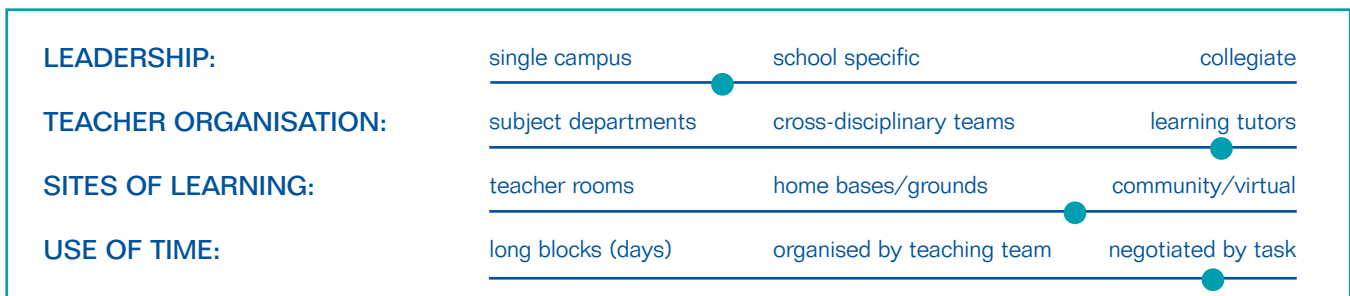
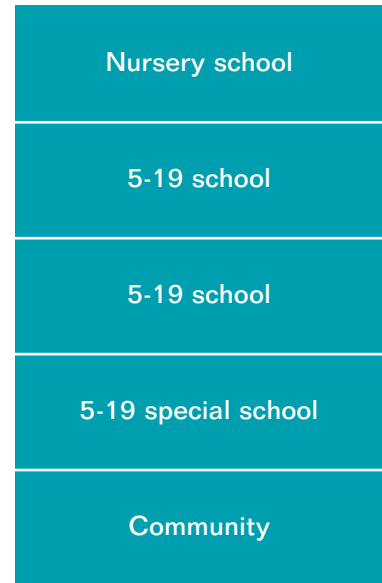
long blocks (days)      organised by teaching team      negotiated by task

NB detail in this model is dependent on mode.

**Model J: Series of mini-schools sharing facilities with the community and co-located special needs provision**

All schools have their own suite of generic rooms and resources and cohort of students and staff within this Education Village. Each mini-school has mobile provision to allow practical and experimental work as, for example, in food technology, and extensive use is made of the school grounds, e.g. creating a science park. Admission arrangements, pedagogy, curriculum (with a real commitment to problem-based learning or PBL), and ethos are set across all schools, with a strong emphasis on continuity. There is an emphasis on using community facilities e.g. the town library and leisure centre, and there are partnerships with local businesses that provide contexts for applied learning.

Mobile technology has enabled considerable empowerment of the students and the ability for extensive periods of time to be spent away from school. Although a small alternative school, rather than schools-within-schools, the West Hawaii Explorations Academy, embodies many of its features.<sup>10</sup>



This last example gives us the clearest hint that scale plus technology is propelling us to a revolution in what it means to be a teacher and a learner, and what it means to be a school and a learning hub intermeshed with the community.

The following idealised school is adapted from a paper by Anker Mikkelsen<sup>11</sup> writing about the student day at Hellerup School:

**A Working Day at Audacity School<sup>12</sup>**  
 Students at Audacity arrive early for one of the many sports sessions

or for a nourishing sandwich at the breakfast club.

On entering the school building they use their personal swipe/magnet card to sign into the flexi-time base of their own small school. Until the first student conference at about 8:30 everybody works on their personal project or any other assignments agreed upon with their tutor. Each of the small schools has its own Learning Resource Centre (LRC). The stock in the Campus library is now mainly fiction, plus some ICT resources that are shared with the wider community.

<sup>10</sup> A short film of the Explorations Academy can be accessed via the web at [www.edutopia.org/classrooms-without-boundaries](http://www.edutopia.org/classrooms-without-boundaries)

<sup>11</sup> Hellerup School – a novel teaching paradigm in Denmark, accessible at: [www.ankermikkelsen.dk/dokumenter/ICSEI%202003II.doc](http://www.ankermikkelsen.dk/dokumenter/ICSEI%202003II.doc)

<sup>12</sup> While the key ideas in this description are based around Hellerup, the details have been amended to fit a British context.

During the first conference the students individually discuss with their mentor/tutor how they are getting on with their personal project, they seek ideas on improvement and ask for any guidance or help to deepen their understanding of the work in hand and ease them into the day.

The students work through the day using the teachers as advisers and consultants in relation to their individual projects. The close proximity to a wide variety of resources enables the student to discover/create/make/investigate the topic of their inquiry in a medium that best extends their skills and acts as a catalyst to display their talents.

To support the project work an appropriate range of long and short courses are available to extend understanding and broaden experience/interests. These are timetabled in a traditional way, but students opting to attend do so on the basis of need and interest rather than age and compulsory compliance.

After a flexible lunch break the second conference takes place. During this conference every student, within their learning group, tells about the good and poor experiences they might have had in relation to their projects. This conference is about peer-sharing and support and is meant to give everybody some good ideas for their own work and make sure that all students are well informed and

supported by their learning community.

Before the end of this conference all students know what to do for the rest of the day and in the flexible time the following morning.

The students can choose when to leave school, taking into consideration the compulsory number of weekly hours. Many stay to use the resource/café area, enjoy sport or elect to study a range of more formally organised courses.

## Conclusions and Hope

What an exciting prospect this final extract holds for us, and especially young people. What a way to model the life-long skills and dispositions that are so frequently said to be lacking in our school leavers and foster a new civic society, refreshing our flagging social democracy.

The models quoted from the 1970s and those sketched above represent a real challenge and opportunity. After thirty years of the rhetoric of 'choice and diversity' from all political parties, the move to break down our monolithic secondary schools and academies and move towards schools on a human scale has so much potential – the potential to offer a variety of curriculum patterns, give choice over ways of

'The models quoted from the 1970s and those sketched above represent a real challenge and opportunity.'

‘Didn’t Winston Churchill once reflect that ‘We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.’

working, and support a variety of specialist studies. To offer choice while simultaneously – and vitally – allowing relationships to develop and mature so that personalisation based on a deep knowledge, trust and understanding of each other becomes a reality can enable schools to take a quantum leap out of the past.

At a minimum, every plan and strategy for change should be scrutinised in relation to the following questions:

- how does the design place learning and learners at the centre of its function?
- how does the design create a sense of identity and belonging for learners?
- how does the design champion a strong sense of community for the learner?
- how does the design encourage inclusion and welcome learners of all ages?
- how does the design incorporate advances in our understanding of learning, of students’ preferred modes of learning and of new developments in ICT?
- how does the design promote emerging pedagogies and ways in which learners of the future indicate how they wish to learn?
- how does the design support the

move to more person-centred, devolved and participative organisational structures?

- how does the design support an iterative commitment to development, and embrace continuous change?

The range of models A to J and the exemplar schools described in this Occasional Paper have a clear story to tell and much to offer. They are each designed from first principles, principles committed to individual and group success, to parity of esteem and community cohesion. They give hope for the emergence of a good local school for every young person and their family which embodies comprehensive values and non-discriminatory choices. They represent a very different set of roles and experiences for students at school and for their parents or carers. They also offer a contrasting view of the future and of the part they can play in a participatory democracy that is committed to human flourishing and economic wellbeing.

Didn’t Winston Churchill once reflect that ‘We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us’? The creation of human scale schools by design might be seen as a contemporary manifestation of that belief and gives us hope for the future.

# Conclusion

## A Practical Manifesto for Education on a Human Scale

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

1. Small size. Schools or learning communities of 250 to 300 students.
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 that makes 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.
6. 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.
7. Student voice involving students in the learning arrangements and organisation of the school.
8. Genuine partnership with parents and the community.



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Further copies are available from  
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