

## School size research – Summary Sheet

Since the mid 1960s school sizes across the country have steadily risen especially as many smaller rural schools have closed. There are very many more very large primary (over 800) and secondary schools (over 1600). Across the UK, USA, Australia and Canada a good deal of work has looked at the optimum sizes of schools as these countries rebuild their school estates.

### Primary Schools

LGA Published a research document entitled: "The impact of school size and single sex education on performance" in 2002. It largely asked questions about small primary schools because of pressure on LAs to close small primary schools. The results based on; a literature review, value added pupil performance and opportunities, was that **size of primary school did not matter**. With the exception that there was a small correlation between increased size and lower performance in maths, however this effect was small.

There are now some very large primary schools in this country. Titan schools are primary schools larger than 800 NOR. In 2012 there were over 20. Some American researchers, often arguing for a particular type of school, have suggested that smaller schools are better for younger children as their personal development is enhanced. Similarly, some educationalists in the UK argue for smaller schools based upon educational theory rather than quantitative data.

### Secondary schools

Research into secondary schools suggests that middle size schools do best. Very small and very large schools seem to do less well but larger schools can organise in such a way as to operate like several smaller schools e.g. schools within schools or through house systems. Broadly the correlation is a shallow bell curve. The best size for GCSE students was between 175-200 pupils in a cohort (11-16 school size of 875-1000) with the exception of Science where the optimum size was 230 (11-16 school size of 1150). Schools with large sixth forms do better whilst those with small sixth forms do worse than those schools without sixth forms at all.

### Through schools (5-16 and 5-19)

There is less research on the impact of through schools. What is there suggests that the impact of through schools is positive as they encourage better transition and children learn to live with children of all ages; older children mentoring younger ones. Further, younger children get access to specialist teaching facilities. Much of the research to date is qualitative as there are still only a relatively small number of 'all through schools'. Older research is not helpful as "all-age schools", those in place in the UK until the 1960s often did not offer external exams as the school leaving age was then only 15.

### Class size

There is inconclusive evidence on class sizes. In many small rural schools classes are small, children are well known to teachers but standards can be lower as children of several ages maybe in the same class, e.g. all KS1 in a single class. Research into effects on standards suggests that a good teacher working with a larger class is much more effective than two poorer teachers working with smaller classes. In some cases very small classes do not work for example modern foreign languages at A and AS Level. Many schools now look at mixed arrangements for classes and groupings.