

# Twelve golden keys

Do you ever wonder why you're doing what you do? **Matthew Freeman**, extended schools development officer in Suffolk, got together with his colleagues to find twelve compelling reasons for becoming an extended or community focused school.

One of the ideas I've been working on with the rest of the extended schools team in Suffolk is the 'golden keys to a headteacher's office', a set of arguments for study support and extended or community focused services that are so persuasive they can't be resisted.

Here's where I've got to so far:

- Study support helps to raise standards. Evidence shows that children who attend study support get better marks at SATs and GCSEs.
- Extended or community focused schools bring in extra funding. Involvement with the voluntary sector gives access to funding that statutory bodies like schools can't apply for directly. Working with other agencies often brings additional budgets on stream as well.
- Involvement in extended services helps English schools to fill in their SEFs, especially the sections that ask for contributions towards Every Child Matters (ECM). The work that extended school co-ordinators do with partners and schools, is often targeted at an ECM outcome.
- Study support helps with school improvement plans. New activities can be developed around school priorities. For example, a school wishing to improve levels of literacy could set up holiday reading schemes with its local library, reading competitions with prizes from local bookshops, or volunteer reader schemes.
- Schools these days are expected to consult more with their parents and communities and community focused/extended school co-ordinators have new and interesting tools to help with that, as well as a range of partners who also want to consult or may already have some useful results that schools can use.
- It helps get children and families involved in learning together, using tools such as family learning, family literacy and numeracy and events such as Family Learning Week.
- Breakfast clubs improve concentration. Research shows that children who are well-fed and watered learn better.
- Involving parents in children's learning has been proven to have a good effect on achievement.
- Extended or community focused school co-ordinators enhance partnerships. They work across many schools and make links with

lots of agencies, statutory and voluntary. They are often able to set up strategic plans across clusters of schools instead of each school having to do it alone.

- Heads are often concerned about what happens to their pupils during holidays and weekends, but an extended or community focused school supports young people throughout the year. A year-round programme of support, activity and learning can be developed.
- It helps schools to build on their strengths. Most schools are already offering some or many of the elements of extended or community focused services, and co-ordinators can help develop these.
- Schools with extended services attract more pupils. Parents like the childcare and extra activities. So, it keeps the school competitive.

And, that, in a nutshell, gives us the golden keys to extended or community focused schools. You can use these wherever you find them useful, whether you need a swift set of reasons to convince a potential funder or partner, or something to give an extra oomph to a co-ordinator's job description. Alternatively you could stick them up on your wall, just to remind you that what you are doing in your schools is profoundly changing the way children, young people and families experience education.

If you think you can add to this list, you can email your suggestions to [deirdre.de.barra@continyou.org.uk](mailto:deirdre.de.barra@continyou.org.uk)