

Keighley Schools Linking Project

External Evaluation Report – 2005-06

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Introduction

During the academic year 2004-05 the Bradford Schools Linking Project took part in an external evaluation, to determine the impacts of the project on participating children. One of the recommendations arising from that evaluation was to find ways for linked classes separated by large geographic distances to link in future with children living closer to, or even within, their own neighbourhoods, and the Keighley Linking Project is an example of this.

Under the umbrella goal – ‘to encourage a sense of belonging to Keighley as a cohesive community through raising awareness of its social, cultural and environmental resources’ – the Keighley project seeks to offer the same opportunities and learning outcomes as the Bradford schools linking project (see project aims and objectives – Appendix 1).

The external evaluation of the Keighley Schools Linking Project during this year focussed on exploring the strength and success of the new Keighley linking model, and the quality of the experience for those participating. There was less opportunity to analyse social impacts resulting from the Keighley project, as had been achieved through the Bradford evaluation, however any *impressions* of change resulting from participating in the project have been reported.

Overview of evaluation process and aims

The evaluation process involved individuals across the range of roles, and included both children and adults, represented by a sample of individuals in each case:

- *56 pupils* – eight interview groups of seven, across the range of activities, and including pupils from schools with predominantly white, predominantly minority ethnic, and mixed pupil profiles
- *6th form students* (initially, although the involvement of this group was erratic, and has not in the end formed part of the ongoing evaluation process)
- *24 teachers and teaching assistants* (in some cases different staff attended the two staff evaluation sessions, and so although comments and perspectives are very valuable, a correlation between before and after perspectives may be difficult to claim)

Question areas and evaluation methods

Confidentiality is a fundamental aspect of the evaluation method used, and trust and confidentiality ground rules were negotiated throughout interview and discussion sessions. Eight question areas were used in discussions, which relate closely to the evaluation objectives. The groups were asked to share:

- their views about the Keighley community, and how, whether and where they feel they belong within this community
- their knowledge and views about Keighley's social, cultural and environmental resources
- what in their view an ideal Keighley community could be like – projected 3 to 5 years into the future – and what could move people in Keighley towards this ideal community
- their expectations of the project, and what they, and the anticipated project model, might achieve
- their experience of opportunities to discuss issues of welcoming and /or negotiating diversity, which are at the heart of the project (see aims and objectives, Appendix 1)
- what differences they think there might be between children taking part from different Keighley schools
- what they are wondering about children/adults they might meet through the project, who are (or might appear to be) different from them in noticeable ways. These responses are known as their 'curiosity questions'.

Questions were framed appropriately for the age of each evaluation group, and questioning methods used with children included activities as well as discussion. Activities used were accessible and inclusive of all ability levels, and the evaluation was strengthened by selecting a group representing a range of abilities and attitudes within a class to take part in the evaluation. The confidentiality of all contributions ensured that respondents were free from concerns about repercussions arising from the views they expressed; although evaluation material is used by the team to understand and analyse the project's strengths, weaknesses and impacts, verbatim material used in the report or elsewhere is never attributed to individuals or schools.

Following their involvement in the project the same individuals were invited for a further evaluation interview. The questions which formed the basis of these second sessions were linked to the initial interview questions, aiming to draw out a project end picture, and any journey or change resulting from involvement in the project.

Schools' involvement in the evaluation process

Most schools were involved in the evaluation in one of two ways:

- by arranging a visit time for the evaluator to interview a small group of 7 children
- through staff members' or the head teacher's input at evaluation points on training days.

Interviews with children were conducted in a quiet and private room, and the class teacher was not present (except in one school), in order to enable children to speak more openly about their experiences. The evaluator encouraged a culture of non-

judgemental openness during interviews; children seemed to welcome this concept enthusiastically and with initial disbelief, as a rare and precious space for exploring ideas they were not sure would be acceptable within earshot of adults.

Data and Findings

To explore the effectiveness and value of the project, the question areas outlined in the evaluation overview above were used to provide a pre-project and a post-project sketch of participants' connections to and feelings about their home town community – which was understood to encompass Keighley and surrounding hamlets. The project was seeking:

- a shift, particularly amongst children, of some degree towards a firmer identification with Keighley as their home
- a broader sense of local identity than simply their own extended family, immediate neighbourhood or faith community
- a greater openness towards the diversity within the local community, and
- increased awareness of cultural, environmental and social resources available on their doorstep.

The 'before and after' picture in these areas is reported here, summarised from the children's followed by the teachers' and teaching assistants'¹ responses across the range of questions.

Comments were also invited on:

- children's levels of enjoyment of activities, and to what extent they felt activities they had taken part in had enabled them to mix and make new friendships
- both children's and teachers' observations of stronger and weaker aspects of the project, and any learning or surprises, and
- suggestions for how to improve the project model in future years.

Sets of data are colour coded, to easily identify whether responses are from interviews which took place before involvement in the project or afterwards. Evaluator's summaries and comments are included throughout.

- 1 Children were asked about their relationship to Keighley community – what was good and bad about the town and surrounding area, and where, within the community, they thought they belonged or would place themselves:
 - *central to Keighley community, 'at the heart of' the community'*
 - *included – 'part of/seen as part' of Keighley community, but not at its heart*
 - *'on the edge' of Keighley community*
 - *'outside', or excluded – not part of/not seen as part of Keighley community*

¹ Correlation between the before and after pictures with this group was much weaker – see p.1 'Overview of evaluation process and aims'

Children's responses on their feelings about, and connection/sense of belonging to, Keighley community **prior to the project**

Children responded very naturally here in terms of where they placed themselves in relation to the community, and what they felt were 'Good' and 'Bad' things about Keighley.

- 44% felt they were '*at the heart of*' the Keighley community, and a further 31% felt they were firmly '*part of*' though maybe not '*at the heart of*' the community. Thus 75% felt happily included. Among these were children living in outlying hamlets as well as those living in areas central to the town.
- 20% felt they were '*on the edge of*' and 5% '*outside*' the community. Interestingly, only a quarter of these responses came from children living in outlying hamlets, all others were from children living within the town.

This activity was conducted with eyes shut, to help increase children's freedom to express exclusion in front of peers. In fact children appear mostly to have a strong sense of belonging, or wanted to express this as their projected identity (within the discussion group) which is equally interesting.

Looking at responses to feelings of personal safety below, it may be that families or other community structures are working hard to give children a sense of safety and protection from perceived or actual dangers in the wider community, which is creating a strong sense of close-knit belonging '*at the heart*' (44%) of their own community (see teachers' comments below).

Qualitative comments:

Good things clustered around friendliness, and having '*friends around you*', '*it's easy to make friends*', and people being helpful and caring towards each other. A number of children felt it was a '*fun*' place, and children also felt Keighley people were '*proud*' and '*special*'.

Bad things were expressed more vehemently, with the following themes: (asterisks indicate where a comment is made on multiple occasions)

- Safety: '*Scary; not safe*;especially for children; scary teenagers*; naughty adults**; people bully** each other, are not kind*; racist graffiti; racism*'
- Antisocial, violent and criminal behaviour: '*People smoking – not caring about themselves; noisy neighbours ;*late, rowdy behaviour; vandals**,graffiti; people breaking the play area*; thieves; muggings; drunks *; pubs, drink driving; violence*; (people who are Asian get said to them "oh you black so'n'sos!" and people get hit); people chuck stones; guns, murder (a recent local case)*; drugs*** (We found some! We know where they hide them); junkies – they take over the park*'
- The environment: '*Pollution*; glass, rubbish*****'

These comments weigh heavily when they recur in this way, and when they concern such aspects of children's lives, over which they have no control. When children feel so unsafe it is not surprising if they feel they need to find refuge in close-knit, sometimes virtually barricaded communities (see teachers' comments below) and are fearful of looking outwards and welcoming 'difference' – the unknown. This both reinforces the need for linking work with Keighley children, and highlights that children may find the idea quite daunting.

Children's responses on their feelings about, and their connection/sense of belonging to, Keighley community *following 2 terms of the project*

Following a short involvement in the project, mostly through participating in one shared weekly activity taking place over 6-8 weeks:

- roughly a quarter of the children expressed a different level or kind of belonging within the community, and
- almost half reported feelings about Keighley that had moved to a more active and positive position.

Though fewer children considered themselves '*at the heart*' of the community any more, (36%, down from 44%), more felt '*part*' of it (44%, up from 31%). Thus overall, those who felt happily included had risen from 75% to 80%. This might be seen as positive in two respects, since children may be realising that their 'community' is bigger than they previously thought, but that they still feel close enough to the heart of things to say they feel included.

Amongst those feeling less included (20%), now only 1 child still claimed to feel '*outside*' the community, though other children in the same school actually expressed a stronger sense of inclusion than before.

Qualitative comments:

Roughly half of the evaluation cohort stated that being involved in the project had not changed how they feel about Keighley as a place.

Amongst the others a range of interesting, new thoughts and ideas arose in discussion, mostly describing a more positive or more relaxed attitude towards Keighley.

- '*I thought Keighley was a boring place, but when I met people it wasn't boring*'; '*Keighley's more interesting now – now I've seen loads and loads more people. I feel different between (towards) different coloured skins, because people are the same really (even though some are a bit different!)*';
- '*its changed because I've got other people's point of view and its made me think more....*'; '*I'm not so scared of the children we didn't know – I used to cross over the road in case they might hit me!*'
- '*We've got more friends to play with*'; '*We can see that people get on.*'

Nobody reported that being in the project had made them feel less positive about Keighley. Children didn't reflect at all on the fears and dangers that had preoccupied them in the first interviews – their uppermost impressions of the town seemed to have shifted. The only persisting negative comment which came up in this second interviews was about racism:

'There's too much racism. We don't want it!'

- 1a Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs) were asked the same question in relation to their own impressions and thoughts about Keighley, and their own position or sense of belonging within Keighley community:

Teacher/TA responses on their connection/sense of belonging to Keighley community **prior to the project**

Surprisingly, only 5 teachers (21%) felt a personal sense of belonging at the heart of the community, or felt 'included' – part of, or seen as part of the local community.

A similar number stated they played a central role or were 'included' through their teaching job.

The remaining 58% felt themselves to be marginal, excluded or separate from Keighley.

Almost all teachers expressed a negative sense of Keighley's cohesiveness as a community, seeing instead a range of separate and closed neighbouring communities.

It is relevant to note here that few teachers involved in the project live within the locality, and that the two in the pre-project evaluation sample who live in, or are native to, the town had a significantly more positive view of the community than others.

Teacher/TA responses on their connection/sense of belonging to Keighley community **following 2 terms of the project**

Asked whether their own relationship to Keighley had changed since involvement in the project:

50% felt that 'maybe' it had, though not enough to enable them to choose a different level or band of belonging from the list. It must be noted here that in the post-project evaluation sample there were more TAs than teachers, and more of these staff members live locally within the Keighley community (See note 1 p.3).

Change was cited mostly in increased familiarity with the town.

- *'learnt more about different schools and places'*

1b Teachers/TAs were then asked the question again, in relation to their *children's* connection to, and sense of belonging to Keighley community:

Teachers'/TA comments on children's sense of belonging **prior to the project**

Prior to the project, teachers mostly felt that their children were well bonded with their own local geographic or faith community, however they felt children had little awareness or confidence beyond this immediate circle.

Teachers'/TA comments on children's sense of belonging **following 2 terms of involvement**

Most teachers/TAs thought involvement in the project had possibly impacted positively on their children's sense of belonging to a wider Keighley community:

- *'they're more aware of the surrounding community'*
- *'they mostly made friends and want to get to know them better'*

One felt a definite, positive impact on most of their children:

- *'they were apprehensive at first, but confident by the end. Some are now more confident about transition to High School'*

Three felt there had been no impact:

- *'the majority didn't benefit, preferring to return to their school groups at every opportunity'*

2 Children were asked about their awareness and usage of local cultural amenities: 'social, cultural and environmental resources'

Children's listed local amenities which they valued or used *prior to the project*

The following shows, in order of recurring responses, what children feel Keighley has of value to offer them. There is clearly a greater awareness generally of the commercial amenities, though Cliffe Castle and the library were also recognised:

- Shops***** 7 x
- Swimming pool; leisure centre***** 7 x
- Parks (Victoria Park)***** and flowers 6 x
- Cinema**** 5 x
- Library*** 4 x
- Cliffe Castle*** 4 x
- Football pitches** 3 x
- Railway** 3 x
- Bowling*; countryside*; moors; St Ives Estate; fairs*; festivals; cafes*; Star centre

Children's responses *following 2 terms of involvement*

Through the project children participated in at least one of the following activities. At the second interview point they were asked to give each venue/activity a score for how much they had enjoyed it, with the following outcome:

Extremely popular		Popular		Quite popular		Less popular	
Cycling	10/10 (10 out of 10)	Football	8/ 10	Star Centre	7.5 out of 10	Drama	6.5 out of 10
Nell Bank	9.5 out of 10			Art at Cliffe Castle	7.5 out of 10	Walking	5.5 out of 10
				Dance	7/ 10		

These scores were responsive to a number of factors, not just the quality of the activity or the venue, but how things were organised, the behaviour of other children and the fact that sometimes children missed sessions and felt aggrieved (for example due to the winter vomiting epidemic which closed a number of schools).

Children could see through their own and their classmates' activities within the project that Keighley has amenities and experiences to offer them which are enriching.

- 'Keighley has lots of History! I never knew.'

- *'Keighley seems better now. It feels bigger now. It's good to see how big Keighley actually was! With the walking project we went all over!'*

2a Teachers/TAs were also asked about their awareness and usage of local cultural amenities: 'social, cultural and environmental resources'

Teachers' listed amenities which they visited or used with children **prior to the project**

The range of amenities teachers named was wide, including cultural, leisure and community facilities. The following are those named by 6 or more individuals as places they use:

<i>Cliffe Castle</i> *****	17x
<i>Cinema</i> *****	12
<i>Leisure Centre</i> *****	12
<i>Marley for football</i> *****	10
<i>Library</i> *****	9
<i>Keighley College</i> *****	8
<i>Haworth</i> *****	7
<i>Worth Valley Railway</i> *****	6
<i>Mosques</i> *****	6

2B

Teachers'/TAs' responses **following 2 terms of involvement**

There was little change interviewed teachers'/TAs' awareness of local cultural amenities:

3 teachers became familiar with Cliffe Castle
5 teachers became aware of the Star Centre
Comments for both were largely positive.

4 teachers/TAs commented on the new experience of walking in and around Keighley – 2 were very positive, however 2 said they didn't feel it was a safe activity.

- 3 Children were asked what 'an ideal Keighley community' would be like, 3-5 years into the future, and what would have changed;
- 4 They were then asked for suggested steps towards achieving this vision:

Children's 'ideal Keighley' visions <i>prior to the project</i>	Suggested steps <i>prior to the project</i>
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Responses below are grouped into general themes. The right hand column shows some ideas for approaching the challenges of achieving the vision on the left. At this stage children's vision is closely linked to the safety concerns they expressed early on in the interview. Their solutions are very aspirational, and several are ideas that need to be brought about by adults, as they have little control in these areas. However, there were some children with real insight into the kinds of personal responsibility people can take for bringing about change.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Safe** at night</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More lights in backstreets</i> |
|--|---|

Anni Raw
Arts and Regeneration Consultancy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More sure about where the dangerous places are</i> • <i>Adults behaving more respectfully towards children</i> • <i>More people being kind and helpful*** - more co-operative* between areas, nice, not mean; more respect and honesty</i> • <i>No violence* and (racist)* bullying*; no guns</i> • <i>It would be better if it was cool not to do bad things</i> • <i>If people feel angry there should be a place to go where they can have fun and feel better</i> • <i>No rubbish***</i> • <i>No druggies</i> • <i>No noisy neighbours and the arguments</i> • <i>No burglaries</i> • <i>A no smoking*town</i> • <i>Cut down on alcohol</i> • <i>Better if people didn't speak in different languages because the teacher doesn't know what they're saying</i> • <i>More things to do; a skate park; clubs* safe night clubs for children; more fairs</i> • <i>Keighley should be more like a village (its too big)</i> • <i>Like a family, people coming to the town centre when there's a birthday and giving presents</i> • <i>I wish there was an Asian land and a white people land – Keighley could be separate halves</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nobody should do bad things in front of their kids</i> • <i>get rid of turf fighting (white gangs); don't threaten each other*</i> • <i>sort the teenagers out!** (older children behave racist and younger children follow, even in school)</i> • <i>Feel good and you can stop yourself wanting to do bad things</i> • <i>Pick up rubbish**, recycle</i> • <i>stop drugs****; People should be strong and tell the others not to do drugs; resist peer pressure</i> • <i>Get rid of vandals; graffiti</i> • <i>People learn different languages – if everyone spoke all the languages it would be easier and people could be friendly; have a languages centre!!</i> • <i>Make parks better – look nicer</i> • <i>Play cricket together (instead of drugs)</i> • <i>Show people you like them so they don't want to move, and you don't want them to.</i> • <i>Asians go back where they live, or if they stay, help people</i>
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There was a sudden flow of bigoted, racist comments at this point in the discussion at one school, represented here by the two comments above. Some of the children were talking in phrases they can only have copied straight from adults, as when questioned about what they meant they had no idea. They didn't know any details about incidents they were citing to back up any points they made, and actually contradicted themselves several times, mixing the phrase 'Kick racism out of football!' in amongst the other comments. These children needed the opportunity which the project presented to confront their fears.

Children's 'ideal Keighley'	Suggested steps <i>following 2 terms with the</i>
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<i>visions following 2 terms with the project</i>	project
<p>Children seemed to focus in the second interview more on creative ideas for achieving a more cohesive community as the priority for Keighley – agreeing that an overarching vision could be to help Keighley function better as a single enormous team or ‘family’. This came up in the first school and then became a useful shorthand for exploring how an ideal Keighley community might feel.</p> <p>Their ‘suggested steps’ ideas followed similar themes in each discussion group, and some of their (unprompted) solutions outlined below are astonishingly sophisticated, including the suggestion of using a Forum Theatre device for resolving differences. These suggestions are more participative and proactive than ideas that were suggested before meeting others through the project, and there were only one or two mentions this time of more generalised behaviour change.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘I don’t think we really need to change Keighley, because we’re a nice family already’</i> • <i>‘No racism.’</i> • <i>‘Respect each other*, help each other, say nice things’</i> • <i>‘Treat others how you want people to treat you’</i> • <i>Football, sports camps</i> • <i>There should be places for people to go and have parties</i> • <i>That the big Keighley family gets on**; keep the family safe (eg from Iraqi bombs)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘Have galas more often*; like churches do, have a big festival, and ask people if they want to be involved with the community’</i> • <i>‘Get each others’ contacts and have more little parties*; get together and have parties*/festivals - that would help.’</i> • <i>‘We need to work more as a team. The project doesn’t do enough to help this.’</i> • <i>‘We should have a huge children’s play area’</i> • <i>‘If two people who are different colours meet and make friends, and you make a team with not just your own colour, with other people’s colours too’.</i> • <i>‘Go swimming together!* Have a huge swimming pool and swim together.’</i> • <i>‘Do a huge community drama play, where people stop the play and discuss what to do (!!)’</i> • <i>‘Eat food together (a huge ‘family’ dinner); After the meal, have a discussion’</i> • <i>‘More linking’</i> • <i>‘Don’t make people angry or tease people; no hurting people’</i>

3a /4a Teachers/TAs were also asked to describe their vision for ‘an ideal Keighley community’, 3-5 years into the future; and for their suggested steps towards achieving this vision:

Teachers’/TAs’ ‘ideal Keighley’ visions <i>prior to the project</i>
<p>Responses here were full and forthright. There were distinct themes emerging about what might need to change, with a clear top priority of a community that is: Mixed, mutually respectful, with confidence to listen to and accept each other.</p>

The term 'mix up' or 'mix' itself was cited in 16 of 24 responses, with similar concepts cited by others:

'integrated'; multicultural'; 'no segregation'; 'no us & them'; 'break down barriers'

Mixed schools was also a clear specific priority for many.

Teachers'/TAs' suggested steps **prior to the project**

From the consensus on the nature of an ideal Keighley community, Teachers/TAs also demonstrated significantly similar thinking about the steps needed to reach this goal:
Mix more; meet more; learn more about each other; build more confidence; greater openness and respect; people listening more effectively; more projects like this!

Teachers/TAs often emphasised the need for parents, as well as older members of the community, to be more involved in these steps and initiatives.

Teachers'/TAs' 'ideal Keighley' visions **following 2 terms with the project**

After some involvement in the project Teachers/TAs had retained the same priorities for an ideal Keighley, adding some more practical details:

'communities working together to improve Keighley'; 'socialising with each other'; 'communication!!'

Teachers'/TAs' suggested steps **following 2 terms with the project**

After the project Teachers/TAs had not altered their advice, but some emphasised the need for time and patience, and some specified the need for a greater intensity in the linking initiative.

Some were quite negative about any likelihood of making progress, feeling instead that the general trend is in reverse.

- 5 Children were asked, prior to involvement, to say what they thought linking would be like; afterwards they were asked to comment on their experience ('What was linking like?') anything that had surprised them.

Children's expectations **prior to the project**

This area of questioning was very rich. Below is a summary, highlighting trends in responses with some key examples.

There were anxieties among some children. Many said they would feel shy, embarrassed, nervous. Fears focussed on not being able to gauge or guess how other children would behave:

- *'Could be scary – you don't know how they're feeling: if something goes wrong they might be cross and angry'*
- *'Scary*** – they might bully us*'; scary at first until you get to know the other children; you might be lonely'*
- *'People might argue – have 2 separate paths...'*

Some had simple worries about friendships, losing friends, not making friends.

Some children focussed on positive hopes:

- *'Fun; exciting*; meeting new friends'*
- *'Different in a good way'*
- *'Really good idea, to meet other people, get more people who you can trust; we can ask them if they want to be pen pals!'*
- *'If you have questions, they can help you (understand)'*
- *'Might meet people going to the same upper school as you.'*

Two groups had been involved in linking during the previous year, and had ideas about how this experience might compare:

- *'A bit too crowded – 3 groups is lots of different people. Too many to get to know.'*

One group based their expectations on the experiences of their peers who had begun an activity and fed back what it was like:

- *'Other people in our class said linking was good: they feel happy'*

Children thought there might be things they could learn from the experience, and offered some simple and some quite sophisticated hopes:

- *How to not be shy; make friends; have friends who are not your best friends; to get on with each other; that they might like the same things; get more confidence to meet new people; to co-operate between children; to be kind*
- *'What it's like to be in a different religion'*
- *'About different languages eg Iraqi, African, European...'*
- *'About what the other people think, and different points of view**'*
- *'What they think about Keighley; they might teach you things you never knew in your life!'*

These responses show how much children had begun to invest in the idea of linking, and equally how much some of them felt might be at stake. It's easy to forget how ensconced children are in a known and predictable 'mini universe', and how rare the opportunities are for stepping outside this boundaried reality.

Comments on impressions and surprises, **following 2 terms of involvement**

Children's experiences within the project were sometimes not comfortable, which is not to say that the initiative was unsuccessful! Children were provoked into thinking quite deeply about people, identity, themselves and the world, often through finding an aspect of their experience disappointing or frustrating. Below is a selection of quotes outlining the kinds of experiences children did not enjoy, followed by some more positive highlights for others. Below that are some examples of children articulating new thoughts and learning which have arisen through the experience of linking, categorised under Surprises and Learning.

Disappointments:

- *'We felt outnumbered'*
- *Children from bigger schools/other schools* stuck together and didn't mix with us* - they stayed away because they didn't know you'*
- *'It didn't really change who I knew. I didn't get to know people, we mostly stuck to our friends'*
- *'School Z are really Christian and they stuck to their selves, huddled up to each other.'*

I'm Christian but I like to spread out with other people, playing tig and that'

- *'Some people were silly; Some were unfriendly, teasing us because they wanted to have a laugh; Some had respect, some didn'.'*
- *'There was one Chinese boy, he was the only one and people were bullying him'*
- *'Some people were being quite racist*. They'd only let people who were the same (as them) have stuff'*
- *'Some people from School X were quite racist – when we had to do group work they were keeping the materials and not sharing'*
- *'I met one girl again at the swimming gala & she wasn't so friendly then'*

Positive highlights:

- *'It changed from scary to exciting'*
- *'Its better to make friends out(side) of your own religion: its interesting and a good thing'*
- *'The people we met were right kind to you. Some came and made friends'*
- *'They taught us magic tricks!'*
- *'They were really trying in the teamwork (Nell Bank)'*
- *'Some people were nice'*
- *'Fun – you got to know what they do'*

Surprises:

- *'They were very friendly* (mostly);'*
- *'I thought it would be really hard for me but it wasn't'*
- *'Some were a bit of a swot'*
- *'Sometimes people didn't talk to you so you think they didn't like you, but then they suddenly started talking and they did like you! They needed a lot of time'*
- *'Children from some schools wouldn't let us do stuff – they were just doing it for themselves. Even people who were the same colour as us!'*
- *'Some people thought they could pick on people because 'hey were different coloured people, ('Pakis!') or because they had a disability ('Quacky')'*
- *'I thought they'd be mean and nasty, but they were nice'* 'I thought people would be mean, but all the people I met I got on really well with'*

Learning:

- *'I learnt more about religions: I'm sort of half Christian, I don't know if I believe in God or not, but I was talking to people who go to their church every (Sun)day – people who have Muslim faiths, and we talked about it. She started it! We were talking about it and she goes "I go to Mosque every day because I've got a very strong religion"...'*
- *'You're used to your friends' opinions and you're not used to anyone else's opinion, but now you know other people's opinions, about school and stuff'*
- *'People are the same on the inside, but not on the outside. I thought it would be the other way round: if they went really down deep to their inside thoughts they might not like you – but it wasn't like that. If you looked deep down they did like you.'*
- *'There's different bits of people'*
- *'It might be easier now, if we met some of the people (in Keighley)'*
- *'You can make more friends – you can have as many friends as you want, and never have too many!'*
- *'People think that different cultures are all nasty and stuff, but in the linking schools it made me think a bit more – sometimes I was a bit scared of Keighley because of that, and now I'm not so scared'*

The kind of learning outlined here can occur for some children while the project is taking

place, if they are independent thinkers. However, most children need to be supported to explore and reflect on the linking experience in order to draw out such insights and deep learning. This is the essential role of the class teacher, offering a safe space afterwards for children to process their experiences.

5a Teachers/TAs were asked, prior to involvement, to outline their expectations of the experience and benefits of participating in the linking project; afterwards they were asked to comment on any achievements.

Teacher/TA expectations **prior to the project**

Teachers' expectations for what the project might achieve were numerous, far-reaching and ambitious. Most of their hopes focussed on one or several of the following themes:

- what the children would gain personally in having access to new experiences
- challenging or breaking down stereotypes
- increasing awareness of diversity
- building wider friendship circles and more social interaction
- fostering confidence in preparation for transition to High School
- developing a wider sense of community
- reducing mutual aggression between different groups

Comments on project achievements **following 2 terms of involvement**

Teachers/TAs acknowledged after the project that its impact had been modest, with a sense that this was

'- a good start, but a cohesive community is a long way away.'

However, a number of project achievements did fall into the categories teachers/TAs had hoped for:

- *challenged some stereotypes and preconceived ideas*
- *quieter children took leading roles, came out of their shell*
- *children made friends (cited x 9); and became aware of the wider community*
- *found a 'friendly face' which helps with move to secondary*
- *children tried new activities they wouldn't have chosen;*
- *'they're just like me!'*
- *given children experiences they may not have had (cited x 6)*
- *helped schools that don't have multi-cultural mix*
- *children from different backgrounds mixed and made friends*
- *children were open and listening to others tell about their new friends, and there was a willingness to come back from events and share experiences with rest of class.*

- 6 Children were asked to think of any differences there might be between themselves and other children they would meet through the project, and then to comment on whether these were important differences or not.

Anticipated 'perceived differences' <i>prior to the project</i>	
Important differences we might notice	Unimportant differences we might notice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Religion*****</i> • <i>Different language****</i> • <i>How they act**; being bullied; being bossy</i> • <i>Skin colour**</i> • <i>Culture*</i> • <i>Accent *talking Asian, Scottish</i> • <i>Hobbies*</i> • <i>Disabled people*</i> • <i>From different countries that have come over here</i> • <i>Not used to our weather (!)</i> • <i>Foods (halal, veggie)</i> • <i>Looks – eg Chinese</i> • <i>Skill level</i> • <i>Hygiene</i> • <i>Different kinds of personality</i> • <i>Different grammar</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fashion, hair***</i> • <i>Skin colour*</i> • <i>Eye colour*</i> • <i>Accent*</i> • <i>Uniform*</i> • <i>Liking different things*</i> • <i>Personality*</i> • <i>Football teams</i> • <i>Favourite subjects</i> • <i>Toys, hobbies Gender</i> • <i>Different points of view</i>
<p>Children expressed very few anxieties about these kinds of differences before they met. It is interesting that having a different religion was most commonly seen by children as a significant difference, and that children tended to focus on linguistic differences as a divide, rather than seeing bilingualism as of lesser importance as long as they would share a language that they can speak together. Their ideas about differences varied significantly from school to school, with 'mixed' schools perhaps unsurprisingly feeling more relaxed than non-mixed schools.</p> <p><i>'We'd be too shy to ask about these differences – they might get angry'</i> <i>'We'd respect the differences'.</i></p>	

Actual 'perceived differences' noticed by children <i>during 2 terms of project activity</i>
<p>After involvement in linking activities children picked out mostly differences that had surprised them in some way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Children from bigger schools behave differently'</i> • <i>'Some attitudes were different'</i> (referring to behaviour towards teachers) • <i>'People were shouting at us in a different language and accent'</i> • <i>'Some people talk posh'</i> • <i>'Some people talk Muslim – it's a different religion, but also a different explaining voice'</i> • <i>'Different skin colours'</i> • <i>'Why are they that colour? I thought everybody would be the same colour'</i> • <i>'They have funny writing that reminds me of Chinese!'</i>

- 'They write in Arabic (probably)'
- 'Length of hair'
- 'We all like different things'

Some children were able to make 'in the moment' assessments about how much the differences would matter, and some were then able to challenge their own assessments:

- 'When I saw some of the children I thought they were going to be different from us, but some of them were in our group, and they weren't that different'

Many of the differences named before linking seemed not to figure during the later interviews, such as religions, culture, disabilities. It's hard to know whether there has been any real revision by children of what constitutes an important difference, but they were certainly less forthcoming in naming differences after the project than beforehand.

6a Teachers/TAs were asked to think of any perceived differences they might anticipate encountering within the project, between their own and other schools' pupil cohorts:

Teachers'/TAs' anticipated 'perceived differences' **prior to the project**

Many perceived differences were anticipated by teachers/TAs between the children who would be meeting through the project. This list runs from most commonly cited to individual thoughts, with comments clustered by theme:

- Social backgrounds/ financial/economic (x 12) (eg council estates)
- Cultures, cultural backgrounds (x 8), cultural beliefs/Different religions (x 5)
- Language (x 4)
- Family set-up (x 4)
- Parents attitudes (X 2)/ prejudices, parental involvement/ interest
- Negative/challenging behaviours (x 2) (not because of difference)
- Lack of tolerance/ racist, attitudes (x 2), values
- Insular, difficulty to mix/ meet with aggression from others? Levels of enthusiasm, expectations
- Life-chances/ levels of aspiration (x 2)

Individual thoughts:

- SEN/ abilities or disability; clothing; race; ethnicity; colour; intelligence; hobbies; many similarities; none – we have a mix already.

Actual 'perceived differences' noticed by Teachers/TAs **during 2 terms of project activity**

Far fewer perceived 'differences' were noticed by teachers/TAs in the reality of the project than they had anticipated.

Some of the anticipated differences were apparent, though some – eg religion – did not seem to present a 'difference':

- Dress/hygiene, some were very unkempt (x 2) /some of biggest difficulties are with schools of similar racial, but different economic catchment groups/ huge class differences
- Cultural differences and values gave rise to some problems, due to some children's intolerant background/ upbringing

- Children's attitudes
- Some not keen to mix across differences
- Levels of enthusiasm to participate in further events
- Confidence, self esteem
- Race (x 2); standard of English spoken; gender differences – boys' attitude to dance; huge differences between some schools

7 Children's next interview area focussed on their 'curiosity questions' about the children they would be meeting; and after the project they were asked what they would still like to know.

Children's curiosity questions **prior to the project**

Children's questions here are quite insightful, showing a particular curiosity about lifestyles, and about what the other children might want from friendship.

- *Are your mum and dad divorced? Do you have both your parents?*
- *Do you have any difficult or sad things at home?*
- *How do you live?*
- *Where do you live?*
- *What's your home like?*
- *What does your family do for work?*
- *Do you speak different languages?*
- *What do you eat? Will there be meat there?*
- *What things are you good at?*
- *What are your:*
 - *names?**, hobbies?**, birthdays/ages?**
- *What's your school (life) like?**,*
- *Are your lives like ours?*
- *What do you like to do?*
- *What will you do when we're not together?*
- *What kind of friends would you like?*
- *Do you want to be my friend?**
- *Do you appreciate meeting us?*
- *Will you talk about us after we meet?*
- *Are you healthy?*
- *Do you fancy me?*
- *Are you a boy or a girl?(androgynous hair etc)*

Children's curiosity questions **after the project**

- *Why do you carry on behaving badly?*
- *Why do you laugh when you're told off?*
- *What would you like to talk about?*
- *I wonder what they're doing now?**
- *Is the friendship real?*

- *Would you like to come to my house? Will you come to a picnic? A sleepover?*
- *Would you come to our school?*
- *I wish I'd got their email/msn to carry on...*
- *I want to know more about how you write - Is it the same, or a different language?*
- *I want to know what you eat*
- *I wonder why some people have got bigger lips*
- *How old are you?*
- *How many brothers and sisters do you have?*
- *What team do you support?*
- *Where do you live?*
- *Does anybody (boy) want to talk about something that's not football?!*

- *I'm not curious about anything****

Children's questions after linking with others are mostly still at an early stage of curiosity. It doesn't seem as if many questions have been answered through being involved in the project, but new questions have arisen, particularly those about behaviour. However there is evidence here amongst some children of an appetite to continue the contact.

- 7a Following the project Teachers/TAs were also asked whether they had any unresolved questions, which they would ask of others if there were no taboos or sensitivities between different groups or neighbouring communities:

Teachers'/TAs' unresolved questions

Three quite stark questions and one note of scepticism were posted, which seem to point to some disappointments with the experience of attempts to overcome perceived differences through the project:

- *Why are we not accepted by the Asians?*
- *Why do Asian children find it difficult to join non-Asian children in groups? Is it due to comments from home rather than comments from other children?*
- *Why do parents encourage their children to be racist and discourage them from learning about other people and religions?*
- *Will we be nearer to complete inclusion with this project??*

- 8 Project appraisal, and constructive suggestions made by children after involvement

Children's own suggestions for improvements to the project model

- *Too many people. It's easier if it's one class linking with another class; easier if you link with one class (both comments from children who have the experience of the Bradford model)*
- *It's not good to be outnumbered by a different school*
- *In Keighley we need to work more as a team. The project doesn't do enough to help this*

- *Teachers should be more in the sessions, and help with bad behaviour*
- *We could choose activities – then you'd have something you share with the other children, an interest or hobby*
- *Could get picked out of a hat for activities. Then it would be fair.*
- *I'd like a different kind of linking project, where you don't do anything exciting, but a couple of people from each class go on an exchange to visit and ask questions to find out things*
- *Girls and boys could link separately, then bring everyone together for the last sessions.*
- *Pick out more unusual activities to do*
- *Go on a weekend residential camping trip together*
- *Do our clubs together, the things we do in school*
- *Go swimming together!***
- *Make the linking stronger (like last year)*
- *More linking; more activities – more times in the year*
- *Carry on linking. It's not long enough!*

Children's appraisal of the usefulness of activities for helping with mixing

Less useful for mixing	Children's score	Medium usefulness	Children's score	Most useful for mixing	Children's score
Drama	5/10 (5 out of 10)	Art	7.5 out of 10	Nell Bank	10/10
Star Centre	6.5 out of 10	Dance	8.5 out of 10	Cycling	10/10
Football	7/10				

Amongst the activities listed that were also attended by the evaluator (= all but cycling), it seems children have estimated very accurately which activities offered more opportunities to mix and get to know the other children. There were valid reasons why the drama, Star Centre and football events were felt to be less successful in this regard:

- Drama appeared in this case to be less discussion based than the activity can sometimes be, and less focussed on interaction between children than other activities. There was a greater focus on interaction with the facilitator than with each other
- Star Centre activities were very strong in terms of the quality of the experience and learning through doing, but one key activity was structured so that groups competed, which seemed to bring out negative behaviours between groups, including unfriendliness based on differences between children
- Children felt that the football was good, but much too short to really help with mixing and linking

By contrast, the other activities seemed to involve strong inter-school or small group team work that broke down barriers for many children.

8a Project model strengths and weaknesses highlighted by teachers/TAs after the project

Teachers/TAs: Strengths, organisational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Jane's organisation!
Teachers/TAs: Strengths, specific to this model of 'Linking Project'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Range of activities available o Children meeting away from home territory o The creative workshops (sculpture, dance, art) necessitated mixing together, and required practical participation, which involves social interaction o They will meet the children they've met again, either at secondary school, or in town because Keighley is small o Widened children's knowledge of Keighley, its centre, facilities; and the surrounding community; new experiences of Keighley amenities (other than shopping!) o Encouraged children to pass on information, talk to their families and research further (walking)
Teachers/TAs: Weaknesses, organisational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Disruption to remainder of class o Session times awkward o Releasing staff difficult o Too heavy commitment on school to send children twice a week o Timetables to link schools can be hard to organise o Communication between co-ordination team and staff who go on the outings was tricky. Some people were only informed days beforehand (sometimes due to head teacher workload) o Transport! o Needs more help from staff within school
Teachers/TAs: Weaker aspects of this model of 'Linking Project'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Not enough time for children to get to know each other, or get past initial/formal interaction o Too short a space of time – maybe the acquaintances are too short? o Project appeared to lose momentum – especially with vomiting bug. Better run over a week of 5 sessions? o Keighley walks were in dangerous areas, and there was not much beauty o Learning and experiences were not always shared with the rest of class – so not collective, quite isolating o Keeping the links going? How? o Continuity?

9 Teachers/TAs were asked when and how, including how often, the issues at the heart of the project arise and are discussed, with their children, and specifically also with colleagues or with other adults.

Teacher/TA responses regarding discussing the key issues of cultural exchange and attitudes towards 'difference', *prior to the project*

With children:

Teachers/TAs reported that opportunities mostly arose through curriculum or formalised classroom activities, and therefore not often spontaneously – except in mixed classes.

- RE curriculum (cited x 8)
- PSHCE, (built into curriculum) (x 8)
- Circle time; carpet time (x 7)
- Assemblies (x 6)
- Class time when conflicts/incidents arise (x 4) (- regularly! x 1)
- School and class rules discussions (x 3)
- Associated with national and international events: earthquake and Tsunami appeal, 'wishing well', 'here I am'
- Celebrations – Eid, Diwali; Mosque visits; visitors to school
- Class time on news; more openly discussed out of school
- Not a lot!
- Lots of opportunities in our class (mixed class)
- talk with children about their own families

With other adults:

- *Constantly feel I have to defend our school (community) – socially and professionally*
- *Over dinner (at school)*
- *Occasionally with colleagues; staffroom discussions; with colleagues: when barriers to learning arise*
- *Regularly, personally and professionally; informal chats, colleagues and friends*
- *With my friends informally; Personally, at home. Not professionally*

Teacher/TA responses regarding discussing the key issues of cultural exchange and attitudes towards 'difference', *following 2 terms with the project*

With children:

Teachers/TAs offered a range of responses at the end point of the project, from 'rarely' (x 5) to 'regularly – a common topic' (x 1). The average after the project cited by teachers/TAs who responded was 'monthly'

Sometimes teachers felt the project had given rise to discussions:

- *Racist comments from children on one activity prompted discussions within school*
- *Social issues were discussed – our children commented that others were 'posh'*
- *A child from the project was surprised that children from another ethnic background also ate quaver crisps. Cued a discussion on likes and dislikes, food*
- *Little in class, but we overheard playground discussions (between children) about ethnicity – and not positive!*

Some others felt that such issues arise regularly anyway.

Amongst colleagues there was less cited discussion. Only one teacher commented:

- *Discussion amongst staff after workshops re pupil discussions, involvement, participation*

Conclusion and recommendations

In relation to the aspirations of the project, the following section offers conclusions about any change in perceptions or attitudes and any learning resulting from the project and draws conclusions on the success and value of the Keighley Linking Schools model used in 2006.

1 Perceptions of the Keighley community, and any sense of belonging or identification with Keighley as home, or the 'home team'.

There are indications that a significant number of participating children altered their perceptions of Keighley to some extent, following involvement in the project. Although approximately half of interviewed children claimed the project had not had an impact in this area, others seemed to be beginning to lose some of their fears of other local people, and some were developing a more relaxed and positive attitude towards the town and local area.

Teachers and Teaching Assistants seemed to benefit much less in this respect. Their perceptions of Keighley appear not to have shifted far, although they could see some changes for many of their children. This finding is maybe less reliable than others, since the second group of interviewees included more Teaching Assistants than the first group, and Teaching Assistants often have stronger personal links within the local community anyway.

It was clear at the point of the initial interviews that children's sense of identity was defined by one or a number of smaller subgroups of the wider Keighley community, such as family, localised neighbourhood, or faith grouping. Few showed any awareness of a broader and more inclusive, diverse and shared identity representative of Keighley as a whole. However, after taking part in the project some children did show signs of increased awareness of this wider community identity, and some interest in finding bonds across groupings.

It was ambitious for the project to seek to impact on children's sense of identity through such a short intervention. However, some children seem to have begun the journey, and some modest success can be claimed in this area.

2 Knowledge and views about Keighley's social, cultural and environmental resources.

Teachers/TAs demonstrated a considerable awareness of many of Keighley's local resources before becoming involved in the project, and children also showed some awareness even if they themselves had not been to some of the places they named. Many children taking part rarely travel outside their immediate neighbourhood locality, unless to go shopping in town. However the locations of some of the venues that were used encouraged children to gain a better sense of the geography of the town, and even driving past or nearby other schools involved in the project gave children a better sense of how the smaller neighbourhoods and their resident communities fit alongside each other.

The walking project seemed to stimulate interest and new awareness among children, despite some concerns about safety (from teachers) and some complaints about having to walk the relatively small distances each week (from children!).

The resources which children picked up on, above all, were the cultural differences presented by some of their co-participants. Some children displayed signs of new

realisations that they share their home town with people who are different in some ways, and that this might be interesting and useful.

Overall this area of the project aims showed small or embryonic success, mostly focussing on increasing appreciation of informal resources rather than formal venues.

3 Visions of an ideal Keighley community – projected 3 to 5 years into the future – and proactive solutions for moving people in Keighley towards this vision.

There was a marked difference between the 'before' and 'after' interviews in this area of the evaluation, especially amongst children. The questions drew out the degree of fear children hold for their own home town environment, and the solutions they provided before the project were almost universally aspirational and beyond their own capacity to achieve.

By contrast, after the project children's responses were more proactive and achievable, and it was clear that the project had sparked motivation amongst some children from across the project to work towards a more cohesive community. Fears were less prominent, and there was evidence that some children's fears had diminished through their experience of meeting other Keighley children.

Teachers/TAs showed much less marked changes in their vision or their suggested solutions, although their comments highlighted that more time linking, or more similar initiatives focussing on communication and shared time with each other would be useful.

Overall this aspect of the project achieved noticeable positive impacts for children.

4 Qualitative comments on expectations compared with experiences of participating in the project.

Within this area of the evaluation a large volume of data was collected. Before being involved children felt both excited and wary at the prospect of taking steps outside their accustomed and limited habitats. They showed signs of investing high hopes in the experience.

After their short experience of linking, children's comments showed a very mixed response with both excitement and frustration expressed. However, almost all the comments, negative or positive, involve observations and learning which have altered their perspectives. The children were thinking, discussing new ideas, and trying to understand experiences that confused them.

Teachers' and TAs' expectations of the project were also ambitious. After the project teachers' comments highlighted some impacts and achievements in some of the areas they had hoped for, but generally felt these were small steps on a very long road.

Overall, the project appears to have opened up very important lines of curiosity and inquiry for children, without supplying easy answers. This could provide an invaluable stimulus for discussion in the classroom, and is a positive outcome in itself. If teachers were to capitalise on the potential for significant and deep learning which the linking project has catalysed, the project impacts might be very significant. However, it appears that opportunities for meaningful and focussed reflection between contact times were not often found, and children have not always been given the support they need to maximise their learning from the linking experience.

5 Views on differences between people, and diversity amongst children living in the Keighley community.

Children's views on differences seemed not to be significantly altered through involvement in the project, although to some extent they encountered different kinds of diversity than they expected. In reality the mix of children involved in each activity was not always very broad, with some activities bringing together different schools serving similar catchment communities, and therefore differences were less evident. After the project children commented on more subtle differences than the long list of external categories they had named beforehand, and some of their comments seemed to suggest they had found differences in behaviour the most prominent.

Teachers/TAs highlighted socio-economic differences and diverse cultural backgrounds, before the project, as likely to be most significant. This seems to have been partially confirmed for them according to their feedback after the project, which cited socio-economic differences between schools and between children as stark. Teachers/TAs also highlighted differences in attitude, for example children's readiness to mix.

This aspect of the project has offered some pupils and teachers, those who took part in the more diverse links, food for thought. They have been prompted into reassessing what kinds of diversity exist in Keighley, which are the differences that do present challenges, and which are less of an obstacle in reality than people might assume. A small number of very insightful comments were made by children, however the project has not offered children enough time together to begin negotiating how to work with or around the differences they experienced. This project has simply begun to open up the issue.

6 Areas of self-censored individual curiosity about different cultural groupings, which might be addressed by participating in the project.

Some children who had taken part in Bradford Schools Linking last year mentioned, before taking part in the Keighley linking model, that they were worried they wouldn't have much chance to really get to know the other children. The evidence from the curiosity questions children cited before and after this project seems to back up this position. Most children's questions did not seem to progress much, but continued to be relatively superficial, indicating that they had perhaps not had the opportunity to progress beyond a basic level of contact with each other. One or two children were curious at the end of the project about whether their contact had really become a 'friendship'. A number of children were clear at the end interview that they were left with no curiosity about their new contacts.

These findings point to questions about how much can really be achieved in building cross-cultural friendships through short, tightly programmed activities such as this project provided.

Teachers/TAs were yet more searching in their 'unresolved questions' following the project. Although very few teachers/TAs commented, those who did raised frustrations and scepticism, highlighting the need for more opportunities for teachers to share and discuss their concerns.

7 Opportunities to discuss, more openly, issues of welcoming and /or negotiating diversity in Keighley.

Teachers/TAs commented prior to the project that they found opportunities within the curriculum and through assemblies, carpet/circle time or festivals to discuss issues of diversity with children in school. This is a surprising response, considering how many children interviewed before the project expressed anxieties, confusion or basic ignorance about diversity issues. It may be that discussing these issues through the existing curriculum doesn't transfer easily to a relaxed feeling, or an awareness, about diversity and any associated challenges in reality, or on a personal level.

The project aimed to act as a catalyst for more opportunities to discuss these issues openly in the classroom, indeed that the project could act as an ongoing class topic throughout the spring and summer terms. However, teachers'/TAs' responses after the project didn't indicate that many new opportunities had been made to use the project as a starting point for such discussion. Three comments indicated that discussion had arisen as a result of children's observations. One comment suggested that children had shared their negative thoughts in the playground, but sadly that this had *not* been picked up for classroom discussion. Some teachers/TAs felt that such discussions arise in their classrooms anyway, and that the project had not necessarily added anything new to these.

This is a disappointing outcome for the project. It may be that teachers and Teaching Assistants were not seeing the project as much more than a set of activities available for their children, or just did not recognise their own role in maximising the learning opportunities it offered through classroom preparation and follow-up.

Overall conclusion

The benefits of taking part in the Keighley linking project have been clearly demonstrated for many children. Some were sparked into thinking quite deeply about themselves in relation to the world around them, and some simply had fun.

Some children benefited to a lesser extent, or hardly seemed to gain anything from the experience, and the reasons for this differing response are complex. However a number of recommendations are made below which should help to increase the impact of the project for these children.

Teachers and Teaching Assistants seemed less convinced of the value of the project than this evaluation suggests they could be, and it would be helpful to share the findings with participating staff as far as possible.

The Keighley model appears weaker in some areas than the Bradford Linking Project, particularly in the lower priority status it seems to have held within schools. This is likely to be a consequence of the model receiving less hands-on involvement from Class Teachers, and leadership on delivery resting with Teaching Assistant. Thus when 10 children leave, with a TA, to take part in the project, classroom activity for the others carries on as normal.

With this in mind, time needs to be devoted to building on the model, and challenging schools to offer staff and children much more support, between linking activities and generally throughout their linking year, on exploring the important issues it raises.

Overall, the team should be proud of the impact they have had on many children's development during year five, and should remain strong advocates for their project idea.

Recommendations

Teachers and children were asked to comment on the Keighley linking model, and make recommendations for how to improve it. As shown on page 18-20 above they had lots to say, with particularly inventive suggestions made by children. Suggestions from participants have been combined, below, with recommendations from the evaluator, to provide some guidance for strengthening the project.

The following recommendations are made with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the Keighley Linking Project in achieving its objectives:

1. **Children need to spend more time together**
Many participants were clear that more time was needed to build real contacts. Activities could continue for longer (a full half term or more), or sessions could last for longer (a full day, or to include eating together before or after the activity itself).
2. **Meetings need to include more unstructured time for socialising and playing**
A key finding of the Bradford evaluation was that children need and want free time to build informal contact in their own ways. The same finding emerged this time in Keighley. This is very difficult to accommodate if the time spent together is limited purely to taking part in the programmed activity. Linking contacts should include time and space before, during and after the programmed activity (see 1 above, eg eating together).
3. **Some activity leaders need stronger briefings on the aims of the project. The team may need to offer more guidance for activity leaders on how to prioritise linking**
The focus of activities bought in or accessed by the project was not always clearly enough trained on linking, and some prioritised other learning objectives. While this may not be a problem if the objectives are complementary, leaders do need to commit to ensuring their activity is a real linking experience; for example by minimising competitiveness between groups.
4. **Teachers and Teaching Assistants need more support and emphasis on how to continue linking discussions in class, and more commitment to follow through on contacts made or issues arising**
The primary agents in ensuring the linking project is effective and positive are the Year 5 Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants. These staff members need to take on board the crucial, active role they have in this initiative, in order for it to achieve benefits for children. This may mean that teachers and their TAs need increased support and acknowledgement from within school, increased support from the team, and more release time for planning and prioritising this work. Without this support teachers, and particularly TAs may feel too isolated to take on the role.

5. Teachers need to provide more preparation time in class before their children become involved in linking, including building class to class contacts via email or letters
Teachers can be instrumental in preparing children for meeting other Keighley pupils, by initiating contacts between groups in their class and children from other schools who will be taking part in the same activities. Even though the contacts which arise through this project may be short term, lessons can be learnt from the Bradford Linking Project about building excitement and enthusiasm, as well as confidence, prior to meeting. This may be more complicated, with small groups making contact with a variety of other classes, but this will help to increase the potential of the project for building links across the district.
6. Teachers and TAs need more opportunities to discuss and problem solve together – building a Keighley team of linking specialist teachers
Teachers and TAs expressed how much they appreciated the chance to link up with their peers from different schools. As well as ensuring their children have sufficient time for reflection in order to make sense of their new experiences, teachers may also need more time to reflect with their peers. Opportunities to build a network of linking staff would be very useful. If this could be facilitated teachers/TAs would then be able to take a more active lead during linking contact times, offering children strong role models for building new friendships through the project.
7. There should be a ceiling on the group size from any one school
Several children mentioned how it felt uncomfortable if they were outnumbered by children from a different school ; it's worth noting that an imbalance of this kind upsets the condition of 'equality' seen as a fundamental cornerstone condition of Allport's Contact Theory on which the linking project bases its principles. Although organisationally difficult, it is important to make sure that groups of equal size from different schools take part in each activity, even if it is not possible to achieve an equal balance across cultural groups.
8. There needs to be a ceiling on group sizes for activities
Children also stated that smaller numbers involved in the activities were better than larger numbers, simply because it was harder to make friends if there were too many children meeting. It may be necessary to make sure that no more than 30 (normal class size), and preferably fewer children take part in each activity together.
9. Teachers and Teaching Assistants need to ensure their own full engagement throughout activities, and to take the lead with behaviour management
Some children were troubled by disruptive behaviour by others in their activity groups, particularly where this was not immediately challenged or dealt with by teachers/TAs because their attention was elsewhere. The evaluator also witnessed some teachers/TAs opting out of activities and leaving behaviour management in the hands of activity leaders. This is considered poor practice, which leaves children feeling unsafe, especially when relationships between children need to be built very quickly, and trust is essential to this process. Teachers/TAs need to be hyper-aware during activities to pick up children's responses to each other, and to offer appropriate support or encouragement both during and after activities to help build friendships. The active and focussed involvement of teachers/TAs in all activity sessions is crucial to the success of the project.

10. Some linking activities/groups could be girls only or boys only
It might be interesting to offer some specialised group activities as part of the programme, for example the single gender activities or groups suggested by one girl. She felt that opportunities to make friendships might be better in this environment, and she may be right.
11. There could be options for enhanced linking, following the first set of activities e.g. residential/outdoor adventure/party, which encourage progression to a deeper level of friendship
Some children were interested in taking their contact to the next level, and were keen to take part in more intense bonding activities. If such activities were offered as an opt-in opportunity following involvement in the main programme, providing an extension activity, it might be possible to build a strong core team of linking ambassadors amongst the children.
12. Mutual invitations should be encouraged after link activities are over e.g. joint swimming trips, sports days, festivals or school carnival days, with efforts made to build directly on children's linking contacts
Many of children's suggestion following the project for strengthening cohesion across the district focussed on spending celebratory time together, and sharing special events. The project offers an ideal spring board for such ideas, since embryonic links already exist, which could be broadened to include families, governors, lunchtime or kitchen supervisors, caretakers and other members of school communities.
13. More explicit work could be carried out in class on the geography of Keighley (maps, discovery trails, detective work) and the make-up of Keighley community (local people visiting to meet children, family input)
One finding emerging from the evaluation is how little many Keighley children, and indeed their teachers, know about the local community, and about the geography of the town and surrounding area. The project began a process of local discovery for many who took part. This would be a much greater and more useful learning opportunity if more class time could be devoted to researching the local geography and community throughout year 5.

Anni Raw, External Evaluator
November 2006

Appendix 1: Schools Linking Project Aims and Objectives

Keighley Schools Linking Project Aims & Objectives (Taking the lead from the Bradford Schools Linking Project Aims & Objectives)

Overall goal:

To encourage a sense of belonging to Keighley as a cohesive community through raising awareness of its social, cultural and environmental resources.

Aims of the Project:

The Project will provide opportunities:

1. For children, their families and carers, from different ethnic, cultural, social and religious backgrounds (who might not normally meet, because they live and attend schools in different areas of the district) to work and play together.
2. For adults who work with the children to meet to share ideas and broaden perspectives.
3. To increase the children's knowledge and understanding about the diverse nature of Keighley's communities.
4. For children to develop good relationships and respect the differences between people
5. To provide shared learning experiences which celebrate diversity, dispel stereotypes, and remove barriers, which cause racism and promote a cohesive community.
6. To develop the children's skills of enquiry, communication and participation.
7. For children and adults to work with creative partners and the district's cultural venues to enhance the curriculum through creativity

Objectives:

The objectives (the learning) that should take place as a result of children taking part in the project include the development of knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and understanding.

Through the Schools Linking Project activities pupils should be taught:

- To recognise their worth as individuals by identifying positive things about themselves and their achievements
- To identify national, regional, cultural, religious and ethnic identities and to think about and value the lives of people living in different places, times and ways
- To talk, write and express (through a range of creative media) their ideas, their opinions and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society
- To research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events and explore how the media present information
- To explore how to face new challenges positively
- To develop positive relationships with their peers through work and play
- To resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices
- To recognise and learn to challenge stereotypes, anti-social, or racist behaviours
- To reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination and empathy to understand other people's experiences