



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

6 June 2007

### **FLEXITIME IN PLYMOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOLS - Southernway Federation**

Four primary schools in Plymouth, Devon are giving families and pupils the choice of starting school at different times of the day. Pupils can start formal lessons at either 7.45 am or 11.00 am instead of 9.00 am. The project is being piloted for a four week period as part of the "extended schools" initiative. Although some other schools have been offering flexibility in teaching times, this is believed to be the first time in England that a group of schools, known as a "federation", have combined their resources to enable such a scheme to work. If successful, it could provide a model for other groups of schools who wanted to use this approach but who were unable to offer this kind of flexitime on their own, and provide the education system with evidence of the effectiveness of this kind of approach both for the children and the parents.

The scheme, which started this week, is being run at Southway Primary School, Tamerton Vale Primary, Langley Junior and Langley Community Infant School.

Andrea Norris, Headteacher of Langley Community Infant School said : –

"This is a very exciting initiative for us and the more we have looked into it the more questions have been asked, but this is a very good thing. It is making us all think about what is best for children's learning. We have 45 sets of parents all willing for their children to take part in this trial. Interestingly most have opted for the early morning slot. It actually fits in much better with many parents' working lives. Teachers have also been much keener on this time slot. We shall be monitoring how the children respond very closely. At the moment they are all very excited, but it will be interesting to see how learning is affected."

The project is part of The Innovation Unit's Next Practice programme in which radical ideas developed by school leaders and teachers themselves are being applied to educational issues and challenges.

Michael Peters, The Innovation Unit Project Leader for this scheme, said:

"This project is exciting because it is testing out ideas on how to customise learning to meet the needs of individual families as well as on children themselves. The field trial on the split shift day started by responding to the voices of parents and children. We must not forget that children's learning is affected by the circumstances of their families and an approach which enables them to better support their children must be worth encouraging. Ultimately we would expect to see learning gains from a more flexible approach."

The results of this Southernway Federation pilot will be published before the end of 2007. The Innovation Unit's Next Practice Programme, of which the Southernway Federation is a part, is funded by the Department for Education and Skills. More details about The Innovation Unit and the other projects in the Next Practice programme can be found at [www.innovation-unit.co.uk](http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk)

**STATEMENT ENDS**