

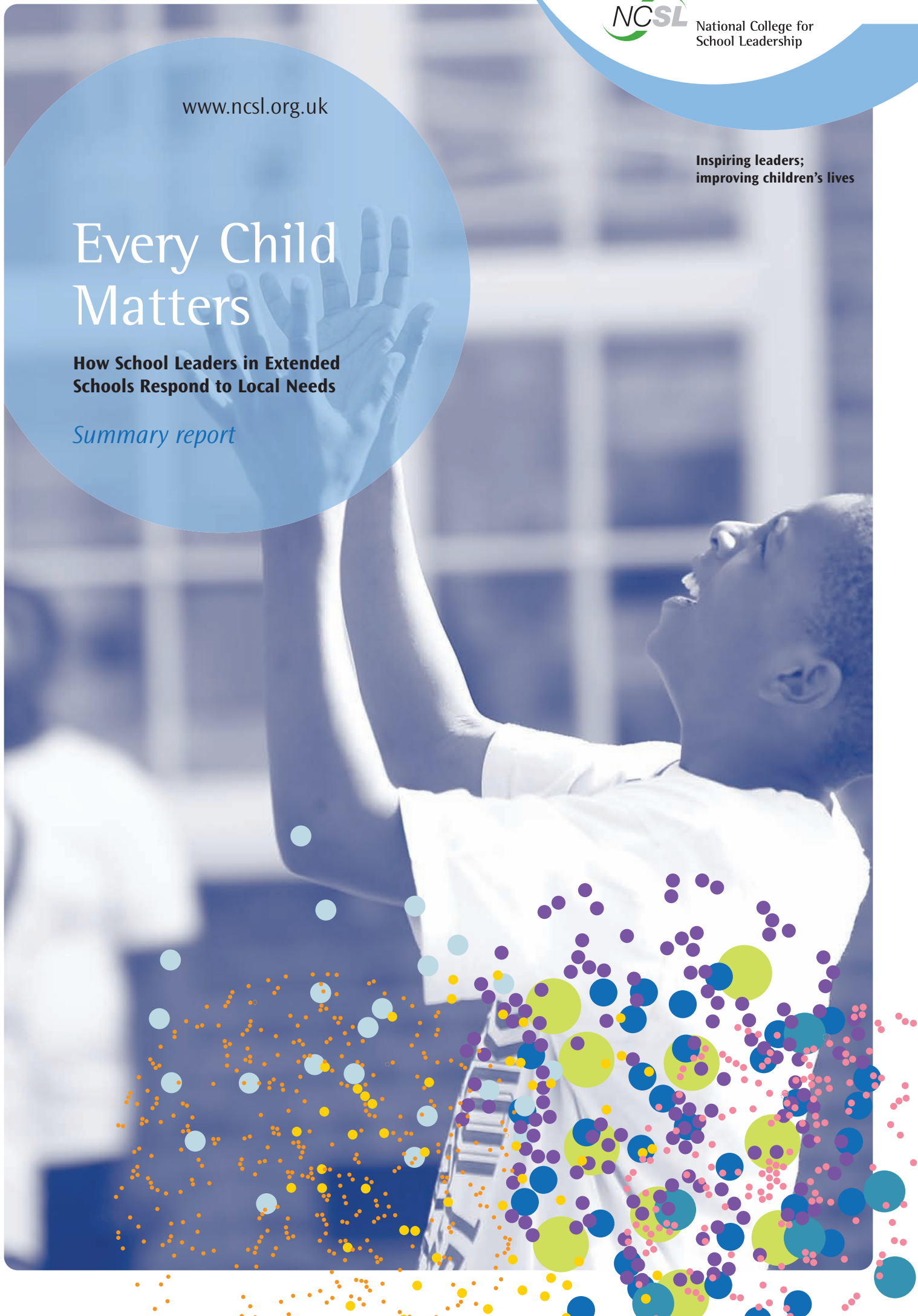
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Every Child Matters

**How School Leaders in Extended
Schools Respond to Local Needs**

Summary report



Every Child Matters

Authors: Sally Kendall, Emily Lamont, Anne Wilkin and Kay Kinder, *National Federation for Educational Research*, June 2007

Introduction

This report describes the findings of research into how school leaders contextualised the principles of Every Child Matters (ECM) and the leadership of extended schools for their local area. It explores how school leaders aligned ECM, extended schools and standards agendas, the ways in which school leaders adapted ECM for their own context and investigated whether responses to the principles of ECM varied according to the socio-economic levels of the community that the school served.

Methodology

Six extended schools (two primaries, three secondaries and one special school) were selected for in-depth case-study work. One of the schools had a children's centre on-site and one of them operated within a cluster of schools.

Interviews were conducted with a range of key personnel at each school. These included: the headteacher, extended schools co-ordinator, curriculum managers, support and associate staff, governors, pupils, and service providers. Local authority representatives were also interviewed.

Research was undertaken during winter and spring 2007.

Key findings and implications for leadership

Alignment of ECM, extended schools and standards agendas


- **Key finding:** Every interviewee in the study felt that ECM, extended schools and standards agendas overlapped and very few tensions between the agendas were reported. Where tensions did exist they were usually based on early misconceptions about the implementation of extended schooling. An indivisible link was made between ECM and extended schools agenda, reflecting the fact that extended schools are regarded as one of the local delivery points of ECM. As the agendas were felt to align so closely, implementing the ECM agenda was a relatively smooth process in the case-study schools.

Implication for leadership: The view that ECM and extended schools agendas were inextricably linked meant that ECM confirmed, rather than drove, activity and aspirations in the case-study schools. Nevertheless, school leaders in other contexts may find it useful to make explicit how extended provision and ECM complement each other.

- **Key finding:** All interviewees took the view that delivering ECM goals would ultimately impact on standards of attainment.

Implication for leadership: Where possible, school leaders need to gather evidence to reinforce the argument that ECM and extended schools can lead to increased attainment. This link should be promoted widely in the school and wider community, securing commitment to the agendas by all staff.





The school leaders in this study exemplified highly committed, advanced and innovative ways of conceptualising and implementing extended school provision.

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Factors affecting approaches to extended schools and ECM

- **Key finding:** When describing their vision for extended schools all leaders reflected their huge personal drive and commitment to that vision. All espoused a holistic child, parent and community-centred approach. Leaders' responses additionally reflected a range of perspectives which could be broken down into three types of vision:
 - aspirational or entrepreneurial, where the vision was to expand and trailblaze extended provision
 - grounded or historic, where the vision built on previous values and traditions
 - pragmatic or restrained, where the vision was directly influenced by funding opportunity

Implication for leadership: It should be noted that these approaches were not mutually exclusive and that at any one time leaders might reflect a range of approaches. The types of vision identified in this study might act as a useful starting point from which leaders can appraise their own approach to extended provision and ECM.

- **Key finding:** An aspirational or entrepreneurial vision focused on pushing the boundaries of what was viewed as extended provision and what an extended school should look like. A grounded or historic vision focused on citing a tradition of extended services, such as community education, as underpinning their approach, as well as emphasising the child and family-centred aspect of their vision. A pragmatic or restrained vision reflected the need to provide services within the constraints of the funding available, as well as a practical focus on the beneficial outcomes for parents and children. It should be noted that leaders' responses often incorporated more than one of these perspectives.

Implication for leadership: The most advanced aspirational vision is clearly leading to a profound reassessment of the role of a school; what constituted a learner; and the relationships with its community, customers and service provider colleagues. Such radical reinterpretation potentially requires leaders to debate and agree fundamental issues.

- **Key finding:** Leaders in the case study schools had adopted a range of approaches to encourage staff to buy into their vision. Two of the most successful strategies used centred on transforming the roles of associate staff and targeting individuals who were receptive to change, seeking professional development opportunities and willing to take the vision forward themselves. This clearly links in with the remodelling agenda and workforce reform. Leaders need to be able to identify suitable members of non-teaching staff who are seeking these types of opportunities.

Implication for leadership: Embedding the vision within school structures and systems is essential in order to ensure sustainability. This requires leaders to make use of deliberate and detailed strategies to ensure this happens. This also links with remodelling and workforce reform as school leaders are increasingly managing a broader workforce with a wider range of skills. Employment contracts as well as terms and conditions for support staff need to reflect their increasing levels of responsibility within schools.

- **Key finding:** The workload of the leadership team in schools may have increased as a result of ECM. Leaders in the case study schools reported that they held increased responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the impacts of ECM and for reporting back to the rest of the staff. The impact of the increased workload was also reduced by distributing leadership and delegating responsibility for certain aspects of ECM or extended provision, across a number of dedicated staff members. Similarly, school leaders reported that having a comprehensive staffing structure in place, with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, had enabled them to embrace the ECM agenda and ensure they had the capacity to meet the five outcomes. Where this was not in place, or where capacity was lacking, school leaders felt that schools might struggle to meet the core offer and the five outcomes. Where these were in place, the schools were better equipped to embed the principles of ECM.

Implication for leadership: School leaders need to ensure that the implementation of these agendas does not place additional burdens on school staff but provides opportunities for those who are seeking them.

- **Key finding:** The governing bodies of the case study schools appeared to have embedded the principles of ECM into their procedures smoothly and without difficulty. These governing bodies were well informed about the principles of ECM and had also been working with these principles in mind for some time. However, addressing ECM did not appear to require any major changes to these schools' governance arrangements.

Implication for leadership: School leaders could promote ECM as a potentially useful framework against which governing bodies could evaluate school outcomes.

- **Key finding:** ECM was felt to have consolidated partnership working by giving schools and other agencies or services a framework of common objectives.

Implication for leadership: Leaders need to develop strategies for seeking out new partners within the wider community, recognising that many voluntary organisations and other agencies need to work with schools in order to fulfil their own targets for ECM outcomes. Leaders also need to develop a repertoire of skills for working with other professionals that operate within a different professional culture.

Responses to local needs and the impact of socio-economic factors

- **Key finding:** In all six schools, extended provision was described as being customer-led as each school had engaged in consultation with its community, pupils and staff.

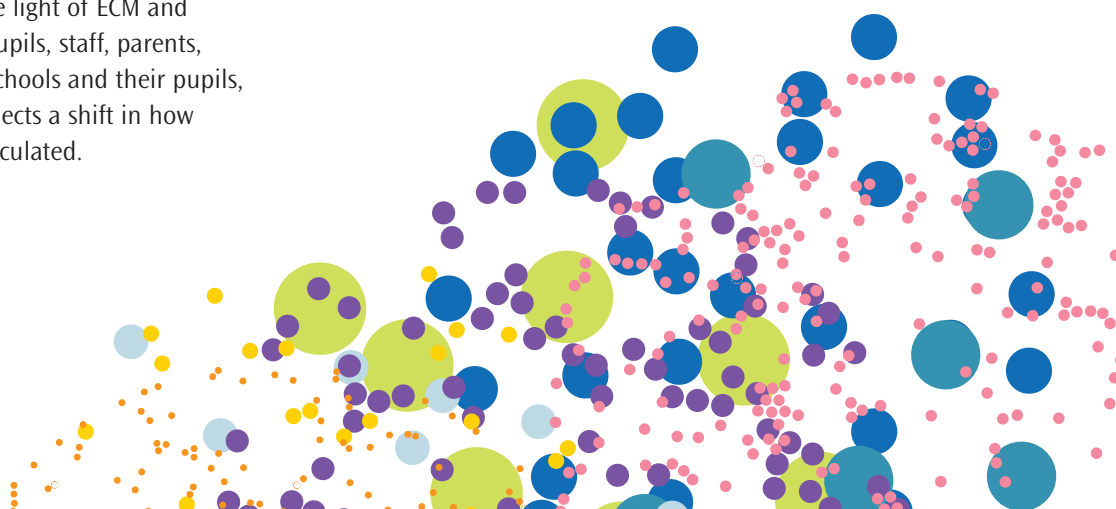
Implication for leadership: It is important that school leaders clearly define the concept and terminology around who they consider their customers to be. It is likely that the customer-base of schools is broadening in the light of ECM and extended schools to include pupils, staff, parents, community members, other schools and their pupils, and service providers. This reflects a shift in how schools are conceived and articulated.

- **Key finding:** In order to identify needs, a range of consultation strategies were used across the case study schools. School leaders considered linking their consultation exercises with other agencies to avoid replication and to access additional funding streams. Joining consultation with other services was also said to help schools audit provision in their local area and avoid duplication of service provision.

Implication for leadership: School leaders need to adopt flexible approaches to community consultation exercises to ensure they are appropriate for their local context. This could facilitate consultation with hard-to-reach community groups and to secure the success of any subsequent activities.

- **Key finding:** Each of the schools had consulted with its pupils to ensure that they contribute towards the 'make a positive contribution' outcome. The secondary schools in the study had moved beyond traditional methods of consulting with students and had given a high priority to student voice. In these schools, the students contributed to the management of the school, as well as helping to shape the development of extended provision. Pupils in these schools felt highly valued and able to make a difference in schools.

Implication for leadership: Schools need to avoid tokenistic consultation and it is important that they can act on identified needs. Schools might need to consider their capacity issues and inform stakeholders what they can feasibly provide. This would ensure realistic expectations on both sides of what is achievable. The case study schools exemplified how pupil voice can make a real contribution to the management and development of extended schools.



- **Key finding:** As the case study schools approached ECM from the perspective of what their users' needed, the nature of the extended services they offered varied. In this way, schools contextualised their approach to best meet the needs of their community. These needs were closely linked to the socio-economic status of the communities, and the schools' approaches to ECM and extended schools varied according to socio-economic levels.

Implication for leadership: This reinforces that there is no blueprint for extended schools. Instead, school leaders should feel able to contextualise their approach to ECM and extended schooling without feeling constrained by other schools' or the local authority's approaches.

- **Key finding:** As the case study schools had taken a needs-led approach to the ECM and extended schools agendas, interviewees did not feel constrained by the core offer. They reported that it did not dominate their decisions or interpretations of ECM and extended schools. Rather, school leaders had been able to adapt and contextualise the core offer to best meet the needs of their school and the local community.

Implication for leadership: It is possible that other school leaders may be constrained in how they deliver the core offer, perhaps limited by funding, space or transportation issues. Maintaining an innovative and open-minded approach is crucial to overcoming these barriers.

- **Key finding:** Local authorities play an important role in helping schools to make sense of the core offer. However, this could potentially present concerns if an excessively top-down approach is taken and the needs of a setting are not considered when ensuring the core offer is being met.

Implication for leadership: Local authorities need to reassure schools that they can interpret ECM and extended schools to best serve their local community. It might be useful to provide schools with opportunities to do this and to assist them in interpreting their approach for their own context.

- **Key finding:** Some of the schools found that ECM could act as a vehicle for developing their relationships with local communities. This is further enhanced by taking a needs-led approach to the agenda. In such instances, meeting ECM outcomes is likely to result in the school enjoying a heightened profile in the community and the barriers between school and its local area may be broken down.

Implication for leadership: In order to meet the needs of their local community, it is likely that school leaders will need to develop closer partnerships with local agencies, community organisations and to link with a range of opportunities in the community. School leaders will therefore need to invest time in building new networks and relationships with other agencies.

Interpreting and contextualising ECM: challenges and support

- **Key finding:** These headteachers encountered few challenges in interpreting and contextualising their approach to the five ECM outcomes, with the 'achieving economic wellbeing' outcome for primary schools being the only exception. However, logistical issues such as space, funding and transport surfaced as potential barriers to implementation. Training needs also surfaced, particularly around the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

Implications for leadership: School leaders should recognise the value of sharing interpretations of certain ECM outcomes; training needs; accessing individuated support from local authorities and utilising networks. School leaders also need to have an awareness of the spaces and sites they can use locally.



- **Key finding:** In adapting their approach to ECM, school leaders accessed support from headteachers from other schools, and in two cases, from the local authority.

Implications for leadership: It may be helpful to school leaders if local support networks for headteachers, where they could discuss approaches to ECM and extended schools, are established. These may also be an arena in which innovative headteachers, such as those leading the case study schools, could share good practice with other school leaders.

Concluding comments

- The school leaders in this study exemplified highly committed, advanced and innovative ways of conceptualising and implementing extended school provision. Their views on the impact of ECM and its inter-relationship with the standards and extended schools agendas clearly indicated a lack of tension between these three policy imperatives. Indeed, the three agendas were felt to be entirely congruent – reinforcing and complementing one another. This reflects the fact that extended schools are one of the local delivery points of ECM.
- In these schools, ECM was not a driver of extended provision or the core offer, but a confirmation of previous well-established principles, vision and practice. It may be of value to promote this positive sense of congruence to the wider school community, including those that have less confidence in adopting these current policies.
- For some of the schools in the study, adopting principles, now so embedded in ECM and extended school provision, had involved a radical reappraisal of the very function of a school. For example, in relation to: the roles of learners and teachers; the contribution of and responsibility towards the students, community and other services; and the leadership styles, structures and practices to manage such innovation.
- ECM provides a climate that encourages partnership with external agencies, who themselves recognise the school as a valuable resource to help fulfil their remit. This work found the case study schools aiming to be trailblazers and maximising such commitment and energy would be a valuable resource for other schools and those who seek to support them.
- Responding to local needs was a key driver for the kind of extended provision and approach adopted in each of the case study schools. Nevertheless, there was evidence that funding constraints affected the vision and aspirations as well as the extent of provision. Can more be done to directly encourage and model entrepreneurial approaches and raise aspirations despite concerns over funding? It may be that such tensions need to be acknowledged and addressed in future support for leadership.



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