

1. The title of the case

The school at the centre of the community

2. General description of the organisation

Dyke House School is an average sized community comprehensive school in Hartlepool in the north east of England. It serves a school population of 1050 pupils aged 11 to 16 years. The school is oversubscribed and most pupils come from areas in Hartlepool that are relatively disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school lunch is well above average and a high number of pupils join or leave during their school career. Almost all pupils are from a white UK heritage background. There are small numbers from other minority ethnic heritages including mixed Asian, Pakistani and Chinese. All pupils use English as their first language. Standards on entry are well below average. The proportion of pupils having special education needs is above average as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need.

The school which was built in 1938 is situated to the north of the centre of Hartlepool just outside the new Hartlepool Marina development. Most of the housing around the school is terraced and due to be replaced in the next few years. The wider area around the school has benefited from a number of Government regeneration schemes including City Challenge and Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. Some of the pupils live a New Deal for Communities area.

3. The main content of the case

Dyke House School is open for 50 weeks a year, six days a week. It provides a range of activities and facilities for the community and was described by the Government Inspectors (OFSTED) as "an oasis in the community". On school days the building is open before school for pupils who arrive early to attend breakfast and reading clubs. Food is available, staff are there to supervise where required and books as well as newspapers are provided. After the final lesson of the day the school remains open for pupils and the community to use the facilities.

These facilities include a drama studio, a music recording studio, dance studio, IT facilities including video conferencing, sports facilities including a swimming pool, study support sessions and adult education. The school buildings remain open until 9pm.

On Saturdays the school is open again for parent and child study support sessions, IT facilities and sports facilities. Music groups use the recording facilities.

Other users of the site include the local residents attending meetings, taking part in craft sessions, attending certificated adult education classes. The local football club runs training schemes for young people from the age of eight years every Saturday throughout the year, each school holiday and after school one evening per week. The Hartlepool Swimming Club uses the school pool as its main base six days per week throughout the year including holidays. The local hockey team for adults also uses the full size artificial surface pitch with its floodlights as its home ground throughout the hockey season.

Pupils and other members of the local community are able to make use of additional support services offered by the Connexions service, a careers and youth support service. There is a community health worker on site who is funded by the local health authority to work exclusively on site supporting pupils with drop in sessions, linking to residents groups and working with teachers on providing education on health issues.

The local health service also organises a weekly health clinic where parents may bring their young babies to be weighed, to talk to the nurse or the doctor and to receive baby food. This service has expanded to link to smoking cessation classes and the health service also organises other classes for new parents, particularly mothers. The school is supporting the extension of this service to include IT and technology sessions for young fathers to promote their attendance.

During school holidays there are a variety of holiday schemes for both pupils and their younger brothers and sisters. Where there is a need the school organises with others child care so that parents, particularly single parents, can go to work knowing that their children are being looked after. The school has developed this programme with local primary schools so that children can be looked after in their own schools at the end of the school day.

A local charity which works with young children and their families as well as providing safety equipment for homes has its offices and storeroom within the school building. This again permits the school to support the local community with facilities which they would otherwise not have available to them. A more recent development is the opening of a community Police Office within the school so that Police Officers and Community Wardens are on site and available to the community each day from their dedicated community police office.

The school has also developed training courses for the community so that young people can take up employment. In particular the school has worked with the local college to provide ICT Technician training and fully qualified Technicians are now in permanent posts both at the school and elsewhere. The school has also trained clerks and is currently training teaching assistants. Some former teaching assistants are now training as teachers at the school.

The Excellence in Hartlepool Partnership asked the Governing Body if they could build a City Learning Centre at the school linked to the community development. This centre is for all pupils in Hartlepool and is funded directly by the UK Government to support technology and school improvement. It too has targets for community use and the shared reception arrangements with the one stop booking service has also supported the development of our programme.

The school is now seen as a centre for the community and a natural base for local activities to take place. All of this has been carried out using normal funding streams with some additional funds to start new ventures. The scheme has been going for over 12 years and can be said to be well established and embedded in the culture of the school.

4. The reasons behind the case

In 1993 the school was considered to be not a friendly place for pupils and the community. The number of pupils had fallen to just under 500 and examination results were poor. Only 8% of the pupils left with five or more good grades in GCSE. Attendance of pupils was considered low by national standards and the buildings were frequently vandalised

particularly during weekends. The school was closed immediately after the final lesson each day and the rooms lay idle.

A new headteacher was appointed with a new management team. As part of the school improvement plan the new team decided that a major difficulty was that many of the pupils had parents who had attended the school and left with poor qualifications. Many were also unemployed and gave little thought to the value of education.

The first step was to use the school facilities during the school day when pupils were not using them. The school had invested heavily in computers and a period of two hours per week was identified when these were not in use by pupils. Adults were invited into the school from the local community to learn how to use computers and publicity was given to pupils about this use. Slowly pupils began to value education when they realised that adult volunteers were coming into school to learn.

Next the school developed better technology facilities with some European funds matched with school funds. This enabled a new technology area built in the heart of the school to be used by adults both during the school day, after school and during holidays. Again this all added to the sense of education having a value with volunteer adults present in school learning new skills.

Together the new headteacher and deputy headteacher supported by the school Governors were able to extend the opening hours of the school and modify the building to enable the community to make use of the facilities without effecting the running of the school during the school day.

5. The actors behind the case

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher were the main people involved in making the change. Both had the same enthusiasm and both believed that the school building and facilities should be used by the community rather than being locked up and underused. The Governing Body of the school also supported this development and encouraged the staff at the school to make bids for building improvements, supported staff development and agreed new appointments for staff to work with the community.

The initial changes were made in collaboration with the Hartlepool Adult Education Service which organised classes at the school, first in IT and now in Mathematics, English and languages such as Italian, Greek and Spanish. Secondly the development of the technology area was in partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education who advised on equipment, funded taster courses for adults and provided extension activities at the college for those adults who wanted to move on to further and higher education.

Initially the local hospital provided support for the baby clinic with staffing and room hire from the school. Then the local health authority took over this role and expanded the service into other health issues. The health authority also funded a full time Health Development worker at the school as the targets for health improvement could be reached by working with the school and the community.

The school has worked with many other partners to provide support for the community. Many sports groups use the facilities and organise their own staff to work with the community. For example Hartlepool United Football Club hire the facilities and provide staff to run football skill classes for the community. Hartlepool Swimming Club also hire the swimming pool and provide staff to instruct their members and encourage the local

community to join in. The Open University also uses the school site on an evening for their groups to meet locally.

The main purpose of collaboration is to provide a wider range of activities and services for the community without the school staff having to provide everything. Collaboration with other organisations is a feature of the delivery of the wide programme.

6. The process leading to success

Initially the school opened the existing facilities to the community. At the start this was a computer room and then a technology area. City Challenge funds were used to build a new community entrance to the school and two redundant classrooms were used to provide space for community groups to meet. Again City Challenge funds were used to provide facilities for changing for the public to use the sports facilities and a Sports Council grant enabled a full size artificial sports pitch to be built for use by the school and the community. Throughout the planning the project has to be self financing. Whilst capital funds were received from successful bids the revenue costs were always part of the financial planning for the scheme. This has contributed to the sustainability of the project. Once a new facility has been built the school has managed to raise the revenue costs from the community using those facilities. For example the artificial pitch surface has been replaced at the end of its lifetime with no cost to the school or any funding body, simply from revenue generated.

Every time a new facility has been added our business plan has been amended to take account of the facility so that the scheme is self financing. When new activities have started they have been subsidised from existing activities or through specific grants to finance the start up costs of the new activities. In the early days when the income generated was not sufficient to fully cover the cost of the staffing the school was able to change job descriptions of existing staff to enable them to work part time in the community facilities to reduce costs.

This scheme was subject to an inspectors report in 2003 when the whole school was inspected by OFSTED, the UK Government's inspectors for schools. In addition the Chancellor of the Exchequer commissioned a report on the use of public buildings and the school was highlighted in that report, the only school in the report, as an example of efficient use of public buildings. ("Towards better management of public sector assets" Sir Michael Lyons. December 2004).

7. Results indicating the success

The leadership of the school want the success of the project to be measured by school improvement. The successes are:

- 51% of pupils gained five good grades (A* - C) at aged 16 in 2005;
- pupil attendance in the high ninety percentages every day;
- more pupils remaining in education beyond aged 16;
- pupils taking Duke of Edinburgh Award qualifications;
- pupils training as Young Sports Leaders and Young Arts Leaders;
- 1050 pupils attending the school (double the number at the start of the scheme)

and for the community:

- average of 3000 adults using the site each week;
- 12 ICT Technicians trained and qualified;
- school buildings open and used six days every week and 50 weeks each year.

And for the school:

Charter Mark awarded for excellence in public service;
Investors in People Award for training our own staff;
Basic Skills Agency Award for teaching numeracy and literacy;
National ICT Award for the use of ICT both in teaching and in management;
Artsmark Award for the use of art in the school and with the community;
Stronger links with local primary schools embedded into our daily work.

8. The main obstacles of the case

The main obstacle was obtaining the funding to extend the school buildings so that the community could make use of them. Without the initial funding from City Challenge, ERDF and UK Government funds to extend the facilities over the years the school would not be as successful with its community use as it is today. WE believe that we have demonstrated that once the capital grant is given so that equipment and building improvements can take place, we can raise the revenue to keep the building and equipment at the level expected. In addition the Governors have demonstrated that opening the school to the community has given pupils more facilities.

9. Main sources of inspiration behind the case

The headteacher had worked in another area in schools which were open to the community before becoming a headteacher. The deputy headteacher had experience of voluntary community work outside of his school career. Initially the scheme was developed without visiting other sites as they did not exist in the same format. There were school buildings which also housed community facilities but they were not managed by the school and its Governors. Dyke House School set out to do something different.

Eventually other schools started similar projects and staff from the school were able to visit, and continue to visit, these other schools in the region and in other parts of the UK to share experiences and look at other best practice. The UK Government is now encouraging all schools to open for extended hours and invite the local community to make use of their facilities. The UK Government is also encouraging workforce remodelling to take account of these changes..

10. The most important lesson learned

The school requires community support to be a successful school and cannot thrive without it. However the school, its leadership and Governors wish to be judged not on the number of adults who use our facilities each week, not on the hours we are open to the community, but on the overall school achievement of the young people who attend our school.