

Appendix 1 - School size and standards research reference.

"THE STRUCTURE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION: England and other countries" by Anna Riggall and Caroline Sharp (National Foundation for Educational Research, Copyright © University of Cambridge 2008).

6.2 The impact of school size on attainment

There is relatively little research evidence on the impact of school size on learning and teaching. One fairly recent study which considered the performance of pupils in schools with different characteristics (Spielhofer et al. 2002) found no evidence of a relationship between primary school size and pupil progress in Key Stage assessments, although this may have been influenced by the relatively small number of primary schools included in the analysis. In New Zealand, Harker (2005) conducted a similar study, examining the relationship between school size and pupil attainment. The author points out that most New Zealand primary schools would be considered 'small to medium' by international standards. The study found no evidence of a significant relationship between school size and academic attainment in primary schools.

Two other qualitative research studies have considered aspects of (large) primary school size and school amalgamation in England. Southworth and Weindling (2002) researched the views of school leaders on the benefits and limitations of large primary schools (those with over 400 pupils). They found that headteachers of large primary schools held mostly positive views of the impact of large schools on teaching and learning. Wallace and Pocklington (2002) studied the process of school amalgamation in two local authorities, documenting the complexity of the process for local authority and school staff and identifying the main change management processes and themes involved.

6.3 However, one of the issues addressed in a report of TIMSS [*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*] data by Martin et al. (2000) was the effect of school size on achievement (where schools were categorised as 'large' if bigger than the national average in that country). The report states: 'There seems to be a general tendency for greater percentages of students in high-achieving schools to be in the larger schools in each country.' (p. 47).

7.3 Two aspects of school structure have attracted more evaluative consideration in England and elsewhere: school size and starting age. The available evidence suggests that neither of these has a strong impact on children's attainment or progress at school.

SOURCE

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/PRO01/PRO01_home.cfm?publicationID=307&title=The%20structure%20of%20primary%20education:%20England%20and%20other%20countries