



PRESS RELEASE  
Embargoed 6 June, 2005

### **More than just a school**

Primary schools in Scotland's rural areas are expanding their role to meet the needs of their wider local communities, according to research carried out by Children in Scotland.

*A sense of time, a sense of place: meeting the needs of the whole child in small communities*, published today (Monday, 6 June) as part of Children in Scotland's Growing Up in Rural Scotland programme 2004/05, reveals that many schools in Scotland have become a focal point in their communities for the delivery of a wide range of services.

All of the 14 local authorities involved in the study based some form of additional service provision within their schools.

The most common additional service was nursery provision, reported as available on all primary premises. Other services made available on school premises included baby clinics, crèches, parenting programmes, breastfeeding support groups, after-school care, breakfast clubs and in one case, a toy library.

Professionals who visit schools were considered a practical way of delivering additional services to children and their families without involving the high costs of services being based there full-time. A wide range of professionals visit schools and pre-schools in Moray for example, including speech and language staff, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, a dentist, a doctor, specialist teachers for children who are visually/hearing impaired, language support staff, English as an additional language staff, specialists in art, music and PE, police education officers, health visitors, early years support workers, social workers and staff from the child and adolescent mental health service.

Natalie Morgan-Klein, research officer at Children in Scotland, said: "Falling birth rates and out-migration from many of Scotland's remote and rural areas, makes the unit cost of providing services high and threatens their stability. Similar pressures face small communities throughout Scotland.

“However, high quality and accessible services are exactly what these areas need if they are to attract new people and encourage those who already live there to stay.

“Making more effective use of schools enhances their viability by enabling them to make a bigger contribution to the community they serve. Schools offer a non-stigmatising way of providing access to services via the universal service of education.

“The study by Children in Scotland to map the use of primary schools in Scotland’s rural areas revealed that many are already acting as the ‘hub’ of their community. However, it could also encourage us to question whether there is scope for schools to widen the range of services they offer, across different age groups and sectors.”

*A sense of time, a sense of place: meeting the needs of the whole child in small communities* is available from Children in Scotland. Contact 0131 2222410. £8 for members of Children in Scotland and £12 for non-members.

#### *Notes for editors*

- A study of the school as the ‘hub’ of communities was one part of Children in Scotland’s Growing up in rural Scotland programme 2004-05. For further details visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)
- Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provisions are of the best possible quality and able to meet the needs of a diverse society.