

Dear Gaire Morris,

I am told that the Assembly's rural development committee is conducting an inquiry into rural education. I should like to make a few observations, and I hope that the committee will give them due consideration.

We are lucky enough to live in a rural village that has within it a small primary school. The children enjoy small-size classes and excellent academic standards. They are part of a notably happy and relaxed institution, and one which has a natural and intimate relationship with the local community, who are often invited into the school, and whose facilities (church, village hall etc) are often used

by the school. In short, this informal support system plays a vital role in the maintenance of a happy and cohesive community; the school makes a significant contribution to this, and is in its turn enriched by it.

I suspect that this inquiry is looking for ways to cut costs, and is considering the possible closure of some or all rural schools. I urge the committee to think long and hard before recommending any such move. It would imply a further grievous blow to village life, already under threat, and few, if any, positive advantages for the children involved.

There's much else that could be said (I'm thinking in particular of issues connected with transport and the length of the school day), but I'd better close before this letter gets deventingly long. Thank you for forwarding it to the committee.

Yours sincerely,  
Richard Bull