



# ***Engaging Places: teacher research***

**Final report**

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Summary of findings</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>About the study</b>	<b>7</b>
	2.1 Introduction	7
	2.2 Aims	7
	2.3 Design and methods	8
<b>3</b>	<b>Awareness and use of the built environment as a learning resource</b>	<b>12</b>
	3.1 Awareness, enthusiasm and value attached to built environment learning opportunities	12
	3.2 How the built environment is used in teaching	23
<b>4</b>	<b>Services, resources and support</b>	<b>33</b>
	4.1 Access to information and resources	33
	4.2 The usefulness of a single source of information	40
<b>5</b>	<b>Challenges and facilitators</b>	<b>44</b>
	5.1 Factors facilitating the use of buildings and places in teaching	44
	5.2 Barriers and challenges in using buildings and places in teaching	46
<b>6</b>	<b>Encouraging greater take-up of opportunities</b>	<b>51</b>
	6.1 Factors encouraging increased take-up of local places and buildings in schools and teaching	51
	6.2 General awareness raising	54
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>59</b>

# 1 Summary of findings

## Introduction

- The report was commissioned by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to provide quantitative and qualitative information on the perspectives of teachers, headteachers and governors, from the three pilot regions (London, the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber), towards using local buildings, places and spaces to support learning across the curriculum.
- This second phase of research, focusing on teachers' views, builds on the findings produced from the initial phase, looking at provision of the work of built environment education providers in the three regions. This research will be used to develop an overall sense of how 'fit for purpose' the built environment sector is in terms of meeting school requirements.
- These findings are based on 71 returned proformas and 19 in-depth, follow-up interviews with teachers, headteachers and governors. This paper will remain in draft until the pilot project is completed and the conclusive findings are presented to Ministers in Autumn 2007.

## Awareness and use of the built environment as a learning resource

- Teachers, headteachers and governors involved in this study were very aware of the educational potential of buildings and local places. Teachers were also enthusiastic about using buildings and local places in their teaching and saw it as a valuable learning resource that had a positive impact on pupil and student learning.
  - Is more awareness raising of the sector necessary? If so, should this be achieved via the development of promotional material, as this was the most commonly reported way in which teachers' levels of awareness were raised? Is there any value in the sector using existing subject-specific networks as a means of raising awareness further? Can, and should, local authority advisors be used to raise awareness?
  - Is there a reason why awareness of buildings and local places was high but few teachers had heard of the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto? Does raising awareness of the latter require consideration?
  - Is there any value in further disseminating *Laying the Foundations* which was positively received by schools and was reported to have actively raised awareness amongst headteachers, teachers and governors?
- Those teachers who were least enthusiastic about buildings and local places and saw it as less valuable were typically from London schools and from the secondary sector.

- Is there a reason for this and what, if anything, can be done to address it?
- Schools are commonly using easily accessible forms of the built environment, such as school grounds, and local town and streets/streetscapes. However, the structure of the school building and classroom space was not readily focused on.
  - Could more be done to aid teachers in using these accessible forms of the built environment?
  - Would information/education packs be useful to demonstrate how the structure of the school building and classroom spaces can be linked to the curriculum?
- The architecture of local, contemporary buildings; parks/squares; and man-made historic features in the countryside were the least commonly used forms of built environment education.
  - Why is this? Could it be because of: the location of the school in relation to the built environment activity (i.e. may be too far away to use often); the prevalence/availability of the activities in the region (i.e. that there are not many contemporary buildings in a small village); or teachers' understanding of what each activity involves (i.e. did they associate the term 'man-made historic features in the countryside' with things such as prehistoric monuments, ruins etc?).
  - Using the architecture of local, contemporary buildings was most commonly reported by teachers from the South East. Could this be a product of the availability of contemporary buildings in this particular region?
  - Use of buildings and man-made historic features in the countryside were most commonly reported by teachers from the South East and Yorkshire. Is the accessibility of more rural locations within these regions, a possible reason as to why this activity was more prevalent?
  - Teachers from urban schools most commonly reported using studies/lessons on the architecture of local, contemporary buildings and parks/squares. Why is this? Is it a possible product of the availability of contemporary buildings and community areas, such as parks and squares, in more developed urban built environments?
- Teachers would like more education packs that show how buildings and local places could be linked to curriculum/subject areas.
  - Would the development and publication of such resources increase teachers' use of buildings and local places in their teaching?

## Services, resources and support

- Teachers indicated that they did not have access to sufficient information and, more importantly, resources to assist them in incorporating buildings and local places into their teaching.
  - The built environment sector should consider focusing on developing resources for teachers rather than, or in addition to, information.
  
- All headteachers said that teachers were supported in using buildings and local places as a resource in their teaching.
  - Is this support recognised across the board amongst school staff? To what extent is this the case nationally?
  - The focus was on practical support, such as staff and cover during school visits, but what about support to develop their teaching skills in this area? Is this needed?
  
- Teachers suffered from a shortage or lack of awareness of, resources available locally. This highlighted the importance and value of local links when using buildings and local places in teaching.
  - What can be done to raise awareness at a local level? Will and/or should the *Engaging Places* website address this?
  
- Those resources teachers were most likely to use, such as virtual resources and maps, were also those that they indicated they wanted more of.
  - Should built environment education providers make virtual resources and maps a key area of their focus when developing teaching resources? In what ways can the sector support providers in developing these resources?
  
- Governors and headteachers indicated that they wanted to learn more about education focusing on buildings and local places in relation to the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, Sustainable Schools and Every Child Matters. In addition, teachers said they would find it most helpful if someone (i.e. face-to-face support) were able to help them make the links between policy initiatives/agendas and built environment education.
  - How can levels of awareness be raised in relation to these policies/agendas and the linkages with built environment education? How could face-to-face support be achieved? Is there any value in the sector undertaking training sessions or presentations to provide this?
  
- More than three-quarters of teachers and the vast majority of headteachers and governors felt that a single source of information would be useful.

Thus, it seems likely that the *Engaging Places* website would be both popular and useful.

- Participants noted the benefits of being able to access information at a local level and to suit their pupils'/students' particular needs. The development of the *Engaging Places* website needs to think carefully about how this information will be provided (e.g. maps so teachers can click on a local area as on the 'Growing Schools' website).

## Challenges and facilitators

- Teachers appeared generally positive about the help available to them and recognised that opportunities and resources were present to facilitate the use of buildings and local places in their teaching.
- The top five factors, identified by both teachers and headteachers, as being the most helpful in terms of using buildings and local places in teaching were:
  - awareness and understanding of the educational potential of buildings and local places
  - availability of suitable buildings and local places to visit as part of teaching
  - confidence in using buildings and local places in teaching
  - availability of resources
  - links to the National Curriculum.
- Awareness of built environment education was a key facilitator to using it in teaching. Is additional awareness raising of the sector the main way to help teachers engage more with built environment education? Could the sector itself help by making more sites available and accessible?
- The factors identified, by both teachers and headteachers, as being most unhelpful to the use of buildings and local places in teaching tended to be those that presented largely logistical and practical challenges or barriers. For example: cost; transport; and regulations/policies.
  - How can these issues be addressed? Is there any scope in the sector offering further subsidised visit fees to schools or incentives to visit? Should teachers be made more aware of the LOtC Manifesto and how this can aid the planning/regulation issues associated with LOtC?
- The school timetable and links with the National Curriculum were also identified as challenges to using buildings and local places in teaching. It was noted that the changing popularity of particular subjects could have a

bearing on the extent to which buildings and local places were used in teaching.

- How can buildings and local places be further explored within the National Curriculum and do the current curriculum reforms offer up any viable opportunities to do so? Does built environment education need to position itself further as a cross-curricular discipline in order to overcome changes in subject popularity?
- A diverse range of site/context specific locational issues impacted on a school's access to, and use of, the built environment. This included traffic congestion in a local area and the ability for some schools to only access buildings and local places in close proximity.
  - Does the sector need to raise awareness and develop resources which illustrate how the local built environment, such as school grounds and local towns, can be easily used within the curriculum?

### Encouraging greater take-up of opportunities

- Teachers and headteachers suggested similar ways to increase and encourage the use of buildings and local places in learning. The only point of divergence was that headteachers most commonly suggested increasing the availability of sites and places to visit, whereas teachers most commonly focused on more practical support and assistance, for example, additional information and resources and increased links with campaigns and initiatives. Teachers suggested the development of 'study packs' to support their use of buildings and local places in teaching and ensure the planning process was less problematic.
  - The built environment sector should consider developing more resources and information for teachers in the form of 'study packs'.
  - If developed, could subject associations offer advice, support and guidance on the development of these packs? How should they look, what format should they take, and what information should they contain?
- More/clearer health and safety guidelines and risk assessments, and schemes of work were also thought to encourage greater take-up of the use of buildings and local places in teaching.
  - The LOtC Manifesto should aid health and safety issues and risk assessment concerns. There is a need to raise teachers' awareness of the Manifesto and how it can assist them in planning LOtC activities.
  - Are schemes of work another area for development? Would this be detrimental to the creative nature of LOtC activities, as noted by one headteacher, and be too prescriptive? Again, could subject associations offer advice and assistance?

- Teachers and headteachers thought the national profile of the built environment sector could be raised in a number of ways. This included articles in teacher publications; the use of INSET; positive media coverage of LOtC activities (i.e. successful and safe school trips); and greater integration and support from the built environment sector with schools (i.e. organisations within the sector working together and with schools).
  - Would greater media coverage be beneficial to the built environment sector and increase teachers' awareness? Should the sector become more integrated and begin to work with schools in this way? If so, how can this be achieved and be visible to schools?

## Conclusions

- School staff have very good and positive perceptions of built environment education but are much less certain of how to incorporate it into their lessons and meet the needs of the curriculum.
- The research has raised a number of issues in relation to how 'fit for purpose' built environment education is in meeting schools' requirements.
- More resources and, to a lesser extent, information about how to use buildings and local places in teaching is needed.
- The *Engaging Places* website will help meet the self-identified needs of teachers in that it is an online resource. However, the website needs to contain both national and, most importantly, local information to be of most use to schools.
- It is important for schools to have someone, such as a practitioner or advisor, who can provide support, inspiration and advocacy for this way of learning.
- The school community was less aware of wider policies and initiatives such as the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto. More awareness raising of these policies and initiatives and the linkages that they have with built environment education, is required. Existing subject-specific networks may be one way in which awareness can be raised.
- The sector needs to ensure teachers are aware of the more accessible forms of education focusing on buildings and local places, such as school grounds, school buildings and classroom spaces. This may help to overcome some of the main challenges for teachers: that of cost, transport and regulations/policies.
- The current curriculum reforms makes the *Engaging Places* project both timely and pertinent and the sector needs to position itself as an effective way of providing cross-curricular education.



## 2 About the study

### 2.1 Introduction

This research provides an overview of teachers', headteachers' and governors' views on using buildings and local places as a learning resource in the three *Engaging Places* pilot regions (London, the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber). This second phase of research builds on the findings produced from the initial phase, which looked at provision of built environment education in the three pilot regions. This research will be used to develop an overall sense of how 'fit for purpose' the built environment sector is in terms of meeting school requirements.

### 2.2 Aims

The overarching aim of this research was to provide quantitative and qualitative information on the perspectives of teachers and school management (headteachers and governors) towards using local buildings, places and spaces to support learning across the curriculum. In order to achieve this, the study sought to explore:

- awareness of the educational potential of local buildings, places and spaces
- how the built environment might already feature in teaching (either in practice, or in classroom discussion with pupils and students about local buildings and places)
- what will encourage schools' take-up of built environment education opportunities
- the enthusiasm/appetite for built environment education learning opportunities
- teachers' preferences and/or requirements in terms of curriculum/classroom resources, services and ongoing support
- senior management issues and pressure points that might determine built environment education activity
- what support and/or services teachers and senior management would like in terms of strategic issues which affect teaching.

## 2.3 Design and methods

There were two phases to the research:

- a survey of teachers, headteachers and governors on the use of education focusing on buildings and local places within teaching
- follow-up telephone interviews with a sub-sample of teachers, headteachers and governors.

### Survey of teachers, headteachers and governors

Originally, three samples of 51 schools, across the three regions, were drawn. In total, these samples comprised of:

- 51 schools from London (24 primary; 24 secondary; and 3 special)
- 51 schools from South East (24 primary; 24 secondary; and 3 special)
- 51 schools from Yorkshire and the Humber (24 primary; 24 secondary; and 3 special).

The schools in each region were representative in terms of:

- urban/rural location
- entitlement to free school meals
- number of minority ethnic groups.

In early April 2007, letters were sent to the first sample of 51 schools (17 in each region), informing them of the research and inviting them to take part. Follow-up telephone calls were conducted by the research team to confirm the school's involvement. Following a low response, with only nine schools agreeing and 11 formally declining, the methodology was altered. The remaining 102 were sent packs containing covering letters, pre-paid envelopes and proformas (77 schools were sent teacher proformas; 25 schools were sent teacher, headteacher and governor proformas). Headteachers were asked to pass on the teacher proforma (and governor, where appropriate) to whoever they felt was most appropriate, including teachers from any discipline or those who were most likely to use buildings and local places in their teaching.

In May 2007, another sample of 153 schools was drawn to boost the response rate. This sample contained more schools from London and from the secondary sector as this was where responses were lowest.

Of the 264 schools sent proformas, a total of 71 were received, thus equating to a 27 per cent response rate. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the breakdown of returned proformas by region and also by school type. Overall, the best response was from schools in the South East, with these accounting for nearly

two-fifths of the sample (27 out of 71). In contrast, although the lowest number of returns were from schools in the Yorkshire and the Humber region (21 out of 71), the lowest response rate was from schools in London (23 out of 112).

**Table 2.1:** Achieved sample of proformas by region

	Overall		Teachers	Headteachers	Governors
	Sent	Rec'd			
London	112	23	15	6	2
South East	76	27	19	5	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	76	21	17	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>

*Source: NFER teacher, headteacher and governor survey April 2007-June 2007*

Table 2.2 shows that more proformas were returned by primary respondents, with just over half of the total sample being from the primary sector. Just over two-fifths were received from secondary schools and three were from special schools (a good response considering that only seven special schools were contacted).

**Table 2.2:** Achieved sample of proformas by school type

	Overall		Teachers	Headteachers	Governors
	Sent	Rec'd			
Primary	109	38	25	9	4
Secondary	148	30	24	3	3
Special	7	3	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>

*Source: NFER teacher, headteacher and governor survey April 2007-June 2007*

The 24 secondary school teachers who returned proformas were from eight different subject disciplines. Geography and history teachers returned the highest number of proformas, both accounting for just over a fifth of the sample each. This is likely to be because of the more direct links with built environment education within these two subjects.

**Table 2.3:** Secondary school responses by main subject taught

Main subject taught	No. of respondents
Geography	5
History	5
Art	3
Design and Technology	3
Maths	2
P.E	2
Science	2
Humanities	1
Non-teaching headteacher	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

Source: NFER teacher, headteacher and governor survey April 2007-June 2007

### Follow-up interviews with teachers, headteachers and governors

Short telephone interviews were conducted with 13 teachers, three headteachers and three governors who indicated that they would be willing to be involved in this part of the research. Interviewees were selected to include a spread from primary, secondary and special schools and also from across the three pilot regions. Table 2.3 shows the numbers achieved.

**Table 2.3:** Achieved sample of interviews by region and school type

	London		South East		Yorkshire & the Humber		
	Prim	Sec	Prim	Sec	Prim	Sec	Spec
Teachers	0	3	3	2	2	2	1
Headteachers	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Governors	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>6</b>		

Source: NFER teacher, headteacher and governor telephone interviews April 2007-June 2007

### The report

The report draws on data from the two strands of the research. Following the summary of findings and this introductory chapter, the report is divided into five main chapters as follows:

**Chapter Three** discusses teachers', headteachers' and governors' current awareness and use of the built environment as a learning resource.

**Chapter Four** considers the services, resources and support teachers, headteachers and governors need or already access from built environment education.

**Chapter Five** highlights the perceived challenges and facilitators to using education focusing on buildings and local places within teaching.

**Chapter Six** looks at what school staff think will encourage greater school take-up of built environment education opportunities.

**Chapter Seven** concludes the report by providing an overview of the key findings.

### 3 Awareness and use of the built environment as a learning resource

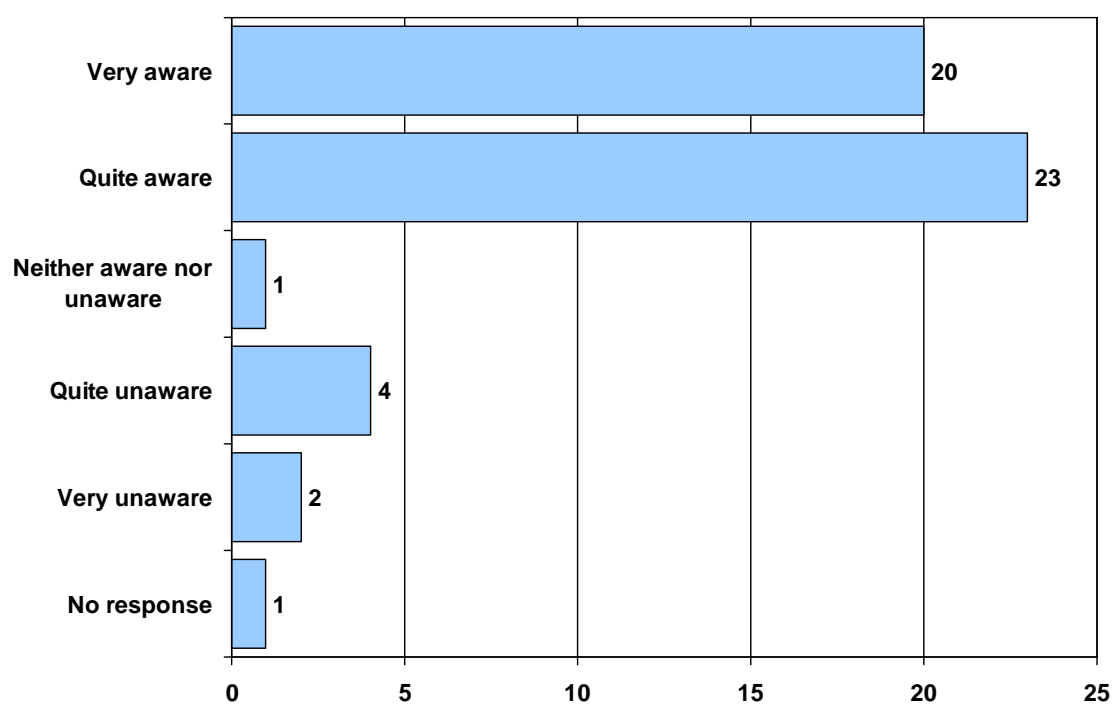
The following chapter examines the current awareness and use of the built environment as a learning resource within schools.

#### 3.1 Awareness, enthusiasm and value attached to built environment learning opportunities

##### Awareness of buildings and local places as a learning resource

Overall, there were **good levels of awareness** amongst teachers, headteachers and governors about the educational potential of buildings and local places as a learning resource. Figure 3.1 shows that the majority of teachers (43 out of 51) were either ‘very aware’ or ‘quite aware’ of the educational potential of buildings and local places. In contrast, only seven teachers reported that they were ‘very unaware’, ‘quite unaware’ or ‘neither aware nor unaware’. There were no differences in the responses of teachers according to region or school sector.

**Figure 3.1** Teachers’ awareness of the educational potential of buildings and local places as a learning resource



Headteachers’ and governors’ responses reflected similar findings, with the vast majority saying they were ‘very aware’ or ‘quite aware’ of the

educational potential of buildings and local places (12 out of 13 headteachers and 6 out of 7 governors).

Teachers, headteachers and governors were less aware of the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto (LOtC), with just under three-fifths (11 out of 19) of interviewees saying that they were not aware of it. One teacher did not know it by name but was familiar with aspects of it because of the new reform of the geography curriculum. The seven interviewees (4 teachers; 2 headteachers; 1 governor) who were aware of the LOtC Manifesto all regarded education relating to buildings and local places as being a key part of the Manifesto. One primary headteacher stated:

*We certainly see outdoor education as encompassing visits to places...buildings of particular interest. That is a key part of our curriculum but it runs in tandem with the other side to outdoor education which is, of course, using the school grounds effectively.*

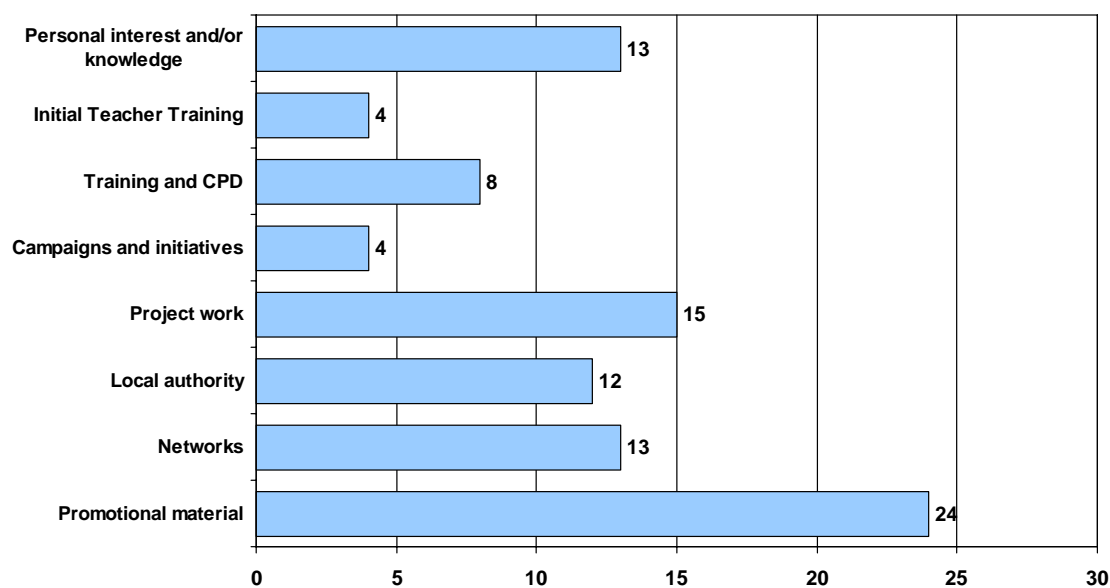
Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

By far the most likely way for teachers to become aware of built environment education was through **promotional material** (see Figure 3.2), for example, leaflets and information packs from local, regional and national organisations and/or initiatives. This included promotional material from local museums; churches; libraries; and named providers (such as, Milton Keynes Sustainable Education [urban places] Initiative; London Eye Education Pack; materials from the National Gallery; The National Trust; English Heritage; Open House; and websites such as schooltrips.co.uk). Three interviewees (one teacher, one headteacher and one governor) also stated that the *Laying the Foundations* publication sent with the proforma had raised their individual school's levels of awareness. It was suggested that the publication had 'opened our eyes' to buildings and local places and that it was useful because it came through to the school in a 'physical way':

*It just occurred to me that using local buildings would be a great way to develop our curriculum.*

Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

**Figure 3.2** Teachers' awareness of the educational potential of buildings and local places as a learning resource



The other five most commonly cited means by which teachers' awareness of buildings and local places had been raised are listed below.

- **project work**

- This included individual pieces of work with local museums, churches and libraries and also architect-led master classes. For example, one primary school from Yorkshire and the Humber had been involved in a local authority 'Creative Contexts' project which focused on the theme of buildings. As part of this, the school had a week-long sculptor in residence who worked with the pupils looking at their school grounds. School benches were used to produce gargoyle sculptures that were located on the school playing field. In another primary school in Yorkshire and the Humber, archaeologists from Bradford University Archaeology Department were brought in to work with Year 5 and 6 pupils. The pupils visited their local church and looked at the architecture of the building and the World War One memorials. Back at the school, the pupils undertook some desk research, looking on websites and using Census data in order to trace some of the names on the memorials. The local archaeologists visited the school and brought in local war artefacts for the pupils to engage with.

- **personal interest and/or knowledge**

- This was often related either to the subject taught, for example, geography, history or art, or the subject studied whilst at university or college. For example,



*We have a well developed built environment in our school grounds, most of which has been created by our kids. I am keen to encourage a love of buildings and building, partly due to my own interest [he/she studied art and architecture whilst at teaching college].*

Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

- Local knowledge of an area was also thought to aid awareness, with teachers often citing that because they lived in a particular area they had a greater understanding of what was available to them and what they could incorporate into their teaching.
- **networks**
  - Teachers typically referred to networks that were subject-specific, for example: history coordinator meetings; local geography networks; subject support groups; and maths associations. Alongside this, networks in the local community, such as ‘Kent Works’, ‘Kent Safer Schools’, were also deemed to have raised teachers’ awareness of buildings and local places. For instance, the ‘local North Oxfordshire geography group’ was thought to be ‘brilliant’ as it enabled local schools to share ideas and good practice.
- **the local authority**
  - This included information, advice and support provided by individual local authority advisors, such as tourism officers, geography advisors and outdoor education advisors. One headteacher interviewee from the South East stressed the invaluable help he/she had received from her/his LA advisor. The advisor, who was still in post but had experienced a reduction in school support time and was seen as a lost resource, provided active and practical training days and encouraged the school to think more carefully about delivering the geography curriculum. The advisor’s support in broadening the delivery of the geography curriculum and working in topic areas meant that the school had incorporated geography more within the overall school curriculum. A geography teacher from a South East secondary school also highlighted the use of their school LA advisor. He/she said that he/she was an ‘advocate for geography’. In addition, another headteacher thought that the DfES<sup>1</sup> should legislate to ensure that every LA has an outdoor education advisor.
  - General information provided by the local authority, often on their websites, was also noted by teachers.
- **training and continuing professional development (CPD)**
  - Most typically, teachers noted training and CPD opportunities that were related to geography and history courses. Other examples

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<sup>1</sup> On 28 June 2007 the DfES became the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families)

included training run by examination boards and ‘Buildings Explorations’ run by Open House.

A minority of teachers indicated that they had become aware of education relating to buildings and local places through **initial teacher training (ITT)** and **campaigns and initiatives** (4 out of 51 respectively):

- **ITT** – this included information on how to deliver a particular geography QCA unit; a residential course visit to places of worship; and a ‘Tate Modern Teacher Day’ run by Liverpool University. The latter involved the trainee teachers, as part of their art training, visiting a street in Liverpool which is located between two cathedrals and is considered to have ‘good potential for learning’. The trainee teachers drew the doors of the cathedral and then the cathedral itself. Following this, the trainees visited the TATE by Liverpool’s waterfront and were shown how they could use the waterfront as a learning resource with pupils/students.
- **campaigns and initiatives** – included: Open Up/Open House Campaigns; Swale Youth Strategy 2006-2009; Open days at local historical sites; and through the ‘Gifted and Talented’ programme.

Finally, some telephone interviewees noted other factors that had contributed to their awareness of the educational potential of the built environment. This included: recommendations from other teachers; previous experiences of ‘topic teaching’ and the use of multi-modal resources; the nature of the pupils/students taught (i.e. those with Special Educational Needs); and a ‘stumbling’ into it. The latter two are outlined in the quotations below:

*The children that I teach need a very concrete experience and for many buildings the learning experience is quite abstract and visual. Many of the children that I teach are visually impaired so, probably, the most used kinds of buildings are churches or cathedrals or something that has a real sensory feel about them.*

Special school teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

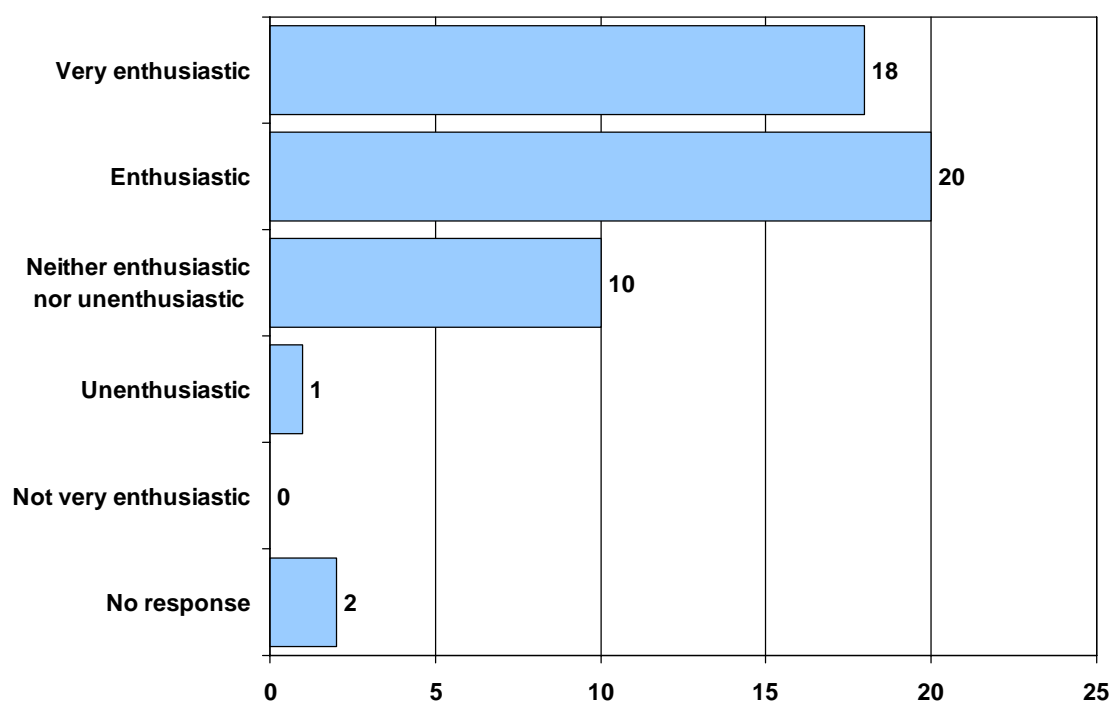
*We sort of fell into it. We do loads of stuff within our community and we got involved with Groundwork basically redesigning a park.*

Secondary assistant headteacher, South East

### Enthusiasm for using buildings and local places within teaching

Teachers were **generally enthusiastic** about using buildings and local places within their teaching, with three-quarters (38) indicating that they were either ‘very enthusiastic’ or ‘enthusiastic’ (see Figure 3.3). However, a fifth (10) of teachers were ambivalent. Only one said that they were ‘unenthusiastic’ about using buildings and local places in their teaching. Teachers reporting lower levels of enthusiasm were typically from the secondary sector and from London.

**Figure 3.3** Teachers' enthusiasm for using buildings and local places in teaching



Teachers who were enthusiastic about using buildings and local places gave the following reasons:

- positive impacts on pupils/students** (both social and academic) – These teachers attributed their enthusiasm to the positive impact that the subject area had on their pupils. At an academic level, teachers highlighted that it encouraged greater learner engagement by making things ‘real’ and by aiding motivation and achievement. In addition, it was noted that pupils enjoyed learning about buildings and local places and were generally ‘fascinated’ by them:

*[It is] invaluable for visualisation, improving vocational content, motivation and wellbeing of students. It aids achievement and student – teacher relationships.*

Secondary geography and leisure and tourism teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

*They [buildings and local places] can give pupils a better understanding of topics covered, for example, castles.*

Secondary history teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

*Reception age children need ‘real’ experiences. They learn by doing and seeing.*

Primary reception teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

- **importance of pupils/students learning about their local environment** – It was felt that pupils/students should know about their local area, mainly because of it being ‘part of their history’:

*I am a great believer in my students knowing the ‘market’ surrounding us in the rapidly changing Thames Gateway.*

Secondary assistant headteacher and history and geography teacher,  
South East

- **links within the curriculum** – This included links with other subjects and also other agendas, such as environmental issues. It was thought that it had ‘tons of potential for coverage of all curriculum areas’ (Primary key stage 2 coordinator and teacher, London).

Those teachers who were less enthusiastic about using buildings and local places, focused on:

- the logistical difficulties of arranging a visit, including providing staff cover, transport, and health and safety issues
- it not always being appropriate to use buildings and local places for certain subjects. For instance, a science teacher highlighted the difficulties of linking learning in this area to the science curriculum
- pressure on covering courses for examinations.

Teacher and headteacher interviewees’ views were mixed when they were asked whether their enthusiasm was shared with other members of school staff. Over half (nine out of 16) said that levels of enthusiasm for built environment education were varied within the school:

*It [enthusiasm] is shared by senior management because they know that GCSE leisure and tourism is a vocational course so it is important to get kids out to experience different places and to broaden their experiences. They see the educational value in it... Some other colleagues take students out quite regularly but others don’t. It depends on the educational content of the visits and the context of their subjects.*

Secondary geography and leisure and tourism teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

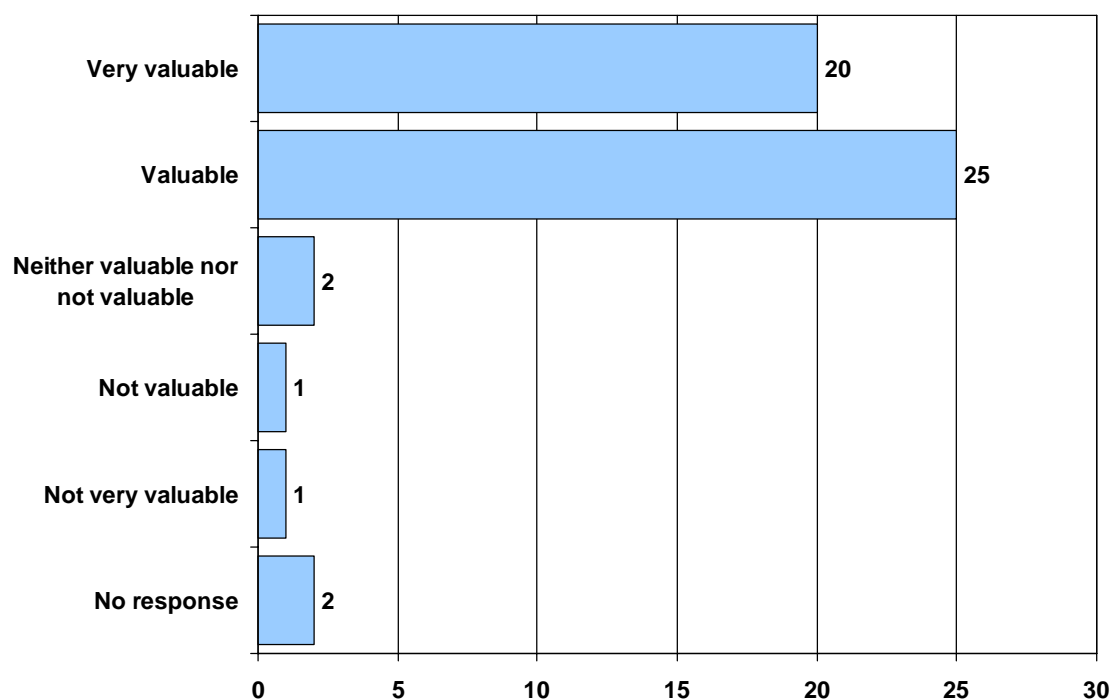
This variation was attributed to the subjects taught (7 comments) and, to a lesser extent, the length of time in teaching (3 comments). The most enthusiastic teachers were thought to be those teaching history, geography, leisure and tourism and design and technology, where links to the built environment were more overt. Findings were less clear in relation to the length of time in teaching. One interviewee argued that younger teachers were more enthusiastic about using buildings and local places and were more ‘geared up towards teaching in a more modern and a more out of the box way’. In

contrast, two teachers felt that more recently qualified teachers were less enthusiastic because ‘the rules of teaching have changed’ and that recently qualified teachers were not prepared to invest the amount of time needed in relation to LOtC and were, instead, ‘grade focused’.

### The value of buildings and local places to learning

Figure 3.4 shows that the vast majority (45) of teachers considered buildings and local places to be a ‘**very valuable**’ or ‘**valuable**’ learning resource. Two teachers were ambivalent and another two stated that they perceived it to be ‘not valuable’ or ‘not very valuable’. Of these, two were from London secondary schools. Reasons given for negative views included: a lack of interesting buildings near the school; and a view that incorporating buildings and local places into learning would not add anything to the subjects taught.

**Figure 3.4** The value teachers place on buildings and local places as a learning resource



The vast majority of teachers (49 out of 51) also felt that the use of buildings and local places within teaching had a **positive impact on student learning**. The main reason given by teachers, headteachers and governors (both interviewees and proforma respondents), as previously noted, was that it was felt to **enhance and enrich the curriculum** by:

- **providing first-hand, relevant experiences that contextualise learning.** It was stated that visits to buildings and local places brought education to life and ‘made things realistic’. In addition, by using buildings and local places within teaching, pupils and students were able to contextualise their

learning. This was thought to be particularly the case for children with SEN as it was a ‘stimulating, different environment for children who need quite a lot of stimulation’ and that ‘different smells and sounds that we might consider as particularly interesting, will be to them’. Other comments included:

*It provides stimulus otherwise unavailable in, or to, a school.*  
Secondary assistant headteacher and science and PSHCCE teacher,  
Yorkshire and the Humber

*They [the pupils/students] are able to conceptualise their learning in the classroom and experience its relevance in the built environment.*  
Secondary geography teacher, London

*It's about giving the pupils experience of, and access to, a whole range of experiences – seeing and doing things. It brings everything to life and makes learning richer. It's broader than the curriculum.*  
Primary headteacher, London

- **developing pupils'/students' understanding of how their local environment has changed and developed.** Teachers noted that the use of learning focusing on buildings and local places enabled pupils and students to understand, respect and appreciate their local environment and situate themselves within it. Using it was felt to increase pupil and student awareness of style, history and also social development. This was ultimately thought to result in pupils and students becoming more ‘responsible citizens’.

*The students will use the custodians of the past heritage and learn they can have a voice in their future surroundings.*  
Secondary headteacher and physical education and health and safety course teacher, South East

*If it is something local to them and they become aware of it, it becomes much more relevant to their lives. It is to make things more real to them and more relevant to them really*  
Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

*It is to put knowledge and the understanding into a local perspective ... to try and encourage the kids to look at what they have got around them and to appreciate what's there. You can identify with it a lot more easily than a picture in a book. It puts a little bit of perspective onto what you teach and makes it more relevant.*  
Secondary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

- **providing cross-curriculum links.** Teachers often incorporated buildings and local places within the curriculum because it was a specific

requirement of a course (for example, GCSE geography coursework). However, it was also felt to be a beneficial means through which a number of curriculum subjects could be addressed on a single visit:

*We see buildings as an excellent way of making those cross-curricular links, teaching a broad range of curriculum subjects through a single trip or single building or site.*

Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

In addition, telephone interviewees also specifically commented on the value of the built environment as a learning resource due to its accessibility. One primary headteacher from Yorkshire and the Humber noted that buildings and local places are ‘a resource there ready to be used’. In addition, a deputy headteacher from a primary school in the South East said that they would be ‘fools’ not to use the Victorian building the school was housed in as a learning resource.

Alongside enhancing and enriching the curriculum, all types of interviewee noted a number of positive benefits/impacts of using buildings and local places in their teaching. These focused on:

### 1. Pupils/students

- Nearly four-fifths (15 out of 19) of interviewees cited a number of ways in which the use of buildings and local places had a positive impact on pupils and students. Most commonly, they highlighted the impact on motivation, self-esteem (i.e. feeling proud of a project) and a greater appreciation of the local environment:

*Buildings are about the world around them and it is important that they can have an input into the design of their community and how it is going to develop in the future. The school is at the heart of the community and the children are at the start of a journey into that community. It helps them to think about why it is important to them and is a very important part of citizenship.*

Primary headteacher, South East

- One secondary school in the South East encouraged its students to engage in community regeneration projects, including the regeneration of a derelict park near the school. Many of the school’s students lived in an area of deprivation and the school felt it was important for them to ‘make a [positive] mark in their community’.

### 2. Teaching

- In relation to the impact on teachers’ teaching, over three-fifths (12 out of 19) of interviewees considered the use of buildings and local places to be a positive thing. It was suggested that it provided a positive challenge in terms of planning for a trip out of the



classroom; helped develop specialist knowledge; and increased teacher motivation and creativity:

*I have always thought that teaching is an absolute creative subject and if teachers are motivated, if they are enjoying it and they are interested in it then, yes, they are going to teach much better.*

Primary headteacher, South East

*It has to be more enjoyable. Staff enjoy getting out of the four walls of the school. I think most of my staff are generally enthusiastic about outdoor education ... I think it just lifts their game a little bit when they are planning for something out of the ordinary like a trip to a building.*

Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

### 3. Raising standards

- Although eight interviewees felt that using buildings and local places in teaching helped raise standards, three felt that it was difficult to quantify and make direct links. Some felt that it helped pupils and students ‘achieve and succeed’, it made them ‘think and enquire’ more and that it had a positive impact on, for example, the writing skills of students:

*[It is] hard to pin down but I think that anything that stimulates children and the children are interested in and want to learn about ... has to raise standards. It might be more measurable if we look at pieces of writing generated. I think we could make some sort of numerical judgement about impact on standards. We have an issue ... as regards to standards in writing and we find that the use of buildings and other first-hand sources of evidence are excellent stimuli activities for high quality writing.*

Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

### 4. Supporting the school community

- Just under a third (six) interviewees specifically noted that they considered built environment education to support the school community. Comments included: that it helped improve relationships between pupils and students and also between pupil and students and their teachers; it provided an opportunity for pupils and students to share what they had learnt from a trip with the rest of the school; and made pupils and student think more about the school building in relation to issues such as recycling.

### 5. The wider community

- This was noted least commonly by interviewees (three out of 19), but included: the opportunity to make links with outside agencies, such as guest speakers and local buildings and places (for example,



churches and libraries); and the engagement of parents in learning (for example it was noted that many parents were interested in what their children learnt about the local area and wanted to find out more/purchase books).

In order to gauge the value that headteachers and governors placed on buildings and local places, both were asked to indicate the level of priority/emphasis given to it within their school. The most frequent response from both headteachers and governors was that they placed a 'high' priority on learning in this area (5 out of 13 headteachers; 5 out of 7 governors). However, headteachers were much more ambivalent than governors, with four out of 13 stating they placed 'neither a high nor low' priority on built environment education at their school. Headteacher and governor interviewees (six in total) were asked how their support/priority/emphasis for, and on built environment education, was reflected in their school. Most commonly, preparation time for trips and visits was noted as was the provision of parental help/supervision during the actual visits themselves.

Just over three-quarters (10 out of 13) of headteachers felt that buildings and local places had a role to play in supporting whole-school improvement. The reasons they gave focused on its opportunities to provide experiential learning for pupils and students; to increase pupil and student motivation; and enabling them to develop an understanding of their own local area. In relation to the latter, one headteacher wrote:

*[It] develops economic awareness, understanding of design technology. [It is a] resource for enquiry and recording in art; understanding of the development of settlement and buildings within settlements/focus for communities (history and geography local study units).*

Primary headteacher, South East

Two headteachers, both from London, did not think that buildings and local places had a role to play in whole-school improvement and one, from a South East secondary school, did not know. Reasons given for their views focused on a belief that buildings and local places had a more general role to play in relation to education, such as enriching the curriculum and adding diversity, but not specifically in terms of whole-school improvement.

## 3.2 How the built environment is used in teaching

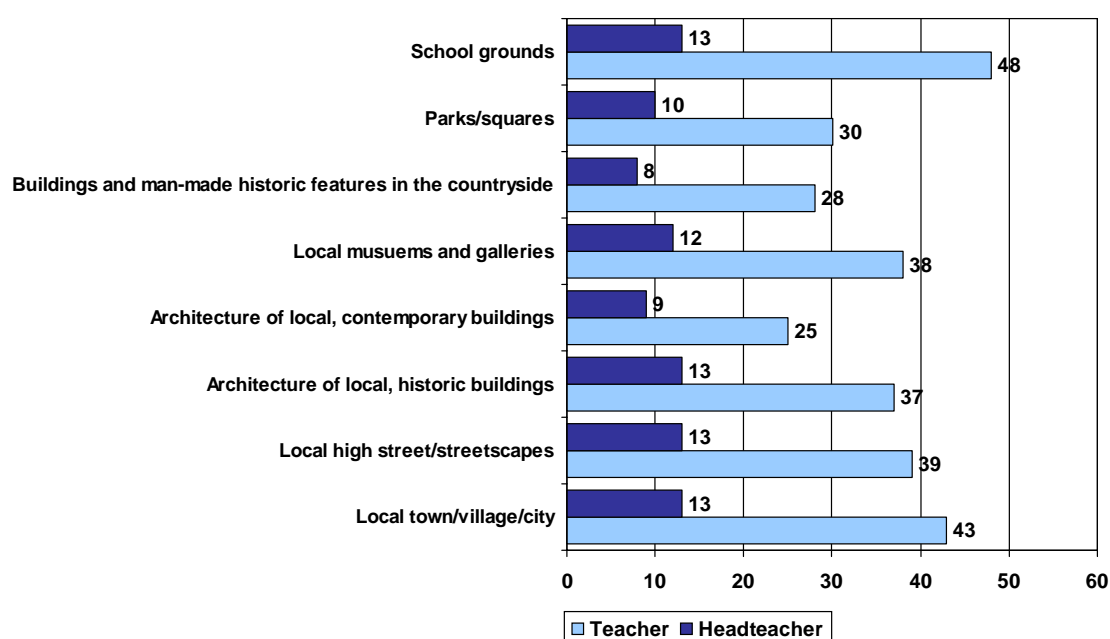
### The use of buildings and local places in teaching

The range of ways teachers and headteachers used the built environment at their school are highlighted in Figure 3.5. The top five responses, identified by both teachers and headteachers, were:

- school grounds (48 teachers;13 headteachers)
- local town/village/city (43 teachers;13 headteachers)
- local high street/streetscapes (39 teachers; 13 headteachers)
- local museums and galleries (38 teachers; 12 headteachers)
- architecture of local, historic buildings (37 teachers; 13 headteachers).

All of the above built environment activities focused on the immediate, local environment and this ease of accessibility may be one of the main contributing factors as to their popularity. This is most likely to be the case in relation to the use of school grounds (identified by all headteachers and 48 out of 51 teachers), as it is a readily available resource that can be accessed immediately, free of charge and without the provision of a health and safety risk assessment.

**Figure 3.5** How the built environment is used in teaching



The use and study of parks/squares; buildings and man-made historic features in the countryside; and the architecture of local, contemporary buildings were the three activities least likely to be used by school staff. However, they were still nominated by between half and three-quarters of teachers and headteachers. Possible reasons as to why these were used less within schools may be because of: the location of the school in relation to the three types of activity (i.e. may be too far away to use often); the prevalence/availability of the activities in the region (i.e. that there are not many contemporary buildings in a small village); and also teachers' understanding of what each activity

involves (i.e. did they associate the term ‘man-made historic features in the countryside’ with things such as prehistoric monuments, ruins etc?).

In order to ascertain how schools *currently* used buildings and local places in learning, teachers were asked to provide additional information on how their pupils and students presently engaged with the built environment (see Figure 3.6). Mirroring the previous findings, the exploration of schools grounds was a popular way of learning about the area (42 out of 51). In addition, other popular ways of engaging with buildings and local places included:

- site visits (43)
- classroom discussions (42)
- project work (39)
- explorations of the local community (37).

These four ways included both learning outside of the classroom (i.e. site visits) and also classroom based work (i.e. classroom discussions). This could indicate that teachers understand that learning about buildings and local places is not restricted to one mode of teaching and that it can be incorporated into learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.

Examples of some of these ways in which buildings and local places were used in school were provided in the telephone interviews with teachers, headteacher and governors. A selection of these is presented in Box 3.1:

### **Box 3.1**      Examples of education relating to buildings and local places

#### **London Secondary School**

As part of GCSE geography coursework, the school takes students to visit a national site, typically the London Docklands. During the visit, the students focus on how the development has changed the area and look at the buildings, houses and the environment. The site is compared with the locality in which the students live and students also compare the developed areas of the Docklands with the non-developed areas.

#### **South East Secondary School**

The school worked with Groundwork to regenerate a derelict park. Their involvement was as a result of the school responding to an advertisement in the local newspaper asking for volunteers.

#### **South East Primary School**

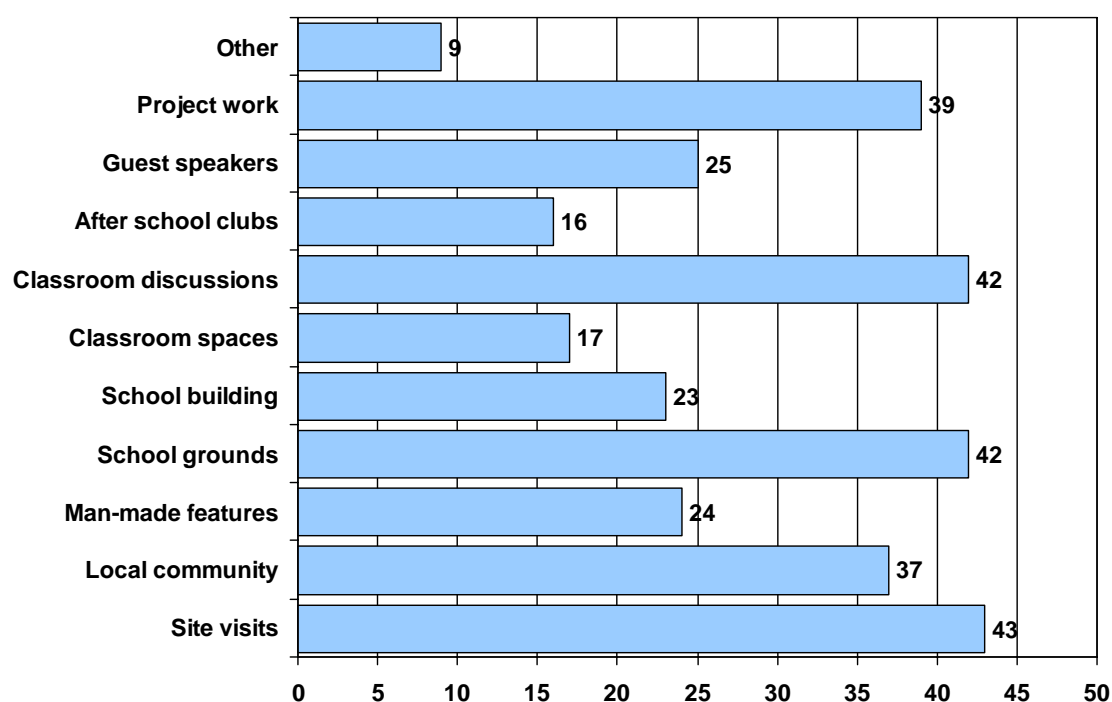
The school uses its grounds with its infant pupils by taking a collection of soft toys, locating them in different places around the school building and then taking photos of

them. The infants then use these photos to locate the toys. This practical activity gets the infants to look at their school building and the surrounding area more directly.

#### **Yorkshire and the Humber Primary School**

The pupils study the immediate locality around the school. A well-developed local website, which contains historical photos of the local area, is used to help the pupils chart the changes over time.

**Figure 3.6** Current student use of buildings and local places



As shown in Figure 3.6, although school grounds were currently used by just over four-fifths of teachers as a method of learning about the built environment, fewer teachers stated that they used the structure of the school building or classroom spaces in teaching specifically. This more focused work on specific aspects of the school (i.e. a classroom space), may make it harder for teachers to know how to use these spaces and structures in their teaching.

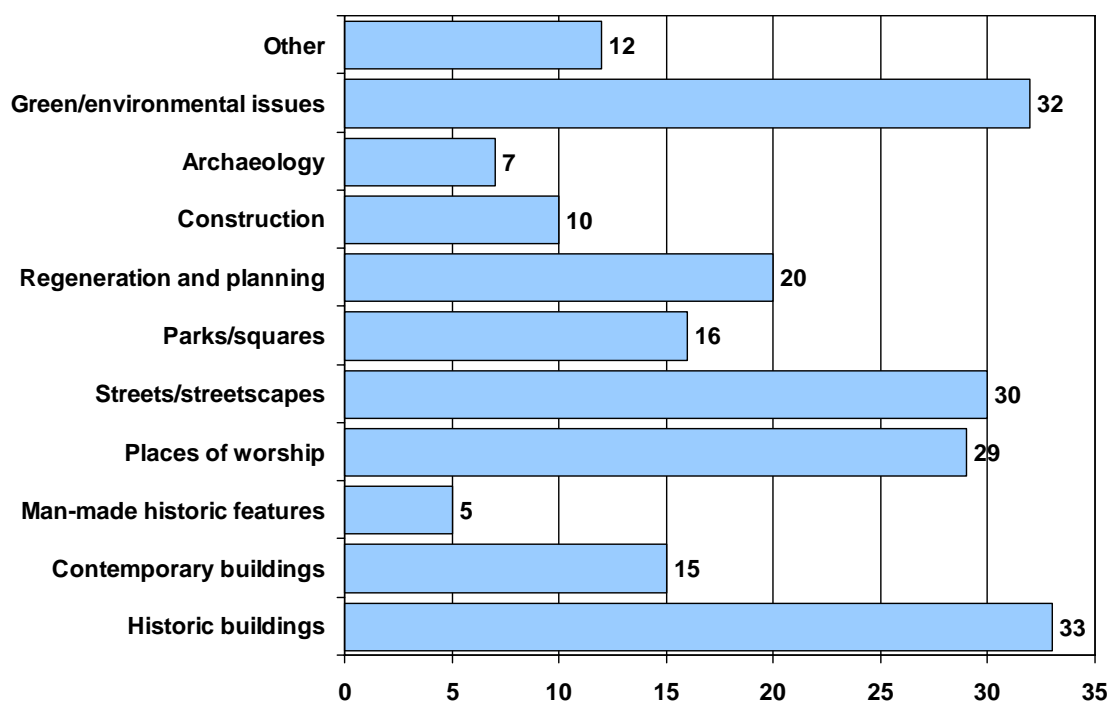
Finally, nine teachers indicated ‘other’ ways in which students currently engaged with learning focusing on buildings and local places. These included: building models of bridges and Tudor houses; studying products in local shops in relation to their design; and rebuilding a quadrant in a school in collaboration with local businesses and a local prison.

Over a third (seven out of 19) of interviewees indicated that they or teachers in their school had used or worked with external organisations in relation to

education focusing on buildings and local places. This included: work with Groundwork; RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects); Open House; CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment); local architects and archaeologists; and a construction company. For example, in one London school a construction company worked with Gifted and Talented students exploring architecture and building structures. In another London secondary school, local architects worked with students in relation to the redevelopment of the Kings Cross area of London.

Figure 3.7 shows that teaching related to buildings and local places most frequently focused on **historic buildings and green/environmental issues** (33 and 32). Primary teachers most commonly noted historic buildings as a focus for their teaching, whereas green environmental issues were noted highly across both school sectors. Figure 3.7 shows that alongside this: streets/streetscapes (30); places of worship (29); and regeneration (20), were also a common focus of teaching related to buildings and local places. Again, primary teachers were most likely to identify streets/streetscapes and places of worship as a focus. However, regeneration was commonly noted across both sectors.

**Figure 3.7** Focus of teaching related to buildings and local places



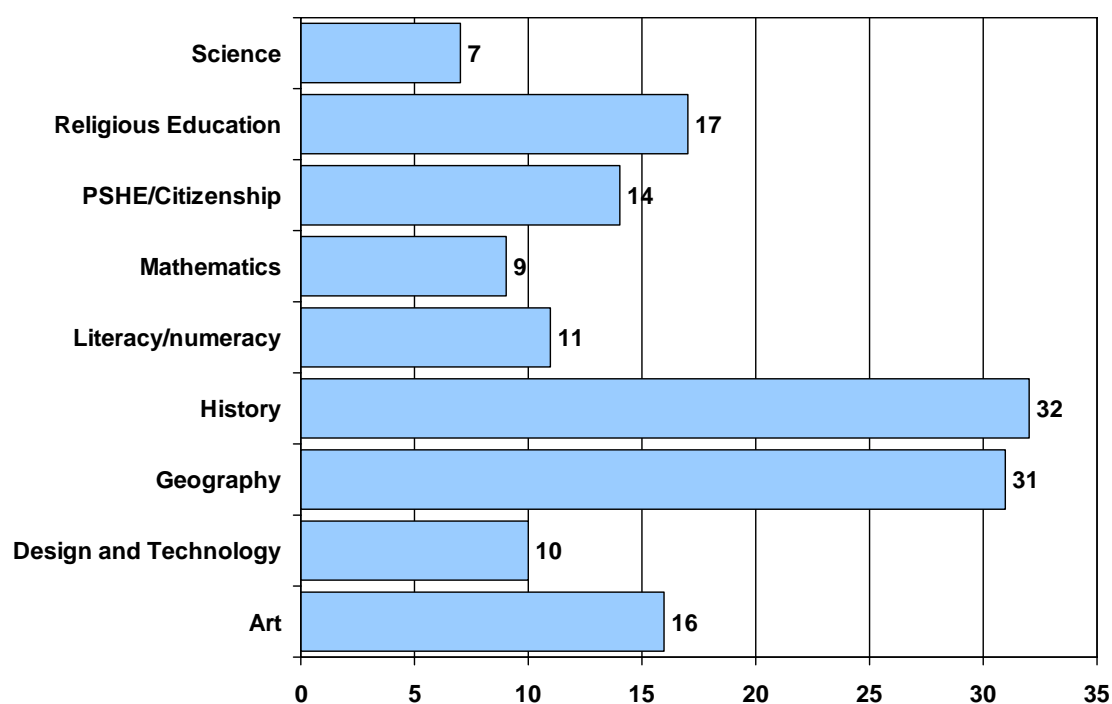
Approximately one in ten teachers indicated that they focused their teaching on man-made historic features and archaeology. All the teachers indicating that they focused on man-made historic features were from the South East. As discussed previously, this may be because there are more of these features in the region. In addition, the majority of the teachers (five out of seven) who

reported focusing on archaeology were from the primary sector. Greater flexibility in the primary timetable/curriculum, as opposed to secondary, may enable these teachers to incorporate archaeological activities more within their teaching throughout the year. In addition, there may be more direct curriculum links to archaeology at the primary level, including work focusing on the Romans and Tudors.

Finally, teachers identified a number of ‘other’ areas of teaching related to buildings and local places. These included: looking at the development of an Atrium; studying the design of a bridge, including its local history and traffic-related issues; and studying mathematics within buildings.

Primary, secondary and special school teachers all noted that education focusing on buildings and local places was linked to a wider range of **different curriculum and subject areas** (24 in total). Figure 3.8 reveals that built environment education was primarily linked to **history and geography**. These subject areas were identified approximately twice as many times as the next most frequently identified subject areas (religious education [R.E.] and art).

**Figure 3.8** Curriculum/subject areas teaching focusing on buildings and local places were linked to



Around a third of teachers indicated that they linked their teaching of building and local places to religious education (RE) and another third linked it to art. In contrast, just seven and nine teachers noted links to the core subjects of science and mathematics respectively.

Teachers gave two main reasons why they linked buildings and local places to specific curriculum/subject areas:

- **a themed approach/creative curriculum.** These teachers, all from primary schools, stressed that they had a ‘creative curriculum’ at the school based on thematic schemes of work. This often related to buildings and local places:

*I have been running a creative curriculum, based on themes, and have had themes such as ‘houses now and then’ and ‘homes and gardens’.*

Primary key stage 1 teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

*We like to promote a practical, creative, linked curriculum.*

Primary headteacher, South East

*Because we use a thematic approach and many of these are related to buildings and our locality.*

Primary headteacher, South East

- **a requirement/part of the National Curriculum.** Teachers said they incorporated education focusing on buildings and local places into their teaching because it was a requirement of the National Curriculum. This included it being related to specific QCA units; parts of the key stage 1 history/geography curriculum; and project work with Edexcel AS art and AS graphics with materials technology.

Alongside the curriculum subjects, teachers also noted a **range of key skills** that education relating to buildings and local places supported. Most commonly these were related to what were deemed to be ‘research skills’, such as observation and investigation. Other key skills included: speaking and listening; creativity; literacy and numeracy; and spatial/visual awareness.

Despite the number of links with a range of curriculum subjects/areas, nearly two-fifths of teacher interviewees (5 out of 13) felt that teachers required additional support to assist them in developing further links. These teachers suggested the need for education packs that supported and showed how buildings and local places could be used across the curriculum:

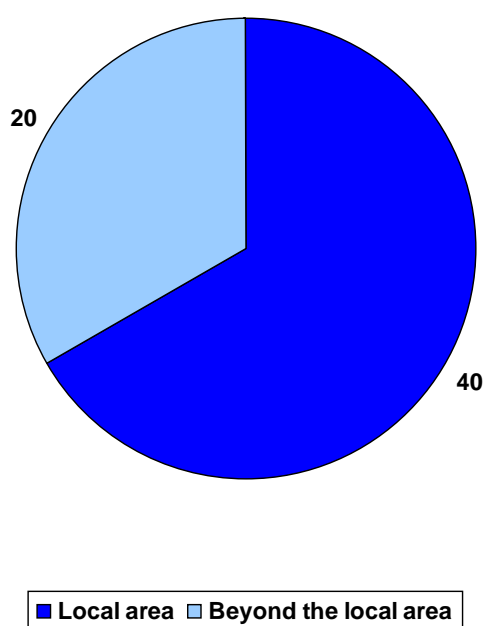
*Information on how to use it really. We might have an interesting local building but how might we incorporate it into the curriculum. So, more cross-curricular resources. It is nice to have ideas that you can look at and then adapt for your own use.*

Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

There was also a call for resources with more links to relevant websites and also more face-to-face support such as a ‘nominated person or department that you could ring up’.

Just under four-fifths (40) of teachers indicated that they **used the local area where their students lived** when teaching about buildings and local places. However, as Figure 3.9 shows, teachers also focused on a wider geographical area when studying the built environment, with approximately two-fifths (20) stating that they went beyond the local area where their students lived. The majority of these respondents were from schools in London and the South East (8 respectively) and there was a higher number from the secondary sector than the primary (12 compared to 8).

**Figure 3.9** Geographical focus of teaching



### How buildings and local places feature in school strategies

Approximately three-quarters of headteachers and governors (ten and three respectively) indicated that education relating to buildings and local places featured in their school plans, strategies and policies. Only three headteachers (all from London schools) indicated that buildings and local places did not feature in any plans and two governors did not know. Headteachers and governors most commonly indicated that learning related to buildings and local places featured in subject policies and/or curriculum maps (e.g. geography, history, R.E, PSHE and performing arts). Other plans, strategies and policies that featured built environment education included: teaching and



learning policies; the self-evaluation framework (SEF); outdoor education/educational visits policies; and the school vision statement.

### Key learning points

- Teachers, headteachers and governors involved in this study were very aware of the educational potential of buildings and local places. Teachers were also enthusiastic about using buildings and local places in their teaching and saw it as a valuable learning resource that had a positive impact on pupil and student learning.
  - Is more awareness raising of the sector necessary? If so, should this be achieved via the development of promotional material, as this was the most commonly reported way in which teachers' levels of awareness were raised? Is there any value in the sector using existing subject-specific networks as a means of raising awareness further? Can, and should, local authority advisors be used to raise awareness?
  - Is there a reason why awareness of buildings and local places was high but few teachers had heard of the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto? Does raising awareness of the latter require consideration?
  - Is there any value in further disseminating *Laying the Foundations* which was positively received by schools and was reported to have actively raised awareness amongst headteachers, teachers and governors?
- Those teachers who were least enthusiastic about buildings and local places and saw it as less valuable were typically from London schools and from the secondary sector.
  - Is there a reason for this and what, if anything, can be done to address it?
- Schools are commonly using easily accessible forms of the built environment, such as school grounds, and local town and streets/streetscapes. However, the structure of the school building and classroom space was not readily focused on.
  - Could more be done to aid teachers in using these accessible forms of the built environment?
  - Would information/education packs be useful to demonstrate how the structure of the school building and classroom spaces can be linked to the curriculum?
- The architecture of local, contemporary buildings; parks/squares; and man-made historic features in the countryside were the least commonly used forms of built environment education.
  - Why is this? Could it be because of: the location of the school in relation to the built environment activity (i.e. may be too far away to

- use often); the prevalence/availability of the activities in the region (i.e. that there are not many contemporary buildings in a small village); or teachers' understanding of what each activity involves (i.e. did they associate the term 'man-made historic features in the countryside' with things such as prehistoric monuments, ruins etc?).
- Using the architecture of local, contemporary buildings was most commonly reported by teachers from the South East. Could this be a product of the availability of contemporary buildings in this particular region?
  - Buildings and man-made historic features in the countryside were most commonly reported by teachers from the South East and Yorkshire. Is the accessibility of more rural locations within these regions, a possible reason as to why this activity was more prevalent?
  - Teachers from urban schools most commonly reported studies/lessons on the architecture of local, contemporary buildings and parks/squares. Why is this? Is it a possible product of the availability of contemporary buildings and community areas, such as parks and squares, in more developed urban built environments?
- Teachers would like more education packs that show how buildings and local places could be linked to curriculum/subject areas.
    - Would the development and publication of such resources increase teachers' use of buildings and local places in their teaching?

## 4 Services, resources and support

This chapter examines teachers' views on whether they have access to sufficient information, resources and support to provide education focusing on buildings and local places within their teaching.

### 4.1 Access to information and resources

Teachers were more likely to indicate that they **did not** have access to sufficient information and resources. This was most marked in relation to the provision of resources, where more than twice as many teachers felt that they did not have access to sufficient resources to assist them in incorporating buildings and local places into their teaching (see Figure 4.1) than those who felt they did.

The reasons teachers gave for their responses could be categorised as follows:

- The majority of respondents who felt they did have access to sufficient information and resources highlighted their own personal commitment to accessing information and resources, for example by conducting their own research:

*You have to discover for yourself but that's part of the fun of teaching!*  
Primary headteacher, South East

*I have made it my business to find resources. It sometimes is quite costly and has taken a long time.*  
Primary key stage 2 history and geography coordinator, London

This was reinforced by teacher interviewees who noted that they relied on their own and other teachers' knowledge of available resources and personal recommendation. Less than a third of the teachers interviewed said that they used the QCA website as a source of information. Some noted the invaluable links they had developed with particular providers, for example Open House. However, they noted that if they did not have these links their resources would be limited. When teachers who were interviewed were asked where they accessed information and resources about teaching in this area, they identified: LA advisors and lead practitioners; subject networks; publicity leaflets produced by providers; teacher workshops [for example, those provided free of charge by museums]; and web-based resources (this included subject-based websites with downloadable resources).

- Those who felt they did not have access to sufficient information and resources focused on:

- A shortage of information/resources available locally, or a lack of awareness of the information/resources available. This was the most frequent response:

[There is] *very little locally. Most need a long journey and a full day out. Often key stage 3 pressures do not allow us time to give up.*

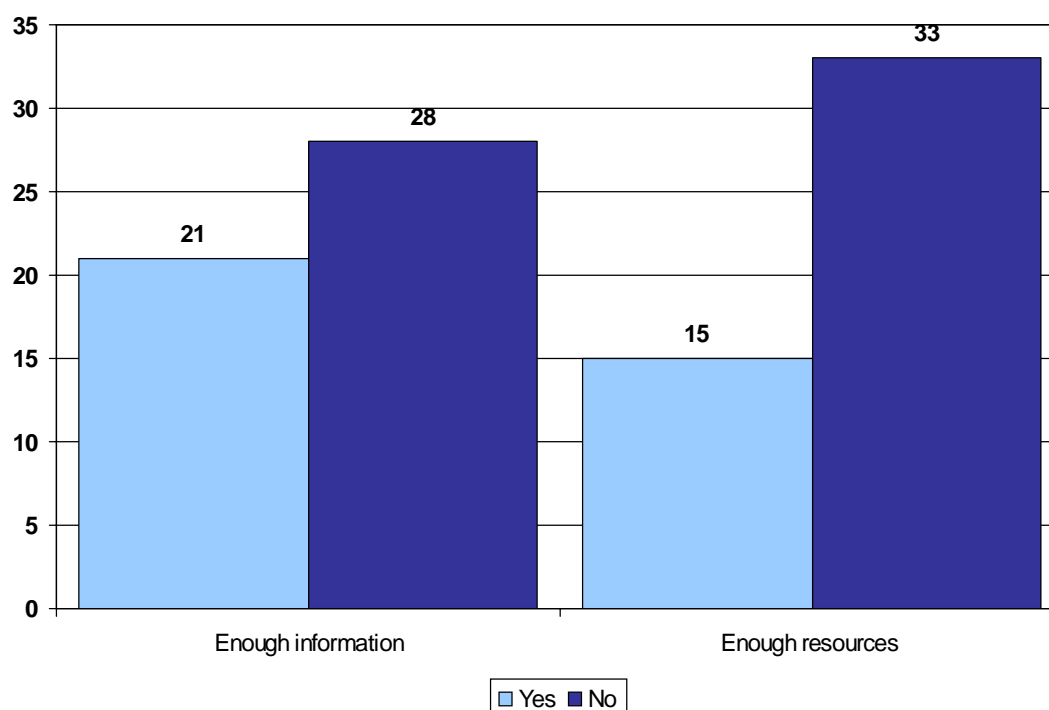
Secondary assistant headteacher and science and PSHCCE teacher,  
Yorkshire and Humberside

*We often travel further afield to find subject matter and there could be local opportunities we are unaware of.*

Primary teaching head, South East

- The need for additional resources in this area, or even that they had never seen any resources of this kind.
- Curriculum issues, for example, a lack of ‘age appropriate’ resources, insufficient information to ‘immerse’ children, and resources in textbooks and publications were considered to be ‘poor’.
- A view that high profile sites had good resources to assist learning but that provision was patchy and other providers lacked these resources.

**Figure 4.1** Teachers’ views on access to information and resources



All headteachers who responded to the proforma (13) indicated that teachers in their school were **given support to use buildings and local places** as a creative resource in their teaching. Four of the governor respondents also

indicated that teachers were given support, whilst the remaining three did not know whether teachers received support. When identifying the support provided, all but one of the headteachers focused on the practicalities of supporting visits via the deployment of additional staff or time to prepare for the visit (including risk assessments):

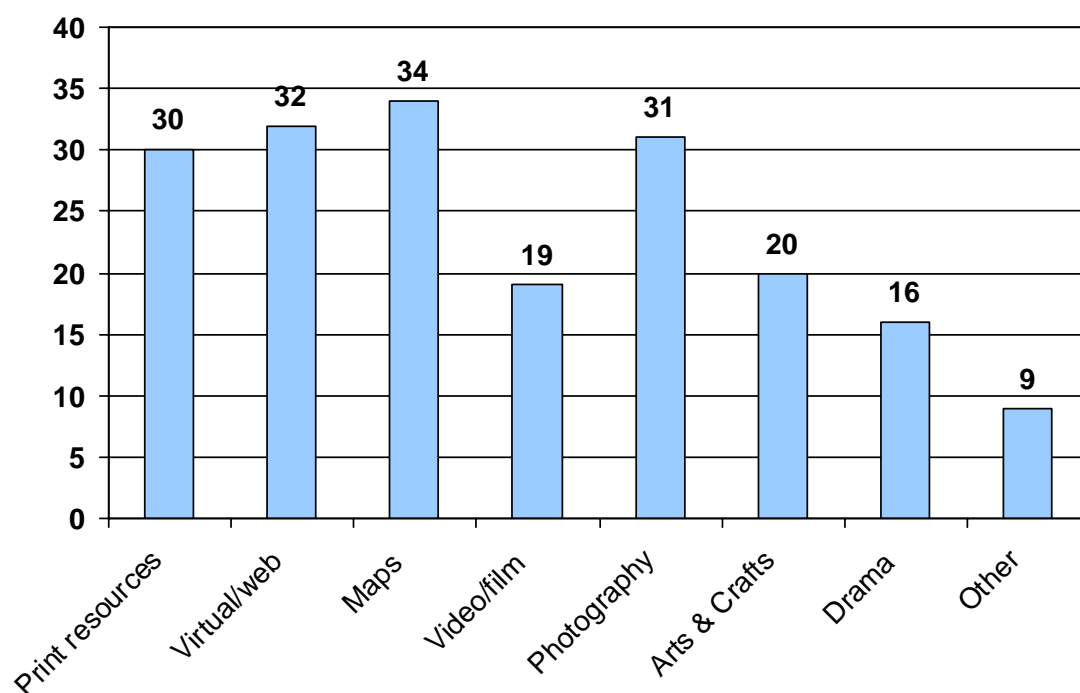
*Teachers always go and look at the place or workshop first. Some places do taster days for teachers so they can go and get the information pack and see what it's going to be like before they take the children. Prep is really important, especially if it involves public transport. So staff go the week before to check it out. It's all risk assessed. Staff do it, and I oversee and check the forms. If I'm happy, I'll sign it off.*

Primary headteacher, London

In addition, three headteachers said that they provided funding to subsidise visits or pay for additional resources, such as maps. One headteacher indicated that teachers had received training from the Education Business Partnership (EBP) focusing on historic and contemporary buildings and structures within the region.

Only three headteachers indicated that they were involved in collaborative working with other schools in this area, whereas five of the (seven) governors indicated that their school was involved in collaborative work. The collaborative work identified focused on visits undertaken with other schools; primary links with secondary schools; or project-focused work in the school cluster.

Teachers were asked what resources they currently used in teaching about buildings and local places. Figure 4.2 shows that teachers were most likely to use **maps and virtual resources** and were least likely to use drama. 'Other' resources identified by teachers included: visits, talks and presentations; information from the local community; data collected by students to conduct primary research; and booklets produced by subject departments.

**Figure 4.2 Teachers' current use of resources**

When teachers were also asked to identify what additional resources they would like to help in their teaching about buildings and local places, they indicated that they would like more of what they were already using most frequently i.e. virtual resources and maps.

- By far the most frequent response was the request for more on-line resources, particularly with a local focus:

*On-line resources for local places and buildings to support delivery of geography and leisure and tourism.*

Secondary geography teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

*On-line information on style, history, social context.*

Secondary art teacher, London

*[To be] able to go on-line and be able to look up quickly local places and buildings of interest, being able to book trips and download resources would be useful.*

Secondary geography teacher, South East

- Maps, plans and models, again with a focus on the local area that could be easily linked to the curriculum:

*A 'map' of local buildings.*

Secondary P.E. teacher, London

*Drawings/redesigns of local areas which the students regularly use i.e. shopping area, models of sports centre.*

Secondary design and technology teacher, South East

- Other additional resources identified by teachers included: printed resources and CDs and arranging for speakers, such as architects and town planners, to talk about their work in this area.

*Printed packs with CDs which can be used on an interactive whiteboard.*

Primary headteacher, London

Interviewees provided further details of the additional information and resources they would like to develop their teaching in this area. They wanted more information on the activities and resources available locally and on how to access those resources:

*There is more we could do in the local area to encourage them to look at their local area and understand it more, rather than always looking further away. It's very good for children to have access to their local area ... Local history groups could help to build links between the community and the school.*

Primary headteacher, London

They also identified the need for additional cross-curricular resources (particularly important with the growing emphasis on cross-curricular themes) and resources which better met their students' needs (i.e. in terms of learning and age); study packs (particularly with a local focus, such as local history or environmental packs); and additional information on what were termed 'lower status buildings, celebrating the lives of ordinary people' (Primary teacher, Yorkshire and Humberside). Interviewees also felt that they required more information on how to use buildings and places in their teaching and to strengthen or make more explicit its direct links with the curriculum. They also identified the need for additional practitioner links and other individuals (such as LA advisors) with expertise, to advise on development in this area:

*I think an enthusiastic person who comes in, like xxx [name of LA advisor] ... is the key thing really. If you can have somebody who is passionate about their subject ... That really fantastic local person that you knew you could tap into, is worth so much.*

Primary headteacher, South East

When headteachers were asked what additional support could be provided by national and local organisations, for example the DfES, the local authority and

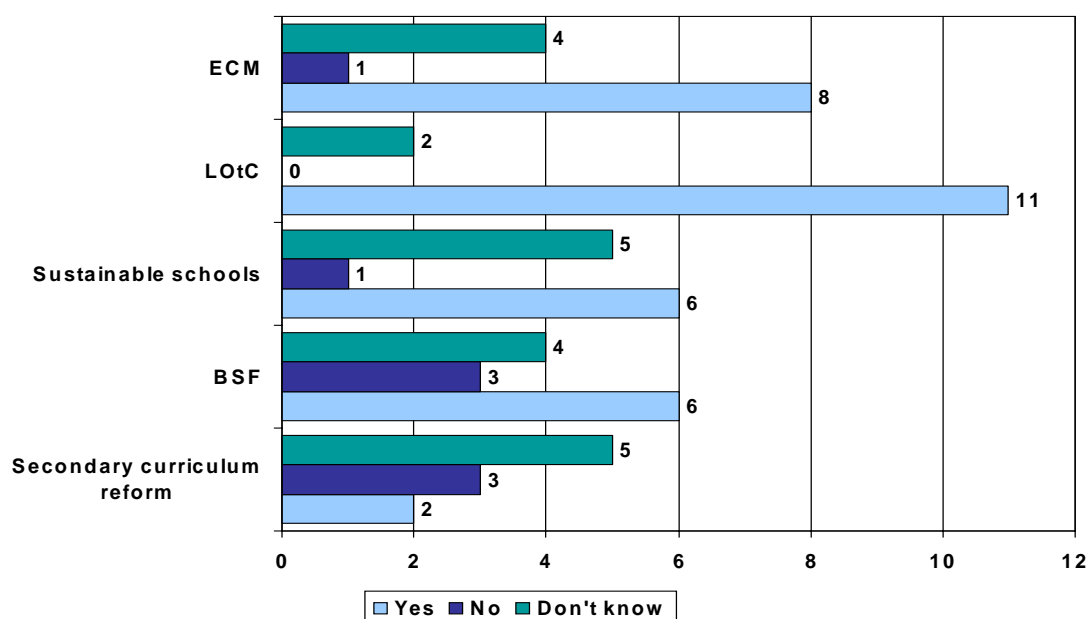
the built environment sector, they highlighted a range of areas which primarily focused on: training; providing information and resources; and creating opportunities for schools to develop work in this area. In particular, headteachers focused on the following:

- DfES: the most common response focused on revising the national curriculum to promote and enable schools to conduct more work in this area.
- LAs: respondents most frequently identified the need for LAs to provide additional resources and information about local sites of interest. They also suggested that the LA could provide CPD opportunities at the primary level in subjects other than literacy and numeracy. Other areas of support suggested included: the LA to provide assistance in carrying out risk assessments, to encourage more out of school visits and to help negotiate access to less accessible buildings. A primary headteacher from the South East commented that the LA was already very supportive regarding visits.
- Built environment education providers: comments focused on improving access to and relevance of resources, for example age appropriate resources for younger children; as well as publicising the opportunities available. However, one headteacher did feel there were a lot of resources available but they did not have time to use them.

Headteachers and governors were also asked whether they felt that current policy issues and agendas, such as Building Schools for the Future (BSF), could provide opportunities for using buildings and local places in teaching at their schools and, if so, what support they might require to facilitate teaching and learning in these areas. Figure 4.3 shows that nearly all the headteachers (11 out of 13) felt that the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto could provide opportunities to develop work in this area, for example by giving schools the ‘freedom to spend time on exploration of localities and to pursue a topic’ (Primary headteacher, South East), or to use it as a basis for BSF, or to provide teacher packs for local environmental work. Nearly two-thirds (8) of headteachers and the majority of governors (6 out of 7) identified Every Child Matters as providing similar opportunities ‘children need to feel safe in their local area’ (Secondary headteacher, London).



**Figure 4.3** Headteachers' views on whether policy issues and agendas can provide learning opportunities related to buildings and local places



Approximately half of headteachers and governors identified possible links with Building Schools for the Future (BSF), for example, in relation to energy conservation and other environmental issues. The headteachers were evenly distributed across the regions, but five of the six were primary headteachers. Similarly, just under half of the headteachers (6) identified possible links with the Sustainable Schools policy, for example, as an opportunity to provide 'joined up thinking in an eco school project' (Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and Humberside). All of these were primary headteachers and were the same headteachers, apart from one, who identified links with BSF. However, both headteachers and governors were less certain of any potential links with secondary curriculum reform. The two headteachers who identified possible links between the two, focused on the opportunities it might provide to introduce more flexibility into the curriculum and 'loosen the strings of the National Curriculum'. Governor and headteacher respondents indicated that they would like to learn more about the LOTc Manifesto, Sustainable Schools and the potential linkage with ECM.

Teacher interviewees were also asked how these policy agendas might support learning focusing on buildings and local places. Interviewees identified some links but felt that they needed to be made more explicit:

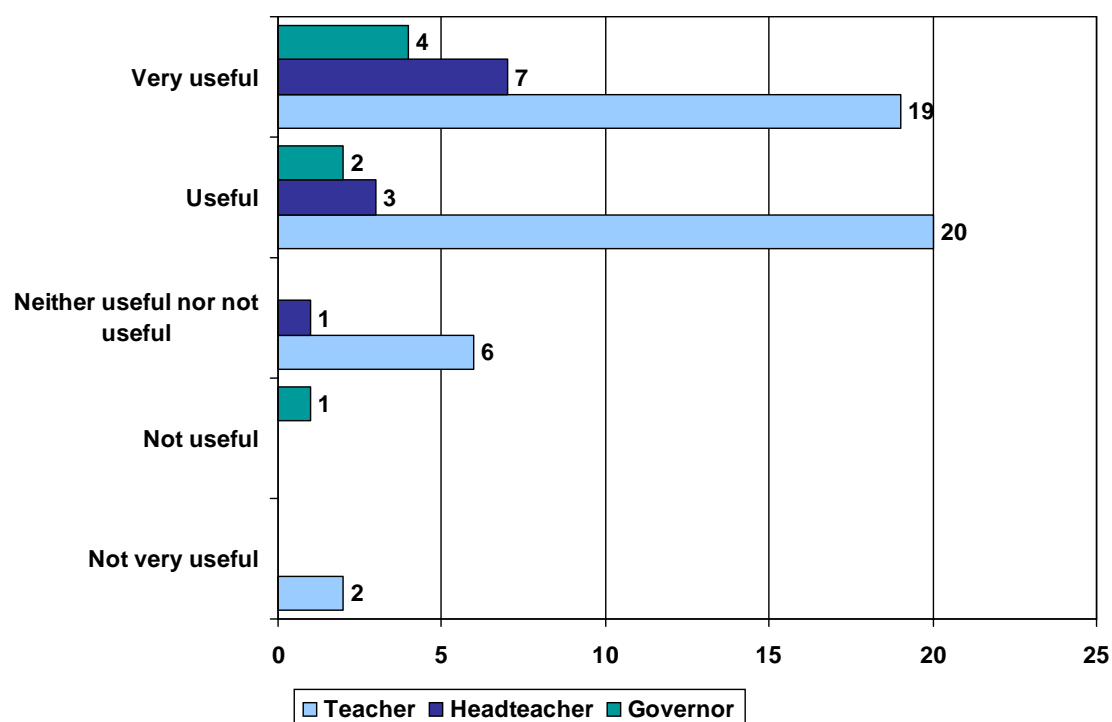
*If we get more awareness about these policies then more ideas will filter through. At the moment they are just seen as government initiatives and there needs to be a greater push on levels of awareness.*  
Secondary, head of geography, London

The support they identified focused on the need to have support, training and information from experts in the area, for example, LA outdoor education advisors and professionals (such as architects and engineers) working on BSF: ‘it is always easier to have someone to talk you through it ... than having to read it’ (Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and Humberside).

## 4.2 The usefulness of a single source of information

All respondents were asked how useful they thought it would be to have a single source of information that could inform them about using buildings and local places as a teaching resource. Figure 4.4 shows that more than three-quarters of teachers (39 out of 51) and the vast majority of headteachers (10 out of 13) and governors (6 out of 7) felt that **a single source of information would be useful**. Furthermore, nearly two-fifths of teachers and more than half of headteachers and governors felt that it would be ‘very useful’. Only two teachers and one governor felt that it would not be useful.

**Figure 4.4** The usefulness of a single source of information



Interviewees were asked to elaborate on the degree of usefulness, and also the content/nature of this single source of information. All but one interviewee felt that a single source of information would be useful. Most recommended that this single source of information should be web-based, providing it was kept up to date. Four interviewees felt that a paper-based resource, for example a booklet, which could be used to raise awareness would be useful, either in addition to, or instead of, a web-based resource.

The internet and on-line resources were mentioned as the key form of information provision by interviewees:

*One main website that you could access that had lots of information on it would just make life so much easier.*

Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and Humberside

Interviewees suggested that this single source of information needed to inform teachers about what built environment education is and why they might want to include it in their teaching (by identifying the benefits and positive outcomes associated with learning in this area). Contact details of providers, LA advisors and schools that had successfully worked in this area were also seen to be an important resource that should be provided. Interviewees also wanted examples of good practice and case studies and the opportunity to make links with the schools involved in this work. Again interviewees emphasised the importance of this information source providing teachers with clear links to the curriculum and the provision of schemes of work (subject- and theme-based). Interviewees also wanted examples of buildings and local places that they could use as a learning resource, particularly if this information was supported by teacher recommendations and practical details of accessibility and price. It was suggested that the provision of virtual tours would be useful for those students and pupils who could not participate in visits.

Types of information that interviewees would like provided included general topics/subject areas, such as 'environmental issues', as well as details and issues surrounding more specific buildings and projects. The planning processes surrounding buildings and developments, such as supermarkets, was highlighted (Primary teacher, South East). Interviewees suggested the need for all-encompassing information, covering both local and non-local information.

*The first port of call would be local because that is the idea that you are using local buildings. However, it is always nice to have a look and see what is available elsewhere.*

Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and Humberside

Others wanted to be able to focus their search specifically on their local area (especially important for those who were geographically isolated) or their students' particular needs. For example, an interviewee from a special school noted the importance of having information that was tailored for his/her students' needs, in terms of accessibility and the importance he/she would attach to teachers from other special schools providing recommendations of suitable sites to visit.

In addition, one interviewee also suggested that a web-based resource could be used as a means of interactive communication whereby individual teachers

contributed to an information exchange system by posting details of their own experiences and areas of interest, as well as learning from others. It was suggested that regular email updates could keep teachers informed of any developments and new resources in their own teaching/curriculum areas.

### Key learning points

- Teachers indicated that they did not have access to sufficient information and, more importantly, resources to assist them in incorporating buildings and local places into their teaching.
  - The built environment sector should consider focusing on developing resources for teachers rather than, or in addition to, information.
  
- All headteachers said that teachers were supported in using buildings and local places as a resource in their teaching.
  - Is this support recognised across the board amongst school staff? To what extent is this the case nationally?
  - The focus was on practical support, such as staff and cover during school visits. But what about support to develop their teaching skills in this area? Is this needed?
  
- Teachers suffered from a shortage or lack of awareness of resources available locally. This highlighted the importance and value of local links when using buildings and local places in teaching.
  - What can be done to raise awareness at a local level? Will and/or should the *Engaging Places* website address this?
  
- Those resources teachers were most likely to use, such as virtual resources and maps, were also those that they indicated they wanted more of.
  - Should built environment education providers make virtual resources and maps a key area of their focus when developing teaching resources? In what ways can the sector support providers in developing these resources?
  
- Governors and headteachers indicated that they wanted to learn more about education focusing on buildings and local places in relation to the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto, Sustainable Schools and Every Child Matters. In addition, teachers said they would find it most helpful if someone (i.e. face-to-face support) were able to help them make the links between policy initiatives/agendas and built environment education.
  - How can levels of awareness be raised in relation to these policies/agendas and the linkages with built environment education?

How could face-to-face support be achieved? Is there any value in the sector undertaking training sessions or presentations to provide this?

- More than three-quarters of teachers and the vast majority of headteachers and governors felt that a single source of information would be useful. Thus, it seems likely that the *Engaging Places* website would be both popular and useful.
- Participants noted the benefits of being able to access information at a local level and to suit their pupils'/students' particular needs. The development of the *Engaging Places* website needs to think carefully about how this information will be provided (e.g. maps so teachers can click on a local area as on the 'Growing Schools' website).

## 5 Challenges and facilitators

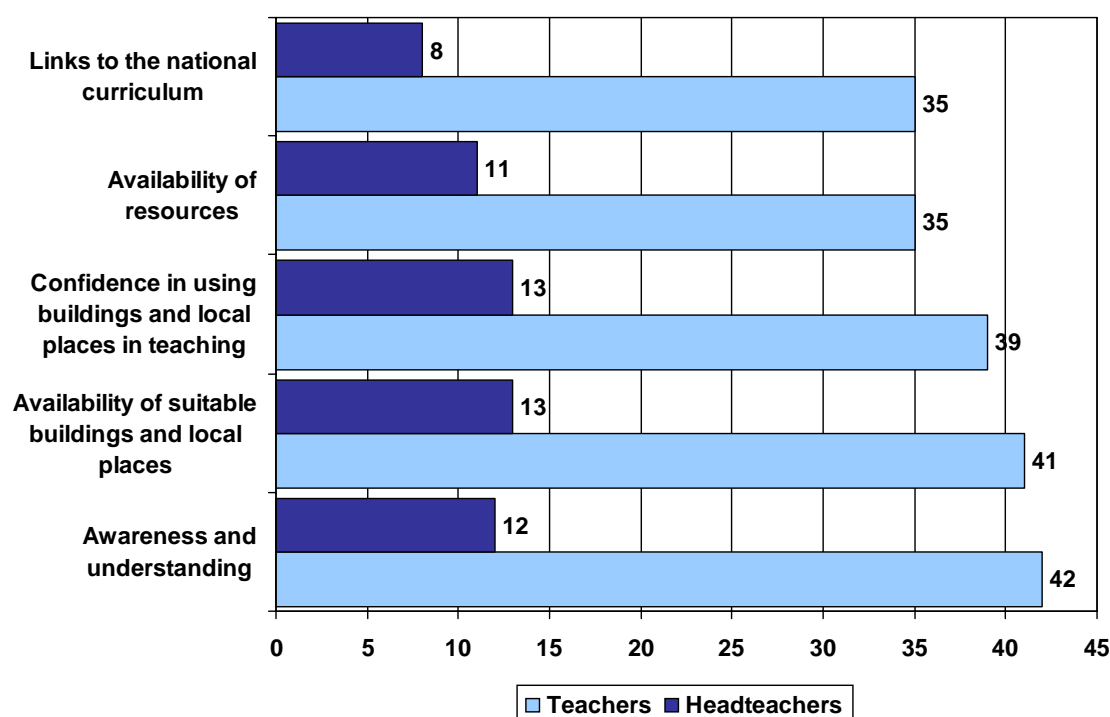
This chapter presents proforma respondents' and interviewees' thoughts on the factors that may act as facilitators or barriers and challenges to using buildings and places in teaching.

### 5.1 Factors facilitating the use of buildings and places in teaching

Teachers and headteachers were asked to rate, on a scale of the one to five, the helpfulness of a range of factors in using buildings and places in teaching. Across the range of ten factors, 382 'helpful' or 'very helpful' comments, 123 'neither helpful nor unhelpful' responses, and 82 'unhelpful' or 'very unhelpful', were received. This suggests that respondents were **generally positive about the help available** to them and recognised that opportunities and resources were present to facilitate the use of buildings and places in teaching.

Figure 5.1 shows the top five ranking factors identified as helpful to teachers and headteachers in using buildings and places in teaching. There were no differences in the responses of teachers and headteachers according to school type.

**Figure 5.1** The top five most 'helpful' factors identified by teachers and headteachers



Both teachers and headteachers identified the same top five factors as being the most helpful in terms of using places and buildings in teaching.

The factor identified as being **most helpful** to teachers related to issues of **awareness and understanding** of the educational potential of buildings and local places. Forty-two teacher respondents suggested that such awareness was either ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’. Twelve out of 13 headteachers responded in this way.

Following this, the **availability of sites to visit** and the **confidence** to use buildings and places in teaching were also seen as being amongst the most helpful factors by teachers with 41 and 39 (respectively) responding in this way. All headteachers noted that these factors were the most helpful.

The **availability of resources** and the **links to the National Curriculum** were noted as being significantly helpful factors in the use of buildings and local places in teaching. Also important was the actual location of the school.

Interviewees commented on the support received by, or available to, the school/teachers in using local buildings and places in teaching. The location of the school and the nature of the surrounding environment were highlighted by ten respondents (across all the regions) as being key facilitating factors. Within this, a range of accessible buildings, places and resources was noted. One interviewee, for example, suggested that the presence of historic buildings in close proximity to the school enhanced the use of, and relevance attached to, the built environment in teaching:

*We are very lucky because we have got all this Victorian stuff, and it is dead easy because our kids just walk to the end of the road and they can go out there and do stuff.*

Secondary history and geography teacher, South East

*It's all on our doorstep. The school is in the middle of London so we have the most amazing array of buildings, old and new, around us.*

Secondary art teacher, London

Accessibility and proximity issues were also seen to be linked to other factors, especially transport and other costs, such as admission charges for places and buildings. Interviewees in London in particular, commented on the benefits of free public transport and access to museums and galleries in encouraging schools and teachers to organise visits to such places.

Issues relating to support were highlighted by four interviewees. The presence of, and the support delivered by, a contact in the LA was noted as being of great value, and another interviewee noted the contributions from the local community. In this case, the school's work (in relation to local regeneration) was seen as having developed and strengthened the relationship with the local community. In another case, a particular school had been approached by a community group involved in transforming a piece of unused land into a community garden. The school seen as potentially being a key player in the project, and involvement in the venture was welcomed by the headteacher because of the range of opportunities and experiences the pupils and teachers could be presented with. Support from the wider school community, especially parents, was also seen to contribute to teachers' and schools' use of buildings and local places in teaching. One headteacher commented:

*We are very fortunate that this is a very affluent area with high achieving parents who want their children to experience things.*

Primary headteacher, London

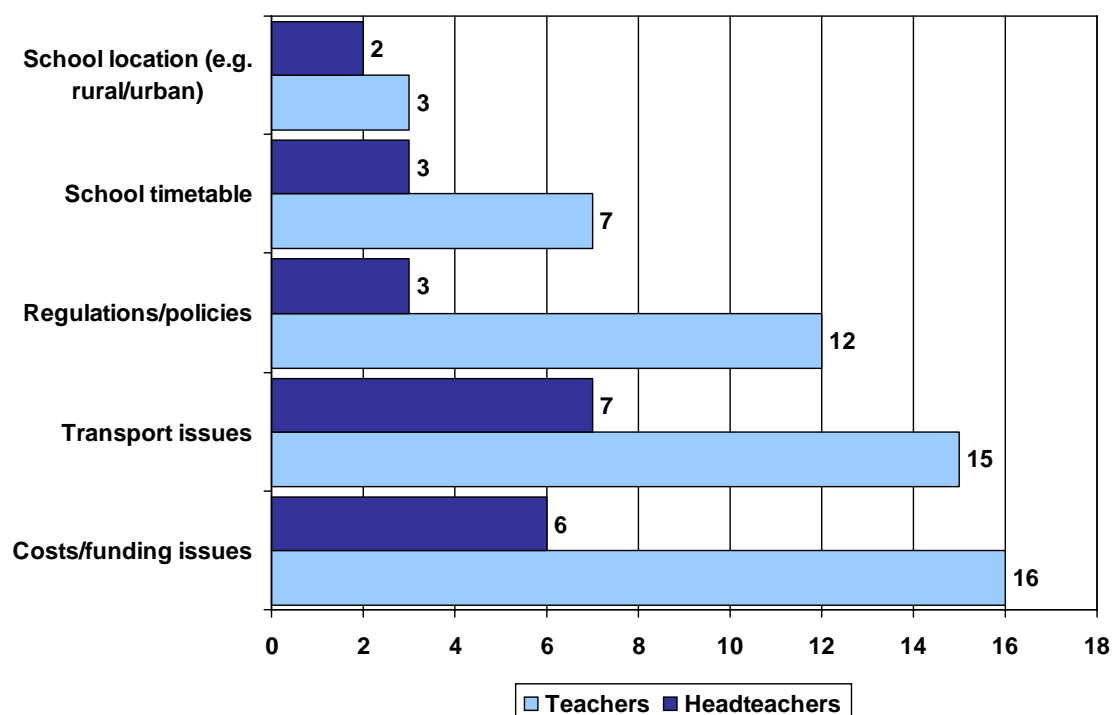
Other facilitating factors included the knowledge and expertise available to support teachers in their use of buildings and local places in teaching, most notably the role of staff/personnel working at particular sites/venues. It was also suggested that changes in curriculum delivery at one school had provided increased potential and space for the inclusion of more visits in the timetable. The provision of three-year GCSE courses was seen to have facilitated the incorporation of LOtC activities into the timetable, so reinforcing the capacity to include buildings and places in teaching.

## 5.2 Barriers and challenges in using buildings and places in teaching

The factors identified as being **most unhelpful** to the use of buildings and local places in teaching tended to be those that presented largely **logistical and practical challenges or barriers**. Again, the same top five factors were identified by both teachers and headteachers.



**Figure 5.2** The top five ‘unhelpful’ factors identified by teachers and headteachers



The factors identified as being most unhelpful centred on **accessibility issues**, such as **costs, transport and regulations/policies**. In addition, the school timetable and links with the National Curriculum were also identified. These findings were reinforced by interviewees from all regions (including headteachers, teachers and governor representatives) who particularly noted transport costs as representing a serious challenge to the use of buildings and places in teaching. Eleven interviewees across all the regions commented in this way. Chiefly, the cost of hiring coaches was often seen as prohibitively expensive. A representative of a primary school in the South East region, for example, commented: ‘We took a group of children up to London and, well, it cost an arm and a leg’. Transporting younger children, for whom public transport might be less appropriate, was thus seen to have cost implications.

Cost and transport-based challenges to using buildings and local places in teaching also included parental ability and/or willingness to contribute towards funding transportation and visits. In addition, the time constraints imposed by coach companies was also mentioned as a difficulty. It was suggested, that because of their regular school transport contracts, coaches were often only available for a short amount of time during the school day. As a result the range of locations/destinations accessible to a school was curtailed, so impacting on the potential use of buildings and places in teaching.

The impact of transport costs could also be compounded by school location. A representative of a primary school in the Yorkshire and Humber region, for

example, commented on the difficulties associated with the school's rural location, and suggested that difficulties could be eased if there were funds available to meet transport costs. It was asserted that, even with parental subsidies, only buildings and places within close proximity of the school could be accessed, so possibly restricting the impact of the built environment in teaching and learning. A representative of a South East school commented that traffic congestion in the local area was an obstacle to be overcome in planning and delivering trips and visits even in the school's vicinity. Hence, a diverse range of site/context specific locational issues impacted on a school's access to, and use of, the built environment.

In addition to transport costs, several interviewees commented on the potential costs to the school associated with visits to buildings and places. These centred on the need to ensure that the visit was staffed and supported appropriately and on the cost of cover required at school to take the place of teachers staffing the visit. One governor and one teacher commented in this way. In addition, a teacher suggested that there were difficulties associated with obtaining the necessary art-related resources to follow up art-related visits in the classroom.

Regulations and policies were also identified as a barrier to the use of buildings and places in teaching, especially in relation to transport issues.

*Our local authority places such limitations on what we do and the distance we may travel, that we are very constrained. We are so close to London, but we are advised to avoid going there because of terrorist risk.*

Primary headteacher, South East

A teacher and a headteacher referred to 'constraints' imposed by the National Curriculum as placing limits on organising and conducting trips and visits, suggesting that even if the will is present, the pressures to meet targets can mitigate against enthusiasm for using buildings and places in teaching.

In addition to such practical, logistical barriers, and cost-based issues, it was also suggested that levels of awareness, knowledge and information required development. A teacher who had only recently become aware of the potential of buildings and places in teaching suggested that 'lack of knowledge' and accessing information constituted the most significant challenges his/her particular school currently faced. 'There is probably a lot out there that we are not aware of and it is having access to that information' (Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber). In a related way, another secondary assistant headteacher from the South East also commented that the changing popularity of particular subjects could have a bearing on the extent to which buildings and local places were used in teaching. Hence, it was asserted that history, for example, in which the built environment could provide a

significant resource base, was becoming less popular, thus impacting on the possible influence of buildings and local places in teaching.

Alongside levels of awareness, four interviewees suggested that motivation and willingness to engage in, and support, the use of buildings and local places in teaching could be challenging factors. In two instances, (both in London), it was suggested that parents of children attending some schools might not see the potential value, relevance and importance of such trips and visits, and may not support their children's participation. In addition, (especially in London), fears of the risk of terrorism were said to be impacting on parental enthusiasm and support for visiting buildings and places in the city. A headteacher commented that there could be reluctance on the part of teachers to engage in the necessary preparation and planning of trips and visits, whilst two governors commented on the implications and 'cost' of taking pupils out of the classroom: 'the timetable is very tightly run and with all these targets to meet ...' (governor). 'The curriculum is already overcrowded. There is a lot of pressure on teachers' (governor).

Finally, two teachers commented on the difficulties faced in locating and accessing suitable buildings, venues and resources. A special school representative noted the logistical difficulties that could be faced in terms of physical access (for wheelchairs for example), as well as the actual content of the visit.

*Visiting a building for history is just too abstract for our school. It has to be much more immediate than that. It is quite hard to find suitable buildings doing suitable things.*

Special school teacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

### Key learning points

- Teachers appeared generally positive about the help available to them and recognised that opportunities and resources were present to facilitate the use of buildings and local places in their teaching.
- The top five factors, identified by both teachers and headteachers, as being the most helpful in terms of using buildings and local places in teaching were:
  - awareness and understanding of the educational potential of buildings and local places
  - availability of suitable buildings and local places to visit as part of teaching
  - confidence in using buildings and local places in teaching
  - availability of resources
  - links to the National Curriculum.

- Awareness of built environment education was a key facilitator to using it in teaching. Is additional awareness raising of the sector the main way to help teachers engage more with built environment education? Could the sector itself help by making more sites available and accessible?
- The factors identified, by both teachers and headteachers, as being most unhelpful to the use of buildings and local places in teaching tended to be those that presented largely logistical and practical challenges or barriers. For example: cost; transport; and regulations/policies.
  - How can these issues be addressed? Is there any scope in the sector offering further subsidised visit fees to schools or incentives to visit? Should teachers be made more aware of the LOtC Manifesto and how this can aid the planning/regulation issues associated with LOtC?
- The school timetable and links with the National Curriculum were also identified as challenges to using buildings and local places in teaching. It was noted that the changing popularity of particular subjects could have a bearing on the extent to which buildings and local places were used in teaching.
  - How can buildings and local places be further explored within the National Curriculum and do the current curriculum reforms offer up any viable opportunities to do so? Does built environment education need to position itself further as a cross-curricular discipline in order to overcome changes in subject popularity?
- A diverse range of site/context specific locational issues impacted on a school's access to, and use of, the built environment. This included traffic congestion in a local area and the ability for some schools to only access buildings and local places in close proximity.
  - Does the sector need to raise awareness and develop resources which illustrate how the local built environment, such as school grounds and local towns, can be easily used within the curriculum?

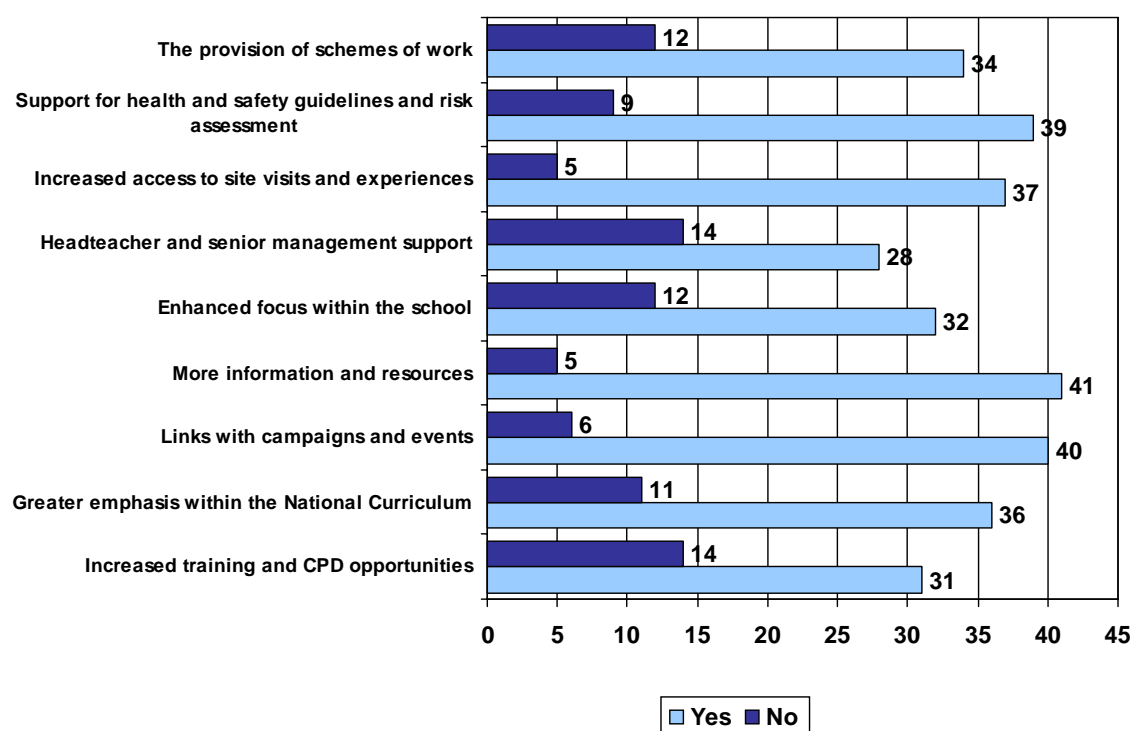
## 6 Encouraging greater take-up of opportunities

This chapter considers respondents' and interviewees' thoughts on the potential of a range of factors in encouraging teachers' take-up of, and schools' enthusiasm for, built environment education opportunities. It also presents interviewees' thoughts on ways of raising the profile of buildings and local places in education.

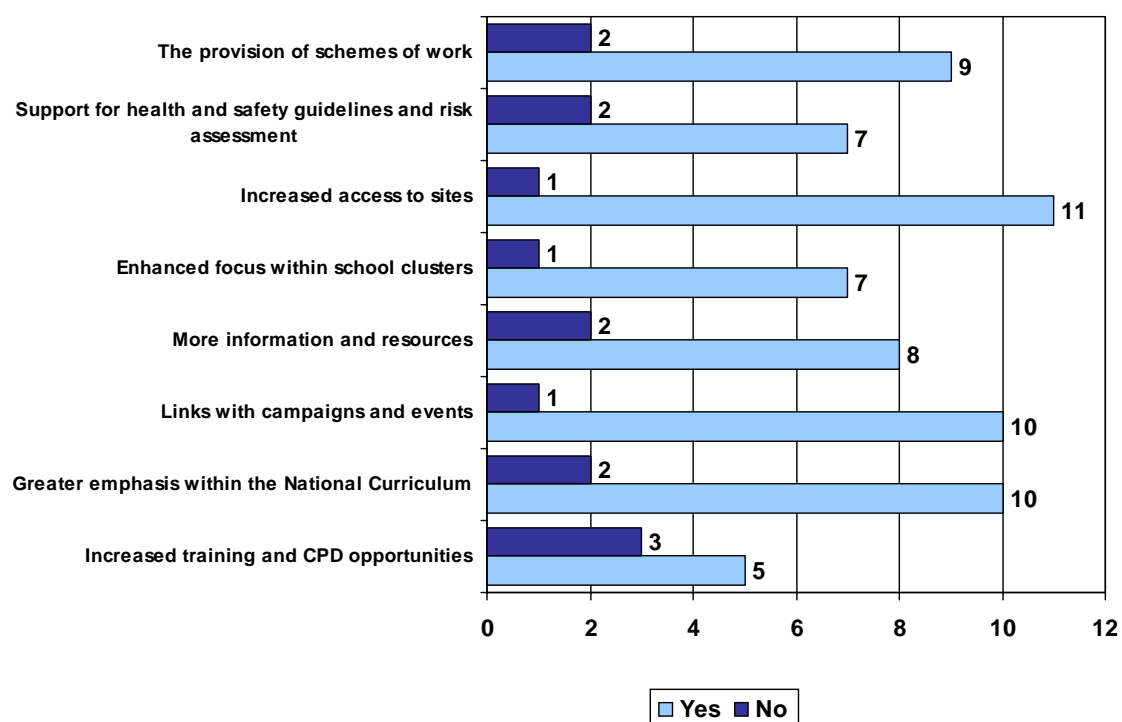
### 6.1 Factors encouraging increased take-up of local places and buildings in schools and teaching

Teachers and headteachers responded positively, suggesting that there were **numerous factors** that could serve to increase and encourage the take-up of buildings and local places in their teaching and schools. Their responses are shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2.

**Figure 6.1** Factors identified by teachers as encouraging greater use of buildings and local places in their teaching



**Figure 6.2** Factors identified by headteachers as encouraging greater use of buildings and local places in teaching at their school



In the main, headteachers identified the same factors as teachers in terms of encouraging increased enthusiasm for, and priority of, the use of buildings and places in their schools. The main notable point of divergence was that for headteachers, the increased availability of sites and places to visit was the most commonly reported factor. For teachers, the factors most commonly identified as encouraging the use of buildings and local places in teaching centred on those offering practical support and assistance. Hence, the availability of **more information and resources**, as well as links with campaigns and events and the increased availability of sites to visit, were all identified by over two-thirds of teachers. Interviewees reinforced these views, especially in relation to the availability of information. It was suggested, for example, that internet-based resources pertaining to **local** buildings and places were of paramount importance in encouraging other teachers. Similarly, the provision of ‘study packs to support the use of buildings and easy referral to sources of information’ (Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber) was seen as making the planning process less problematic and could, therefore, make teachers more inclined to participate in trips and visits. A teacher commented that others would be encouraged if there was ‘more easily accessible information. There is not a website that you can just go on and find information about your area’ (special school teacher). Calls were made for those managing specific buildings to disseminate more widely to schools, providing information on what they could offer. A governor representative also contended that the DfES and the DCMS could provide CDROM

materials, or could promote the use of buildings and local places through collaboration with other media organisations, such as television companies.

One headteacher raised the issue of cost, suggesting that the resources on offer or available had to bear cost in mind.

*The word 'free'. Things come in and the first thing you look at is how much is it and if it's £150 it goes in the bin. So it's got to be very very modestly priced because there's so much pressure on us now to bring people in, to broaden our curriculum etc and there are so many demands on our money. Finance is the biggest constraint of all.*

Primary, Yorkshire and the Humber

Three interviewees also made reference to the potential benefits of providing teachers with **training**, especially through INSET. This was regarded as a means of encouraging teachers to explore the possibilities of places and buildings in teaching without placing additional demands on their own (personal) time. A secondary teacher contended that training would be useful if provided to different groups of teachers, but in a local area, so that awareness of the resources on offer in the locality, and how they could be incorporated into different subject area teaching, could be developed. It was also suggested by a primary teacher that such training should be delivered by 'enthusiastic, knowledgeable trainers' from the relevant sector. In addition, the establishment of lead practitioners in each county to explore and promote the use of buildings and places was also suggested.

*It needs pathfinders or advocates to find a way and show others what the potential is. These people need to be actual teachers to give it credibility at the practitioner level.*

Secondary teacher, South East

Proforma responses suggested that **support**, in terms of conducting risk assessments for trips and visits, were seen as beneficial. Furthermore, teachers suggested that increased links between the use of buildings and local places and **curriculum requirements** would also encourage take-up. Interviewees also highlighted this, and several contended that the availability and dissemination of case studies and examples of how buildings and local places had been used successfully in teaching, (covering a range of subjects), may be a means of encouraging others.

*Case studies would show how it can work, [they] would show teachers that it is something really useful, not just another initiative that they have to get involved with.*

Secondary teacher, South East

The addition of 'pupil voice' in these case studies was seen as a powerful means of demonstrating to teachers the value that pupils derived from

participating in these activities/projects. As such, case studies could inform teachers of the ways that using buildings and places could enrich and support the curriculum as well as teaching and learning experiences. Hence, it was contended that teachers would be encouraged if they had more information and advice:

*Knowing how to make it exciting for the children, to put that 'wow' thing into it, so it's about ideas that can make it very relevant, exciting but challenging. We really want learning to be fun.*

Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

Alongside this, there was considerable support for the provision of schemes of work, with just under two-thirds of proforma respondents commenting in this way. However, one interviewee raised particular concerns with this: 'I feel that schemes of work is an area that kills creativity as teachers often feel obliged to simply follow a scheme' (Primary headteacher, South East).

The factors identified by the fewest numbers of teachers, (although still over half of respondents), included those with a less direct link to their teaching. These included issues such as increasing the focus on built environment education within the school, support from the headteacher and senior management and also training and CPD opportunities. This could indicate that teachers were generally satisfied with the level of support they received within the school, so factors that would encourage greater use tended to be those more closely related to the mechanics/practicalities of accessing and using local places and buildings in teaching.

One teacher commented that the main factor associated with the use of buildings and local places in teaching stemmed from the enthusiasm of individual teachers themselves:

*It has got to be there in the first place with teachers. Teachers have got to want to do it. Some teachers just won't do things, and others will. If the enthusiasm is there for people to go out and do it, then they will, and they will find ways around it if they get blocked doing it.*

Secondary assistant headteacher, South East

## 6.2 General awareness raising

Interviewees were asked to comment on how the national profile and awareness of using buildings and local places should be raised.

One interviewee commented that awareness of these issues was already high, largely because of publicity surrounding, and levels of interest in, wider environmental issues. As a result, it was contended that 'we really do not need



any more directives or policies. We are flooded with them. Give us some time' (Primary deputy headteacher, South East). These comments were echoed by another teacher, suggesting that teachers were already 'bombarded' with information, much of which had to be filtered. As a consequence, the promotion of built environment education would need to be 'attention grabbing' (Primary assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber) and effective, offering inspiration rather than directives. Others also noted that any promotional literature sent to schools had to be distinctive:

*Something that really looks good and would be informative because lots of the information that gets sent through to the school gets put in the bin.*

Primary teacher, South East

The **LOtC manifesto** was noted by one interviewee who suggested that its profile required raising, and by implication, the use of buildings and local places would also be promoted. It was noted that increased efforts to demonstrate and celebrate nationally the extent to which school trips and visits were occurring and the successes they were achieving should be made. Hence, it would be beneficial to show 'how many positive experiences children receive from the outdoor education agenda' (Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber).

**Teacher publications** were highlighted as a possible vehicle through which schools' experiences of using buildings and local places could be presented and disseminated to wider audiences. In addition, the use of INSET was identified as a possible means of awareness raising, especially when targeted at groups of teachers with the same subject/faculty interests. This geography and leisure and tourism teacher suggested that such sessions could also offer advice on how to get the most out of local buildings, facilities and places.

Built environment providers and supporters/promoters were identified as having a key role to play in promoting the use of buildings and local places in education and learning:

*I think it has to be a kind of integration between different groups. Not only schools but also people in charge of the buildings, the environment themselves ... the institutions and the different bodies that are involved.*

Secondary head of geography, South East

As such, it was suggested that increased national leadership or the presence of an identifiable driver, was seen as a possible way of increasing the sector's profile. One teacher suggested that 'the profile needs to be in your face nationally'. The sector was identified as needing to offer more information and resources to schools, one teacher urging: 'tell us what you're doing, and we

can get involved if we want to' (Secondary, assistant headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber). The sector was also identified as the means through which good practice could be disseminated and shared between schools, especially in terms of linking buildings and local places to the requirements of the curriculum.

*The best thing would be for somebody to sit down and look at the literacy and numeracy and cross-curricular themes and make suggestions of how teachers could use specific resources against those sort of criteria. Anything that saves teachers work they will look at and we're all getting into the creative curriculum now. They need to show how it's going to fit into the creative curriculum or literacy and numeracy.*

Primary headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber

Hence, the development of an identifiable, cohesive body of support for built environment education was highlighted as a vehicle through which general awareness could be raised. The key here was integration – teachers suggested that it was necessary for all involved to have an input into promoting buildings and places. Local authority websites were identified as a vehicle through which ideas and themes could be promoted, as were professional events, such as the Specialist Schools Trust Conference, or national events and conferences relating to specific subject/curriculum areas.

### Key learning points

- Teachers and headteachers suggested similar ways to increase and encourage the use of buildings and local places in learning. The only point of divergence was that headteachers most commonly suggested increasing the availability of sites and places to visit, whereas teachers most commonly focused on more practical support and assistance, for example, additional information and resources and increased links with campaigns and initiatives. Teachers suggested the development of 'study packs' to support their use of buildings and local places in teaching and ensure the planning process was less problematic.
  - The built environment sector should consider developing more resources and information for teachers in the form of 'study packs'.
  - If developed, could subject associations offer advice, support and guidance on the development of these packs? How should they look, what format should they take and what information should they contain?
- More/clearer health and safety guidelines and risk assessments, and schemes of work were also thought to encourage greater take-up of buildings and local places in teaching.

- The LOtC Manifesto should aid health and safety issues and risk assessment concerns. There is a need to raise teachers' awareness of the Manifesto and how it can assist them in planning LOtC activities.
- Are schemes of work another area for development? Would this be detrimental to the creative nature of LOtC activities, as noted by one headteacher, and be too prescriptive? Again, could subject associations offer advice and assistance?
- Teachers and headteachers thought the national profile of the built environment sector could be raised in a number of ways. This included articles in teacher publications; the use of INSET; positive media coverage of LOtC activities (i.e. successful and safe school trips); and greater integration and support from the built environment sector with schools (i.e. organisations within the sector working together and with schools).
  - Would greater media coverage be beneficial to the built environment sector and increase teachers' awareness? Should the sector become more integrated and begin to work with schools in this way? If so, how can this be achieved and be visible to schools?

## 7 Conclusions

This research has shown that school staff (teachers, headteachers and governors) have very high levels of awareness and enthusiasm for built environment education and are very familiar with the benefits it can bring to their teaching and learning. It has also raised a number of issues in relation to how ‘fit for purpose’ built environment education is in meeting schools’ requirements. Despite high levels of awareness, teachers are much less certain of how to incorporate built environment education into their lessons and use it to meet curriculum requirements. More resources and, to a lesser extent, information about how to use buildings and local places in teaching is required and should be a focus of the sector’s future work. The development of the *Engaging Places* website will help meet the self-identified needs of teachers, in the first instance, i.e. their preference for a single source of information and online resources. However, if the website is to be of most use to schools, it will need to have both local and national information, as teachers reported wanting to know more about what resources were available within their immediate locality/region. Alongside this, the importance of having a practitioner or advisor who can provide support and inspiration for teachers was evident.

Despite the good levels of awareness about built environment education, the school community was less aware of wider policies and initiatives, such as: the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Manifesto and how this can aid planning/risk assessments for a visit; Building Schools for the Future; and Sustainable Schools. A greater awareness of such policies and the linkages they can have with built environment education is likely to increase the current use of built environment education within schools. Further awareness raising of the sector specifically, and in relation to these policies, may be achieved by using existing subject networks that teachers are part of and efforts should be made to utilise these existing networks further.

Teachers and headteachers still see cost, transport, current regulations/policies and, to a lesser extent, the National Curriculum, as being the main challenges to using buildings and local places in teaching. The sector can address some of these challenges by, firstly, alerting teachers to the more accessible forms of the built environment i.e. that do not always incur a cost, require transport and lengthy risk assessments. For example, teachers may require more information about how to use their school grounds, school buildings or even classroom spaces to study the built environment. Current curriculum reforms mean that the *Engaging Places* is both pertinent and timely and the sector needs to position itself as an effective way of providing cross-curricular education.

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