

SMALL SCHOOL RURAL COMMUNITY STUDY

We asked 201 principals (headteachers) of **small rural schools** (with 105 pupils enrolled in 2019/20 or 2020/21) in Northern Ireland to complete an **online survey** between April and July 2021, and **91 took part** (86 completed responses)



CHALLENGES

90 principals identified up to 5 main challenges for their schools.



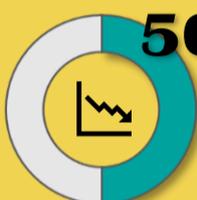
82% Financial pressures and lack of funding



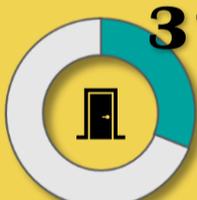
80% Staff's intense workloads



52% Increasing number of pupils with SEN



50% Declining pupil numbers



31% Threat of potential closure



24% Lack of staff opportunities for professional development



... the threat of closure is ever present and this has stopped some families enrolling at the school thus resulting in a fall in our enrolment numbers which are hard to recover from.



There is now so much paperwork and accountability not just educationally but from a health and safety and financial perspective that I feel the role of a teaching principal is no longer feasible.

OPPORTUNITIES

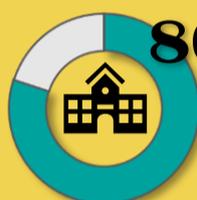


88 principals rated their job satisfaction on a scale of 1-5



62% of principals were satisfied with their job as principals

At the heart of the community?



80% of principals identified their school as one of the main institutions of the community it serves.



Our school is the heart of the rural community. Our families often have no other outlet or community-based organisation to support them. ... We offer support for parents and work closely with community groups to offer social events.



This school is very much at the heart of the community; our school is literally situated right in the centre of the village with the community able to see into the grounds on all sides. ... Any events that are happening we are involved.

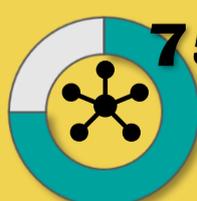


Parents' involvement with the school

89 principals rated parents'/ families' involvement with the school (before the pandemic started) on a scale of 1-5



3/4 of respondents felt that most parents and families were involved with the school.



75% of 84 schools had recently participated in **shared education** programmes and further 3 schools had participated in the past.

