

Small schools, big issue? Exploring the future for small schools in rural and coastal England

Speakers: Daniel Muijs, Dr Cath Gristy, Professor Ian Luke, Neil Short, Andy Wolfe, Professor Carl Bagley, Professor Sonia Blandford & Professor Tanya Ovenden-Hope

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4:00PM - 6:00PM

Online event – pre-registration essential

BERA SIG for Educational Effectiveness and Improvement, in partnership with Marjon University Cornwall, the National Association of Small Schools and the Diocese of Truro, invites school leaders, educational researchers and interested stakeholders to a twilight online event on 'Small schools, big issue? Exploring the future for small schools in England.'

Small schools have been championed for the value they bring to their typically rural/coastal communities. The future of small schools in England is in question due to policy changes and austerity for public services funding (the National Funding Formula not offering the significant increases in funding needed by small schools). Some Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) tried to set a minimum pupil number for schools to remain viable and run at an 'acceptable cost'.

In 2016, the White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' was clear that small schools must come together in formal collaborations, preferably MATs, in order to survive. However, the financial challenges of small rural schools can make them unattractive for academy chains or multi-academy trusts (MATs).

There is no nationally agreed definition of what constitutes a small school, with categories ranging from fewer than 210 pupils on roll to fewer than 101. Research on small schools has also been limited since 2000, with a need evident for more large scale, peer reviewed and funded investigations. This conference will explore the future for small schools and attempt to establish a manifesto to influence thinking about the difference small schools make to education in England.

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