

## Next Practice: All-through schooling

**Is all-through schooling the future of education?  
Or is it a solution that maximises the use  
of resources at the expense of the children  
concerned?**

A debate about whether all children could be well educated in a single school throughout their school years was the dominant theme of a 'blue sky' discussion on the future for leadership and schools in talk2learn.

Several contributors from primary schools argued against educating children of all ages under one roof. Dawn Lane felt a primary school's role as a trusted community hub was too important to sacrifice for the sake of economies of scale.

"Primary schools are at the heart of village communities and we teach children a sense of belonging as they grow – family, school, village, parish," she said. "This is an important aspect of citizenship – of knowing who they are and where they fit into this world."

Niamh Howlett was concerned about pastoral care and feared some students would be 'lost' in large communities, she said –

*"We must not lose sight of the fact that learning is most effective in an environment where students feel secure, valued, cared for and known individually."*

One contributor pointed out that many all-through schools or federations exist nationwide, and had found solutions to many of the issues raised.



"They have developed some interesting approaches to prevent 'incomers' at year 7 from being disadvantaged, for example, forming soft federations and partnership working at year 6 in particular have eased the integration/transition of these children into the all-through system."

Derek Laidlaw also argued that the possible drawbacks should not blind school leaders to the possibilities all-through schools offered. He said: "What we are merging is not simply an environment...but a joining of ideas and sharing of practice. Some of the most valuable Insets I have attended has been with colleagues from primary and nursery, while several of our staff teach across the key stages including KS2 and KS3."

But does it have to be either/or? Another Next Practice consultant Denis Mongon thought that any decision about changing the system should be determined by local need, he said –

*"Perhaps what we need to do is to explore the pros and cons that our colleagues who are trying this out are bringing to our attention and then, on the assumption that not one approach will fit everywhere, decide what's best locally by locality."*

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