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1 Feinstein, L (1999) *Pre-school Educational Inequality? British children in the 1970 Cohort*, Centre for Economic Performance, University College, London

Executive Summary

In this report, we explain how, in the light of research showing that some of the benefits of pre-school education can be lost during later childhood if they are not consolidated, primary schools can play a crucial role in sustaining the social and academic gains provided by early years interventions.

The importance of early years' intervention

Children born into low income or poorly educated families carry such disadvantage with them throughout their lives. This is in the most part because they perform less well at school – leaving earlier and gaining fewer qualifications. As a result, such children usually have less well paid jobs, higher rates of criminality, health problems, alcohol and drug abuse and so on in their adult lives. Research shows in fact that education accounts for around 35-40% of the relationship between a parent and their son's income. And this disadvantage starts early - Feinstein actually found that, for those born in 1970, at 22 months, there was already a clear difference between the cognitive ability of low, middle and high socio-economic status children, and that these differences increased as the children got older. He also found that cognitive ability at 22 months correlated to educational attainment at age 27.¹

This sows the seeds for a socially immobile society – one where a child's life chances depend more on his father's income than his own ability. In order to stop this transmission of early misfortune into adult disadvantage, research shows we must seek to eliminate the links between a disadvantaged children's family background and their poor development as early as possible. Numerous studies show that intensive intervention in the first few years of life can set children on the right course, hav-

ing more of an impact on long-term life chances than any later remedial programmes.²

It is not surprising, then, that an early years' policy based on high quality intervention during the pre-school years, and targeted at the least advantaged children, is the cornerstone of the government's agenda to improve social mobility and eliminate inter-generational social exclusion. This policy represents a huge investment in the country's human capital – providing Sure Start places for 30% of under-fours living in poverty and all three and four year olds with a free part time childcare place.

However, research shows that the academic and social advantages of pre-school can fade out amongst the most disadvantaged children (i.e. those suffering from multiple disadvantages). By adolescence or earlier, these children may have fallen back behind their peers – potentially undermining the long-term returns of the government's investment into early years' programmes and thwarting its objective to ensure those born into disadvantage can fulfil their potential in adulthood.

However, evidence suggests that if the gains made in pre-school can be sustained until the start of secondary school (including through the disruption of changing schools at age eleven), then they are more likely to be secured in the long-term: a number of pre-school interventions with “follow on” programmes for the over fours produced longer-lasting benefits in their participant children than those offering pre-school intervention alone.³

In the light of these points, the importance of primary schools as a means of consolidating the benefits produced in the early years, and acting as a bridge between pre-school and secondary school, becomes evident. We cannot over-state their potential impact on ensuring the long-term success of the government's early years' policy. As Jeanne Brooks-Gunn states: “To expect effects [of pre-school] to be sustained throughout childhood and adolescence at their initial high levels in the absence of continued high quality schooling... is to believe in magic”.⁴

Yet despite some innovative practices in various schools around the country, the establishment of a national primary strategy specifically designed to build upon the government's pre-school programme has been overlooked. This can only be

2 See, for example, the longitudinal evaluations from the Perry Pre-School Programme, the Abecedarian and Chicago CPC programmes, and Head Start from the US.

3 See, for example, the Abecedarian and Chicago CPC programmes.

4 Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, (2003) “Do you believe in magic? What we can expect from early childhood intervention programs”, *Social Policy Report*, Vol. XVII, No.1 Society for Research in Child Development: Ann Arbor, MI.

5 Head Start is a national pre-school programme in the US

6 Thomas, Currie and Garces *The Longer Term Effects of Head Start* NBER Working Paper 8054, 2000

described as a disjointedness of purpose – one which threatens to undo the progress being made with society's most vulnerable children in Sure Start and similar pre-school centres around the country.

How can primary schools help prevent disadvantaged children from losing their early years' gains?

In order to answer this question, we must first establish some of the common explanations as to why some children fall behind their peers, whilst others thrive following a high quality pre-school education.

Currie and Thomas found that African-American children attending Head Start – a national pre-school programme in the US – were far more likely to lose during primary school the IQ and social boost they had gained. Their white and Hispanic counterparts, however, enjoyed cognitive and social skills advantages into adulthood.⁵ The researchers concluded that the reason for this was that African American Head Starters were subsequently attending lower quality elementary schools than the rest, which had failed to provide sufficient follow-up to consolidate the pre-school benefits.⁶

However, evidence suggests a child's home learning environment (i.e. the parental engagement with the child's development and creation of stimulus and learning opportunities in the home) has a far greater impact on a child's development than the school he or she attends – at least during the primary phase. Poor home learning environments need not be a direct result of low income and socio-economic background, however a correlation does exist. Those who suffered most in Currie and Thomas' study – poor African-Americans – may indeed have attended poorer quality primary schools than their peers, however it is also highly likely that they grew up in low income and poorly educated households – meaning they had little positive stimulus either at home or at school.

Despite evidence emphasising the home learning environment over the role of the school in the development of young children, we explain in this report how the primary school can and does have a central role to play. Not least because the actions a school takes to welcome and engage its parents can significantly improve the home learning environment. As such,

the school is an essential conduit – particularly for poorly educated and low income parents – to help them learn about their child's curriculum and pedagogy, and thus improve the way they engage and stimulate their children in the home.

We must also bear in mind that whilst a poor home learning environment may be the principal contributory factor to the fade out phenomenon, there are several other factors at play, and it is these which the primary school can help prevent. For example – a lack of motivation to learn as a result of: boredom, loss of confidence, low self-esteem or inability to keep up with peers can result in disaffection and fade out. Emotional problems can lead to poor behaviour, which can in turn increase the risk of exclusion and falling behind. Inadequate basic skills (such as literacy) can have the same effect.

In the report which follows, we review the evidence and some of the practices in schools which can specifically address these issues.

What are the key elements of primary school practice that can mitigate fade out?

In this report, we dedicate a chapter to each of the seven key strategies schools can adopt to sustain and consolidate children's early years' academic and social gains. We decided on these strategies in particular by considering why some children fall behind their peers despite a good pre-school experience, and then reviewed the evidence to determine what had been proven, for example, to ensure children stay enthusiastic and engaged with learning, keep up with their peers, and have the basic academic and social skills central to accessing a full primary curriculum. Our chapters are as follows:

1. A central focus on literacy

Literacy is the building block upon which all other subjects depend. Without sufficiently developed literacy skills, a child will find it impossible to access, let alone learn, other subjects. It is hardly surprising then that poor literacy skills have been linked to poor behaviour and de-motivation.

It is crucial that the government ensures those children most vulnerable to falling behind are given adequate support in their literacy development. Meta-analyses of studies in this

7 Hurry, J. (2000). *Intervention strategies to support pupils with difficulties in literacy during key stage 1*. Review of Research Institute of Education.

8 See, for example, Hull's longitudinal study associating low family income with child aggression <http://www.hull.ac.uk/children5to16programme/conference/joshi.pdf>

9 Evans, J., Harden, A., Thomas, J., Scanlon, M., and Sinclair, J. (August 2003). *Supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in mainstream primary schools: a systematic review of recent research on strategy effectiveness (1999 to 2002)*. EPPI-Centre report.

area find successful literacy strategies use a broad curriculum, with a strong phonological element, but included text reading, work on comprehension and on writing, particularly spelling. Programmes which had more instructional time devoted to reading and writing produced greater reading gains, and one-to-one intervention is more reliable than group programmes. The most effective strategies also identified the poorest readers and selected them for early intervention through a transparent assessment process, and used ongoing assessment and monitoring to inform teaching decisions.⁷

In this section we therefore propose the use of Success for All literacy principles (ability grouping, 8-weekly monitoring and so on) as a more effective but compatible alternative to the NLS, as well as the wider use of Reading Recovery as a more intensive and preventative alternative to the NLS's group catch-up classes.

2. Ensuring good behaviour and attendance

As one would expect, schools with high levels of truancy and behavioural problems causing disruption are those which produce lower achieving pupils. Evidence also shows that children from deprived backgrounds are also more likely to play truant, be excluded and have social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD).⁸ It is important, therefore, that schools help children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as until these are resolved, little progress in learning can be made.

Evidence in this area is limited. One meta-analysis of the available research concluded that systemic programmes, seeking to modify the external factors which affect behaviour (for example classroom lay out) had a positive effect on time on task, particularly for more distractible children. Psycho-dynamic programmes, aimed at the causes of poor behaviour and seeking to achieve long-term change through personal development (e.g. in "nurture groups") were effective in the short to medium term (over several months).⁹ Reviewing additional evidence regarding nurture groups, these are found to be a very effective strategy to help those children who are not emotionally or socially prepared for the mainstream classroom. Ofsted's findings are also informative. Inspectors found that learning mentors were the most effective strategy used in the government's existing

BIP programme.

We suggest in this section that government funding should be given to schools with particular socio-economic profiles to implement behaviour improvement strategies. Guidance on such strategies should be based on shared best practice and a more efficient way of measuring low level disruption. Furthermore, learning mentors should be a mandatory element for BIP funded schools, and nurture groups should at least be a recommended element.

3. *Creating a co-educator role for parents*

Here we avoid any evaluations of the government's formal parenting strategies (e.g. parenting orders), which are too much in flux to make any valuable assessments, and instead concentrate on the somewhat overlooked area of the informal, day to day communication schools establish with parents: cultivating co-operational relationships between parent and teacher to achieve the joint goal of ensuring their children fulfil their potential.

There is an extremely substantial body of evidence which demonstrates the correlation between parental interest in a child's education and that child's academic and social achievement. However, Desforges finds that "parenting style" is more important in improving children's development than parental involvement in school per se, and whilst the latter is affected by family income and SES, the former is somewhat independent.

Nevertheless, parenting style can be significantly influenced by how much parents know about their child's education. As such, schools should endeavour to provide several and diverse ways in which parents can become informally involved in the school, to overcome the lack of confidence some parents have in communicating with their child's teachers or coming on to the school site. This includes encouraging parents to act as supervisors in the playground, and organising social events for parents in order for them to develop peer relations.

Schools should also provide more structured programmes, such as *Keep Up With the Children*, to show parents what and how their children learn in school, and how to replicate this in the home. For those parents requiring extra support, home visits can be an effective way of forging links between teachers and

parents early on.

To implement these strategies, a dedicated member of staff should be recruited in target schools to act as parent liaison and charged with improving parental involvement in school activities.

4. *Using innovative class structures*

Class structures – both their size and composition – are extremely important in that they have a significant affect on both what and how children learn. For children vulnerable to fade out during the primary years, class structures can be used to achieve a variety of important outcomes. Small group teaching can help ensure less able children do not fall behind their classmates and give more beneficial teacher-interaction; multi-age teaching can give vulnerable children older role-models and improve social interactions; and cooperative learning can improve social and communication skills, to name a few.

Evidence indicates that successful school grouping strategies are those which are flexible. This is because the most effective group, in terms of size and composition, depends on the skills being taught and the pupils in question.

For example, evidence shows that small classes (12-15) and large classes (30+) can both be effective, depending on the subject being taught. Similarly, and despite the number of studies advising against the use of setting by ability, evidence suggests it can, in fact, benefit low achievers if used wisely. First, a disadvantaged pupil's main point of identification should be with a mixed ability class and grouping by ability should occur only in subjects in which reducing the spread of attainment in the group is particularly important. Second, schools should frequently reassess pupils' group assignment, and movement between groups should be common practice. This will help reduce stigma and ensure pupils are always placed in the group most appropriate to their ability – an approach successfully used by the Success for All reading programme. Third, although teachers must vary their pace and level of instruction to correspond to students' ability, they must take pains to ensure they do not underestimate lower sets. The importance of teacher attitude cannot be over-emphasised.

In general, however, the most effective form of grouping

is grouping by ability within classes. This removes some of the risks associated with whole-class setting but still enables teachers to target their teaching style according to ability. Yet studies show that whilst most primary class children do sit in groups, they very rarely work in groups, more often working individually. This discrepancy increases the chances of classroom disruption. For cognitive, investigative tasks, mixed-ability grouping and discussion can also be productive.

5. *A variety of additional support*

Additional support is one of the most crucial elements of preventing fade out. It ensures that vulnerable pupils do not fall behind their peers, which can lead to de-motivation, and can provide a place where children can practice their social skills, improve their self-esteem and have access to experiences they would otherwise never have.

Evidence shows that whilst “curriculum extension” activities (such as homework clubs or after school maths clubs) have the most significant impact on raising achievement, “enrichment” activities (such as sports, ICT and arts) can have important affects on the sociability, self-confidence and enthusiasm of disadvantaged children, which then in turn can improve their performance and behaviour in classes. Such activities can also improve attendance as they act as an attraction for pupils to come on to school premises.

Mentoring is also an extremely valuable means of providing additional targeted support. As we see throughout this report, mentoring can be used in a variety of ways – from improving behaviour to reading skills and easing transition to secondary school. Most importantly, successful mentors are those which bridge the gap between pastoral care and academic support, and who visibly promote the interests of their students in the school.

Finally, booster classes can also be a useful tool to ensure children do not fall behind academically. It is important, however, that boosts are carried out as early as possible – as soon as it is noted that a child may be struggling in a particular subject. Most schools use boosters in Year 6 as a means of preparing for SATs, but this is probably too late given that they may have been falling behind since Year 1. The most effective boosts are

also intensive, one to one sessions as a supplement to normal classes.

6. *A more flexible curriculum*

The curriculum is the lynch-pin for what and how children are taught in school. As such, it has the power to create a love of learning or disaffection at an early age. A wisely designed curriculum can prove an effective vehicle for promoting social, emotional, behavioural, life and learning skills; for ensuring smooth transitions between school years and school stages; and most importantly, for motivating and engaging disaffected pupils through a flexible and accessible subject offer and pedagogy.

In this section, we suggest the primary curriculum should use more cross-subject, thematic work, to engage more pupils. Learning should also be more skills focussed and not just about knowledge-acquirement. Indeed, it is the lack of such skills which often holds back disadvantaged children. Communication, teamwork, problem solving, leadership, initiative, and so on should have equal weight to the more accepted skills, such as ICT and numeracy.

As we explain in chapter two, social and emotional difficulties can act as a major barrier to learning for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. To this end, the curriculum should encourage children's personal development with social, emotional and behavioural skills as an integral component, promoted in all subjects rather than as an add-on.

Finally, we explain in this section how the curriculum must strike a balance between continuity and progression when it comes to the transition to secondary school. An over-emphasis on the former may lead to boredom and disengagement, whilst an under-emphasis may cause anxiety. We suggest incorporating secondary curricular elements into Year 6, rather than prolonging too many primary elements in Year 7, as one possible option.

7. *A coordinated transition strategy*

The dips in attainment associated with the disruption of the move from primary to secondary school is well documented. Children can be anxious about the prospect of fitting in, and

find adapting to a new secondary school ethos, peer group, environment, curriculum and pedagogy difficult to cope with all at once. For others, heightened expectations of a move to big school can lead to disillusionment and de-motivation.

Although this is a well-documented problem, the government's response is quite limited and focuses mainly on curricular bridges. Unfortunately, such methods are not feasible for many secondary schools, especially those with several feeder primaries. The government's approach also overlooks somewhat the administrative and social aspects of transition that schools can ease through a variety of measures. These include, for example, joint planning between primary and secondary schools to establish what pupil level data is necessary to ensure secondary schools can cater their teaching to the needs of their new intake, and may even be supplemented by children bringing in pieces of work with them to their first day in Year 7. For certain children, however, schools may consider carrying out targeted home visits to forge early relationships with parents.

Induction courses can also be very effective. Even though many schools have open days, few have induction weeks at the beginning of the new term. If new Year 7s were able to start school a week early, they would be able to familiarise themselves with their new surroundings, teachers and classmates, be taught what is expected of them as secondary school pupils and introduced to new study skills and thinking strategies. Other strategies, such as buddying schemes, and using the nurture group strategy for new pupils who arrive unprepared to learn in secondary classrooms, can also prove particularly valuable.

Finally, concerning the curriculum, we emphasise the need to balance continuity with progression: too much continuity risks repetition and disillusionment amongst children excited about a new phase in their educational careers. Children must be provided with both a certain level of familiarity but also be enthused about the new opportunities on offer in secondary school.

Conclusions

This paper is a broad ranging review of the evidence and best-practice in a variety of pedagogical and administrative elements of primary school practice. They are joined by a unifying objective – to ensure that those children most vulnerable to falling behind their peers, despite high quality pre-school experiences, maintain their academic and social skills' progress during primary school and join their new secondary school able to realise their full potential

We cannot overemphasise the importance of this primary school function. The government has rightly invested a significant amount of resources into improving the early years' experiences of the most socio-economically disadvantaged children in the country. However, it would be extremely unfortunate (and wasteful) if the social and academic gains made by the children who need these the most, were to become diluted during primary school and not come to fruition in the form of improved adult life-chances.

It is a reasonable response to the government's investment in the early years that it should ensure that primary schools are able to consolidate this stage of a child's life, maximising the return on the investment in the form of a successful secondary school career and adult success. As such, this paper provides a fresh way of considering primary school reform – through the lens of sustaining the benefits of early years' intervention – and raises a number of extremely interesting points for the government to consider as part of the social inclusion and personalisation agendas.

Introduction

This report is the final stage of an ongoing project at the Social Market Foundation exploring the contribution of good quality pre-school to improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and their families. As the government states: “early intervention to provide a better start in life remains the best lever for tackling long term social inequality”.¹⁰ It is with this objective in mind that the SMF produced *A 2020 Vision for Early Years*, which put forward a case for making life chances the driving objective of early years policy and provision over the next ten years; and *Too much Too Late*, which proposed a reallocation of spending in the medium term in favour of children under five, based on strong evidence of the contribution of early education to improvements in adult life chances.

In this final report, we explain how, in the light of research showing that some of the benefits of pre-school education can be lost during later childhood if they are not consolidated, primary schools can play a crucial role in sustaining the social and academic gains provided by early years interventions. High quality pre-school intervention is one of the most effective means of improving the life chances of those children born into poverty. Children given a good start in life not only achieve more throughout their school careers and therefore experience more adult labour market success, they also enjoy a wide range of social benefits, including reduced criminality, better health, and reduced alcoholism and drug abuse. Pre-school is a truly life-enhancing experience for disadvantaged children.

Yet pre-school is not a magic bullet. It is a crucial first step, producing an academic and social boost which cannot be replicated at any later stage in a person's life – but alone it will not wipe out the perpetuating disadvantage which creates such low social mobility in this country. For the poorest children, living

11 There is a substantial body of evidence supporting this claim both from the US and the UK. For a review of this evidence see Vidhya Alakeson's *Too Much Too Late* and *A 2020 Vision for Childcare*, 2005, Social Market Foundation.

10 ODP. (2004). *Breaking the Cycle of Social Exclusion*. Social Exclusion Unit.

in the worst neighbourhoods, and with the least well educated parents, intensive support in the first few years will not protect them from a life-time of multiple deprivation. This is why a later consolidation of the first steps made in pre-school is so important to the long-term success of the government's investment into an early years' strategy which seeks to improve the long-term life chances of society's least well-off.

Background to the research

There has been considerable government investment in improving the provision of pre-school education in the UK. The 1998 Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* acknowledged that childcare was expensive and badly inspected, and quality was patchy. The Green paper set out the National Childcare Strategy, and in 2001, the government's flagship Sure Start programme was launched, designed to deliver childcare alongside early education and other health and family services. This programme has now invested £3.1 billion to create Sure Start places for 400,000 children, including 30% of under fours living in poverty. New Sure Start Children's Centres are now replacing Early Excellence Centres in disadvantaged communities as a one stop shop for child and family educational and healthcare support. All three and four year olds are also now guaranteed a free, part time pre-school place.

Whilst this policy is in part driven by economic considerations (helping parents return to work by providing subsidised childcare), the level of investment dedicated to improving the early years' experiences of disadvantaged children is, in the most part, based on extensive evidence demonstrating that the 0-4 phase of childhood is crucial in a child's cognitive and social development.¹¹ Government investment into improving the quality of children's pre-school learning experiences is an attempt to improve the adult life chances of children born into disadvantage.

Given the extensive nature of the research in this field, practitioners have been able to define which factors constitute a successful pre-school intervention programme with the most significant and longest lasting beneficial effects. The most important factor is shown to be a “follow up” phase of intervention in early childhood, which helps consolidate the

immediate cognitive and social gains made in earlier years. The Chicago CPC pre-school programme in the US, for example, demonstrates this effect. 13.1% of children who had had pre-school care, and then follow-up care for another two years, had been kept down a class at age thirteen, compared to 30.1% of children who had received pre-school care only. Similarly, reading and maths tests of the pre-school plus follow-up children at nine were not only higher than the pre-school only children, but also higher than the Chicago state average. (Reading scores at age nine: 92.9 points for the control group, 98.6 points for pre-school only and 103.9 for the pre-school plus follow-up group, compared to the Chicago average of 100). This is a great achievement considering the participants in this programme were disadvantaged children (84% of the CPC children qualified for free school meals).¹² From these results, Reynolds concluded that pre-school intervention on its own was more effective than elementary age intervention on its own, while the two combined was most effective.

The long-term effects of this and other pre-school follow-up programmes (such as the Abecedarian project) are particularly interesting given the fact that several of the longitudinal studies evaluating the long-term impact of pre-school programmes in the US have found that the academic advantage of the programmes' participants often fade out with time. For example, the Abecedarian pre-school only programme found that participating children had an IQ advantage of 16.4 points at three years old, but that by age eight, that gap had narrowed to 4.5 points.¹³ Similarly, the Perry programme found its programme children lost their IQ advantage over the control group by age eight,¹⁴ and the Chicago programme found achievement tests were higher for programme children at age seven, but had levelled out with the control group by age thirteen.¹⁵

The fade out problem has led some critics to question the efficacy of costly pre-school programmes which only produce short-term gains. However, the evidence shows that not all children attending pre-school lose the advantages it affords them. For example, in their study measuring the long-term effects of Head Start, Currie and Thomas found that African-American Head Starters were far more susceptible to fade out than their white and Hispanic counterparts, who displayed cognitive and

12 Reynolds, J and Temple, A (1996): *Extended Early Childhood Intervention and School Achievement: Age 13 Findings from the Chicago Longitudinal Study* Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper no. 1095-96

13 Ramey, C. T., Campbell, A. F., and Ramey, S. L. (1999). *Early Intervention: Successful Pathways to Improving Intellectual Development*. Civitan International Research Center, University of Alabama at Birmingham

14 Currie, J. (2000). *Early Childhood Intervention Programs: What Do We Know?* UCLA: NBER.

15 Reynolds, A. (1997). *Can Early Intervention Prevent High School Dropout? Evidence from the Chicago Child-Parent Centers*. Institute for Research on Poverty. Discussion Paper no. 1180-98.

16 Head Start is a national pre-school programme in the US.

17 The term "poverty" in this field of study represents a multitude of factors known to inhibit a child's mental and emotional development – from poor nutrition and home environment, to parental unemployment and low educational attainment, etc.

18 Currie, J and Thomas, D *Do the Benefits of Early Childhood Education Last?* July 1997

19 Thomas, D., Currie, J., and Garces, J. (2000). *The Longer Term Effects of Head Start*. NBER Working Paper 8054.

20 with the exception of teen parenthood in girls and criminality in boys which did not seem to correlate with cognitive performance between 5 and 10.

social skills advantages into their adulthood.¹⁶ A number of theories have been posited to explain this difference: one suggestion was that African American Head Starters tend to remain in poverty for longer periods of time than their white counterparts, and poverty¹⁷ has been proven to have a detrimental effect on a child's cognitive and behavioural development. Another factor, and one which Currie and Thomas assessed to be more salient, was the fact that African American Head Starters tended to go on to poorer quality schools than their white peers. Measuring the "quality" of a school using observable characteristics such as class size, teacher salary, and numbers of pupils in remedial classes, Currie and Thomas found that these factors correlated at least in part with the fade out effect among African American Head Starters.¹⁸

Thus, the research demonstrates that fade out is not, as originally thought, a symptom of the inability of pre-school intervention to affect the life chances of children over the long term, but the result of factors which come into play outside the reach of pre-school interventions – possibly the schooling after the programme, which fails to consolidate the pre-school benefits.¹⁹

The importance of good quality "follow on", later schooling to cement the gains made in pre-school is further demonstrated by a study carried out by Feinstein and Bynner. Their survey of the 1970 birth cohort found that children who were poor performers at age five, but managed to become high performers at age ten, were as successful in adulthood (looking at factors such as educational success, wage levels and criminality) as if they had never been underperforming at age five.²⁰ Conversely, the study showed that those who had been top performers at age five, but had slipped to being low performers at age ten, showed no significant advantage over the control group once they were adults – so overall, academic advantage at age five produced fewer long term benefits than advantage at age ten. This demonstrates that whilst a child's early years are crucial in improving his or her cognitive and social skills, it is the fact of *sustaining these gains through the primary school years which will have the most impact on their adult life chances*.

A further, and substantial, body of research points to another important phase in a child's development – the period

of transition between primary and secondary school. Several studies have noted a fall in attainment in the first two years of secondary school, and link this to the upheaval of a different school, peer group, teaching style and curriculum occurring simultaneously. A study by researchers at Cambridge University in 1999 found that 40% of pupils lost motivation and made no progress in the year after they transferred to secondary school. A more recent study conducted by the same team reports that 39% of pupils in maths and 66% in English fail to make the expected gain of one level after transfer²¹ and almost half of all pupils play truant for the first time in the first two years after moving to secondary school.²²

From the research outlined above, we can thus draw the following conclusions:

- A child's rate of learning in pre-school (0 to 4 years) is faster than at any other time. Pre-school interventions can produce dramatic academic and social benefits, particularly among disadvantaged children;
- These benefits (at least the academic benefits) can sometimes fade out in later childhood;
- The instance and rate of fade out depends on a child's post-early years experiences, in particular from five to ten years of age and their experience of transition to secondary school; and
- If a child can sustain his or her pre-school gains to age 10, and experience a smooth transition to secondary school, he or she will most likely enjoy improved life-chances in adulthood.

In the light of these points, it is clear that the ultimate success of the government's investment into pre-school education will depend, at least in part, on the ability of our primary schools to sustain the progress made by children between the ages of 0-4 until at least age twelve. In this sense, we might view primary school as a stepping-stone of sorts – one which carries children from their play-based pre-school experiences to formal education in secondary school.

Unfortunately, Sure Start and the government's other pre-school programmes have been too recently developed to generate longitudinal studies to evaluate their long term impacts. We

21 Galton, M., Gray, J., and Jean Ruddock. (1999). *The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment*. DfES: London, 1999. Galton et al, 2003 op cit.

22 Schagen, I., Benton, T., and Rutt, S. (2005). *Study of Attendance in England*. National Audit Office. London.

23 Reynolds, D., Sammons, P., Stoll, P., Barber, M., and Hillman, J. (1996), "School effectiveness and school improvement in the United Kingdom", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 7: 133-158.

24 Sparkes, J. (1999). *Schools, Education and Social Exclusion*. CASE: London.

25 Feinstein, L., and Symons, J. (1999). *Attainment in secondary school*. Oxford Economic Papers. 51:300-321. OUP: Oxford.

cannot, therefore, state categorically whether the UK's current primary school system is fit for purpose in sustaining pre-school advantages into the secondary school years and beyond. What we do know, however, is that transitional dips in attainment do occur in our schools – between Reception class and Key Stage 1, and between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. From this, we can at least infer that the primary school phase does not provide a seamless transition between pre-school and secondary school which is most beneficial to children's learning trajectories.

The importance of the home learning environment

Of course, should we find that future generations of adults who attended Sure Start and similar pre-school programmes have no discernable advantage over those adults who did not, we cannot blame exclusively the quality of their primary school experiences. As Currie and Thomas found (see above), fade out affected adult Head Start participants in the US to varying degrees. Those who suffered most – poor African-Americans – may indeed have attended poorer quality primary schools than their peers. However, it is also highly likely that they grew up in low income and poorly educated households – meaning they had little positive stimulus either at home or at school.

In fact, according to studies of school effectiveness, the school a pupil attends only accounts for between 8 and 15% of the variation in his or her attainment.²³ A number of background/non-school variables make up the rest of the variation in pupil attainment, including family income, ethnicity and health.²⁴ Of all of these factors, the Home Learning Environment (HLE) – defined as the quality of learning opportunities provided in the home – is said to be the most fundamental. The quality of the HLE is often affected by a parent's interest in their child's education. Analysis conducted by Feinstein and Symons indicates that moving from a situation of no parental interest in education to high parental interest accounts for a 24% change in exam scores on an all-exam index.²⁵

Given the relatively small impact within-school factors can have on a child's attainment, it would seem misguided to focus on the primary school as a way of ensuring the gains made in pre-school are sustained into adolescence. However, the "school

factor” should not be overlooked – research shows that the school effect can lift GCSE results by up to 14 points for pupils with average levels of prior attainment. This is broadly equivalent to the difference between six Grade Bs rather than Grade D GCSE passes.²⁶

Second, evidence shows the school effect is larger at primary level, and also has more of an impact on underprivileged and/or initially low achieving students. While an effective school benefits all pupils, it offers these groups a particular boost. According to a study of seventeen inner London primary schools, working class pupils attending the most effective schools made greater progress and had higher attainment at the end of the study than middle-class students in the least effective schools.²⁷ Therefore, attending an effective primary school is particularly important for disadvantaged children in mitigating the effects of a poor home learning environment.

A third point that must be taken into account is the fact that a huge amount can be achieved when a school acts as a lever to improve a child's home learning environment. Schools can act as the government's key tool for targeted improvements in the HLEs of the most disadvantaged children. This fact has influenced the development of pre-school programmes both in the US and the UK (including Sure Start's Children's Centres, Early Excellence Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries). Such centres offer extensive family services, including parenting classes, outreach and adult skills initiatives. This reflects the government's acknowledgement that the children for whom these services were designed tend to come from disadvantaged families, where poor education, parenting skills, mental health and few employment opportunities render children's home lives less than conducive to early cognitive and social development. As a result, a holistic “one stop shop” approach to early years' services has developed. Given the valuable relationships which are built up with disadvantaged families during this period, it is surprising and disappointing that not more is done to sustain these ties by encouraging parents to become “co-educators” during primary schooling.

Many schools, of course, do have sophisticated strategies for involving parents in the teaching of their children, both in and out of the classroom. However, these are very much ad-hoc

26 Sparkes, J (1999)

27 *ibid*

28 Thomas, Currie and Garces
*The Longer Term Effects of
Head Start* NBER Working
Paper 8054, 2000

approaches adopted by individual, forward-thinking primary schools. When compared with the range of on-site services and systematic family support and outreach provided to parents of pre-school children, the lack of a concerted co-educator strategy at primary level is evident.

What factors contribute to fade out?

In reviewing the research outlined above and other such studies, we can isolate a number of factors which may contribute to the fade out of the improvement in cognitive and social skills produced during pre-school interventions. As we explain above, studies show only some children seem to lose their pre-school advantage, whilst others thrive. It is the differences between these two groups of children that provide us with the best indications as to what drives the fade out phenomenon.

For example, when faced with the fact that African-American children lost the gains from the Head Start pre-school programme whilst White and Hispanic children did not, Currie and Thomas concluded that it was the subsequent quality of elementary provision that was to blame.²⁸ However a further supposition can be made – that poor African-American children attending poor quality elementary schools are also most likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged, with its associated impact on the quality of the home learning environment.

If we take these two areas – school and home – as the arenas through which some children lose their pre-school gains, we can identify how this may occur.

First, the loss of academic advantage, that is a levelling off of progress during the primary years, can be a result of a loss of enthusiasm to learn. This may be caused by a child's de-motivation, disengagement (boredom), or a loss of self-confidence. In turn, de-motivation or a loss of confidence may occur when a child cannot keep up with the class and feels he or she is falling behind his or her peers. Boredom, on the other hand, may occur if a child does not feel sufficiently challenged, or if the way in which subjects are presented and taught are not sufficiently stimulating.

A loss of academic progress can also be exacerbated by emotional problems and poor behaviour which pre-school intervention had not been able to resolve, and which are not

adequately addressed in primary school. These can make a child unable to fit in and learn productively in his or her new primary class, or lead to exclusion or truancy.

Second, a loss of academic or social skills advantage following pre-school may be caused by insufficient consolidation of these skills from age four-five. For example, the basic learning skills achieved in pre-school may not be effectively translated into literacy and numeracy from Reception and Year 1. Similarly, the first steps in basic socialisation, which pre-school can so successfully achieve, may not be sufficiently developed into more sophisticated communication skills and emotional literacy from age five to eleven.

Finally, some children may fall behind their peers either socially or academically due to the disruption of changing from one school to another. Some children, for example, find it hard to adjust to the new environment, teaching style and peer group that comes with the move to secondary school. The anxiety (or indeed disillusionment for those children with high expectations of secondary school) this move creates can cause less well prepared children's progress to level off between Years 6 and 7, and for some, between Years 7 and 8.

Concerning the home environment, we can identify a number of factors which may contribute to the fade out of pre-school advantages. The EPPE research team identified a poor home learning environment, typified by a negative parenting style and attitude towards learning, as the single largest cause of poor cognitive and social development in young children.²⁹ Children with poor home learning environments are less likely to be engaged and stimulated at home – their parents may not read to them or talk with them, and may not take an interest in their school work. As such, their basic literacy, numeracy and social skills which primary schools are attempting to instil are not consolidated in the home, significantly reducing the schools' chances of success. This type of home environment may also lead to behavioural and emotional problems, which as we mention above, can make it hard for children to learn productively in class, may increase the risks of exclusion and may also render children ill-prepared for the disruption of moving to secondary school.

This combination of home and school factors – the former

29 Melhuish, E., Sylva, C., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B. (2001). Social behavioural and cognitive development at 3-4 years in relation to family background. The effective provision of pre-school education, EPPE project (Technical paper 7). DfEE. London: The Institute of Education.

often exacerbating the latter – can be viewed as the main sources of a slowing of academic and social progress which, if unchecked, will mean the most disadvantaged children may fall back behind their peers despite having gained ground thanks to pre-school interventions.

The research report

In the light of these findings, we identify some of the practices which have been proven to help prevent the fade out of pre-school learning. For example – how can schools guard against de-motivation? By helping ensure children do not fall behind their peers and lose their confidence, and by creating an engaging and accessible curriculum for all ability levels. It is true that for primary school children, a poor home learning environment will probably have a greater influence on social and academic development than school – so that regardless of how hard schools work to prevent a fade out of pre-school gains, the child may still fall behind. However, as we shall see below, a huge amount can be achieved when a school acts as a lever to improve a child's home learning environment.

Thus, the report which follows will investigate what primary schools can do to help prevent the fade out phenomenon, both in the areas of school and home. We will not, however, venture into the formal policy ground currently occupied by the government's existing parenting and childcare strategies, which have seen such measures as parenting orders, contracts and parenting classes. First, such strategies are centred upon a parent's formal responsibility to ensure their child attends school and behaves responsibly, which is a somewhat separate strategy to the "softer" approach of encouraging parents to co-educate their children with their primary schools. Any attempt to add a new dimension to this richly researched field, where policy is still being formed, would be difficult given the time and size constraints of this project.

Second, the role of primary schools as explicit means of sustaining pre-school gains has been somewhat overlooked by policy makers, and thus needs further exploration. Despite some innovative practices in various schools around the country, the establishment of a national primary strategy specifically designed to complement and build upon the government's pre-

school programme is underdeveloped and thus the area where this project will be able to add most value and encourage new strategic thinking.

In the light of this reasoning, the first part of this report will examine a range of within-school practices which have been proven to have some impact on preventing the slippage in attainment witnessed amongst disadvantaged children in the years immediately following pre-school. Each section will explain a particular in-school practice and its relative effectiveness in sustaining cognitive/social abilities and/or easing the transition to secondary schooling; and explore the conditions under which it is most effective (i.e. some practices must be combined with others, or used for certain subsections of children, in order for them to produce positive results). We will also assess the additional value of parental involvement in such practices, where relevant, in order to demonstrate opportunities for integrating such reforms into the government's emerging parenting agenda. To illustrate the use of these policies in practice, we will also present a range of case studies from a number of schools around the country who are innovating in these fields.

Finally, we will create an indicative primary school timetable as a way of expressing the possible implementation of the most effective combination of within-school practices that we assess in this report. This illustration of our policy recommendations can be found in Appendix A. Whilst this, and our proposals, may seem prescriptive at first glance, as we affirm in several of the following sections, the key to successful implementation of these strategies is flexibility – not only to choose which combination of strategies to adopt, but also how and when they are used and to which pupils they are targeted. Therefore, our intention was to create not a definite one-size-fits-all set of practices, but rather present the evidence available and raise awareness amongst government policy makers of the range of strategies that can be adopted to build on and reap long-term rewards from early years' policy. We also wanted to create a tool for primary schools to be able to review instances of best practice and gain new ideas for their own information. The government has recently announced that the per pupil funding in state schools will be increased to match that in independent schools

in an attempt to eradicate poor quality schools in disadvantaged areas. We hope that the suggestions made in this report may serve to provide some ideas as to how this extra funding might be spent.

Chapter One: A central focus on literacy

How can a focus on literacy prevent fade out?

Literacy is the building block upon which all other learning depends. Without developed literacy skills, a child will find it impossible to access, let alone learn, other subjects. This is demonstrated in the fact that literacy improvement programmes often have as side-effects improvements in other subjects, such as maths.³⁰ It is vital, therefore, that children starting primary school are given ample opportunity to develop their literacy skills and become fluent readers and writers if they are ever to enjoy further academic success later in life. There is also a large body of evidence which has found a significant link between poor literacy and poor social skills. Weaker readers tend to display behavioural problems, such as aggression.³¹ This can also be illustrated in the fact that another concomitant benefit found in some literacy programmes is improved social skills and less hyperactivity.³²

Sparkes states that literacy skills are also an important predictor of later life success – she cites evidence which demonstrates the correlation between poor literacy skills and higher rates of exclusion, and greater likelihood of adult unemployment and lower earnings.³³ Parsons also found that poor basic skills were also significantly correlated to criminality, even when poverty and family background are taken into account.

Thus, focusing on improving literacy skills at primary level is particularly important to prepare pupils for wider learning, to keep them motivated and improve their long term life chances. This is even more important for those pupils vulnerable to fade out – e.g. from more deprived backgrounds – as it is a lack of

34 Earl, Watson et al (2003) *Final Report of the External Evaluation of England's National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

35 *Maths Hour Still not Universal*, Times Educational Supplement, 26 May 2000.

36 <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Update/strat.html#literacy>

30 See Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden, *Success for All/Roots and Wings: Summary of research on achievement outcomes*, (CRESPAR: Washington, 2003) for an example of how the Success for All literacy programme improved maths scores.

31 See, for example, Miles, S.B., and Stipek, D. (2006). *Contemporaneous and Longitudinal Associations Between Social Behavior and Literacy Achievement in a Sample of Low-Income Elementary School Children*. *Child Development*. 77: 103-115.

32 Children participating in the SPOKES literacy programme show significant reductions in antisocial behaviour and hyperactivity, as well as a more predictable gain in literacy skills.

33 Sparkes, J (1999).

motivation and ill-preparedness for formal learning which contribute to the fade out phenomenon (see introduction).

The government's current strategy

The importance of literacy as the principle building block of learning is certainly not a new concept, and primary schools have for most of the 20th century dedicated significant amounts of teaching time to reading and writing. More recently, the government introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in 1998.

The NLS has proven successful in raising pupil attainment.³⁴ In 1996, only 57% of eleven year olds were at the literacy standard expected for their age. By 2002, that figure had shot up to 75% following decades of stagnation. Such progress has been directly attributed to the NLS, the cornerstone of which was a set of challenging national literacy targets.

To help schools meet the targets, schools had to implement the “literacy hour”. In January 1998, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority told primary schools to cut the time spent on history, geography, design and technology, art, music and PE in order to spend an hour a day on literacy. Teachers could ignore the national syllabuses for these subjects, but they should “have regard to” them and maintain a broad and balanced curriculum. Every school also had to produce a two-year school literacy plan. In addition, a national curriculum for Initial Teacher Training was introduced requiring every course to give top priority to ensuring that all trainee primary teachers could teach literacy well.

The NLS was successful in part due to the consensus shared amongst teachers, parents and the public that English and maths needed to be prioritised. A survey by CfBT carried out in 2000 found that 95% of primary heads supported the National Literacy Strategy compared to 89% in the year before.³⁵ By allowing teachers the freedom over their curriculum, additional training and some additional funding, schools felt they were supported by the government in meeting an extremely challenging target. Consequently, the 1998-2002 period saw an increase in national literacy rates greater than at any time in the post-war period.³⁶

The NLS has not been free of criticism, however. Ofsted

has raised concerns that the focus on literacy and numeracy in primary schools has led to a narrowing of the curriculum, whereby those subjects with national targets are being taught to the detriment of the arts and humanities.³⁷ Teaching unions have also complained more recently that the literacy hour and various remedial programmes in the NLS have added to teachers' workload considerably, leaving less time for preparation of other classes.³⁸ Various academics and popular authors have also voiced their concerns regarding the NLS method of teaching texts for grammatical and vocabulary purposes, which they argue removes the enjoyment of reading and undermines the sense of the whole text, discouraging children from reading more widely for pleasure.³⁹

Whilst some may object to NLS methods (most notably the government's use of national targets), there has been little disputing the importance of effective literacy teaching at primary level. The question we must address, therefore, is whether the goals of improved literacy and appreciation of reading at primary level can be delivered more effectively than through the current NLS.⁴⁰

Other literacy strategies

A team of researchers from the Institute of Education (IoE) carried out a meta-analysis, evaluating a number of literacy strategies that had been carried out in the UK, US and Australia to support young children experiencing difficulties with their literacy. From this review they were able to isolate a number of key features which were shown to be effective in bringing struggling pupils up to the level of their peers. These features were grouped into three categories – curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Regarding the curriculum, the study found that the most successful reading interventions used a broad curriculum, with a strong phonological element, but included text reading, work on comprehension and on writing, particularly spelling.

The recent Rose Review into primary literacy echoes these conclusions. The review, published in March 2006, recommends that reading, writing, listening and speaking skills should all be promoted as part of the primary literacy strategy, with synthetic phonics constituting a central element of each of these

37 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/2806179.stm>

38 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1937699.stm>

39 <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,1052077,00.html>

40 The NLS is, in fact, in the process of being reformed. Drafts for consultation have been submitted to teaching and other bodies for comment.

41 Rose, J. (2006). *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: final report*. DfES.

42 Hurry, J. (2000). *Intervention strategies to support pupils with difficulties in literacy during key stage 1*. Review of Research Institute of Education.

43 See, for example, <http://www.ruthmiskinliteracy.com/ofsted.html> and Hilary Wilce, *The woman who can teach any child to read*, The Sunday Times, 28 August 2005.

practices. Rose also emphasises the importance of engaging children with reading for fun as early as possible by including a range of multi-sensory components and play based approaches to reading.⁴¹ It seems that some of these recommendations are being reflected in the DfES's recent consultation on the reform of literacy and numeracy teaching.

Concerning pedagogy, as expected, the IoE study found those programmes which had more instructional time devoted to reading and writing produced greater reading gains. The researchers stated that children with reading problems should be given more instruction time than the NLS hour, preferably during non-literacy classroom time. To make the most of instruction time, children must be fully engaged with their task. Adult supervision or work with peers may be helpful. The study also found one-to-one intervention is more reliable than group programmes and teachers tended to produce more flexible and responsive reading programmes than teaching assistants.

Finally, regarding the approach to assessment, the study found that the most effective programmes identified the poorest readers and selected them for early intervention through a transparent assessment process, and used ongoing assessment and monitoring to inform teaching decisions.⁴²

Many of the elements identified by the IoE review of research are present in some of the more noteworthy literacy schemes. Ruth Miskin's literacy strategy (RML), for example, is primarily a synthetic phonics programme, which until recently appeared to be a departure from Government thinking on the literacy strategy, but which has proved extremely effective. In addition to learning phonics, RML pupils also spend more time working in pairs and practicing their speaking skills, and are grouped by ability across age groups. Each of these elements are proven effective teaching strategies (see chapter four for more information about ability based and small-group cooperative learning), and together they form a highly successful literacy strategy praised by parents, teachers and Ofsted for the significantly larger gains made in reading and writing than via the NLS.⁴³

Reading Recovery (RR) is another intervention programme which uses other elements identified in the review of research. RR was introduced in the early 90s in England

but was originally pioneered in New Zealand in the 1980s.⁴⁴ It uses one-to-one, intensive daily literacy lessons for 12-20 weeks for pupils who are the weakest readers after their first year at primary school. Although the various evaluations of RR schemes found them costly (due to the fact that specially trained teachers are used and the programme is based on one-to-one teaching), the benefits were also significant and long lasting in ensuring the weakest readers (often non-readers) had caught up with their peers by the end of the programme. Although Government funding for RR programmes ended in 1995, many schools still fund their own RR projects due to their effectiveness. A Times Educational Supplement survey in 2005 found half of the primary school teachers voting stated the re-introduction of reading recovery programmes was their top investment priority.⁴⁵ The Institute of Education's annual review of RR activity in the UK found 81% of the 5,370 pupils subject to RR in 2004-05 (the least able readers) caught up with their class by the end of the programme. 84% achieved "accelerated learning" – gaining a 21 month improvement on their previous reading ability (accelerating at four times the normal rate for their age group).⁴⁶

In addition, RR programmes seem to produce long-lasting gains. In the context of fade out, this is particularly relevant. For example, children who participated in RR were still performing above average five years later, at the end of KS2. A study by the IoE extrapolated these findings and concluded that if RR were used nationally, only 4% of children would not reach Level 2 literacy by KS2, compared with 7% currently.⁴⁷ It is such programmes, with long-lasting impacts, which are particularly important for those children most at risk of losing such advantages. The RR programme has all the hall-marks of a good booster intervention (with associated high costs, which may in fact be off-set given its long-lasting affects), and will be discussed as such in section five, rather than as a viable mainstream literacy programme here.

A broader support programme, based on the same RR principle, was developed in Bradford in 1996. Older children, parents, teachers and adult volunteers trained to become reading partners. They then worked for fifteen minutes a day three times a week for ten weeks, using a range of approaches to help

44 Government funding for the RR scheme ran from 1990 to 1995.

45 http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=2093102

46 Dou til, J. (2005). *Reading Recovery Annual Report for UK and Ireland 2004-2005*. Reading Recovery National Network.

47 *The Long term effects of Reading Recovery on national curriculum tests at end of Key Stages 1 and 2*, IoE and Reading Recovery National Network Factsheet (date and author unknown).

48 For more details, see <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>

49 <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/young-people/VRH.html>

the children improve their reading. As a result of the intervention, children made an improvement of between 150% and 250% on previous reading scores, an average gain of six months in reading.⁴⁸ The Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) Programme, whilst mainly a mentoring programme to benefit both children and adults in a wider range of activities than just reading, found that one-to-one interaction between adult and pupil had positive effects on reading ability. A 2002 survey found that 83% of children supported by VRH showed an improvement in reading performance, though tended to be more useful for children who already had some basic reading skills in place.⁴⁹

Success for all

Most literacy programmes use one or two of the teaching approaches we mention above. The Success For All (SFA) programme, however, is conspicuous for employing all of the strategies mentioned under the IoE's "curriculum", "pedagogy" and "assessment" categories, and so worth further examination. SFA is currently implemented in approximately 2,000 schools serving over one million children throughout the United States. Although it is a comprehensive school reform programme that focuses on promoting early school success among educationally at-risk students, literacy forms a central theme. When SFA was piloted in the UK in 1997, it was introduced primarily as a literacy strategy.

Although the SFA does have broadly similar objectives to the National Literacy Strategy, there are certain important differences. First, all children are assessed at the beginning of the programme and they are placed into reading groups according to their ability. This helps teachers manage groups more easily. Second, reading levels are assessed internally every eight weeks, and children are moved into different ability groups accordingly. One-to-one tutoring is provided for struggling children, who are given an extra 20 minutes each day intensive support. This is somewhat different from the NLS Early, Additional and Further Literacy Support programmes, which are implemented only in the second term of each year and usually on a small-group basis. The reasoning behind the SFA approach is that if a child is struggling, this can be detected quickly due to 8-weekly assessments. The intensive boost, provided as soon as a dip in

progress is detected, will serve as a short preventative, rather than long-term remedial measure.

Third, the SFA programme is taught in a daily 90-minute block, rather than the one hour designated by the NLS. Fourth, the use of cooperative learning methods is fundamental. Children will work in small groups or pairs within a class, and are encouraged to engage in teambuilding activities and other tasks that deal explicitly with the development of interpersonal and social skills. They are also asked to help their partners with reading and a portion of each SFA session is dedicated to partner discussion. This helps develop speaking and listening skills, the importance of which was emphasised by the Rose Review of primary literacy, mentioned above.

Finally, SFA programmes establish a Family Support Team. This is comprised of the head teacher or deputy, the SFA facilitator,⁵⁰ learning mentors and sometimes a school governor. The role of the Team is to raise attendance, reduce lateness and to promote parental involvement in the programme.

Evaluations from the US, where the SFA programme has been running in various states since the late 1980s, demonstrate the considerable reading gains made by programme children compared with control groups of peers. For example, one study which tested 6000 FSA and 6000 control children in eleven school districts found that FSA first graders were almost three months ahead in standardized literacy tests than control first graders. This difference increased to slightly more than the equivalent of a whole year by fifth grade. A Baltimore follow-up study found that this advantage was maintained into sixth and seventh grades, when students were no longer in the Success for All or control schools⁵¹, and another follow-up study that followed students to the eighth grade found continuing significant effects on standardized reading measures and reductions in special education placements and retentions.⁵² The graph below demonstrates these findings of sustained advantage in literacy amongst SFA children compared to control children.

50 A facilitator is designated by the head teacher to help the school staff implement the SFA programme. Working with SFA consultants, the facilitator organises all staff development, monitors data from each 8 week assessment and provides support and coaching to all teachers.

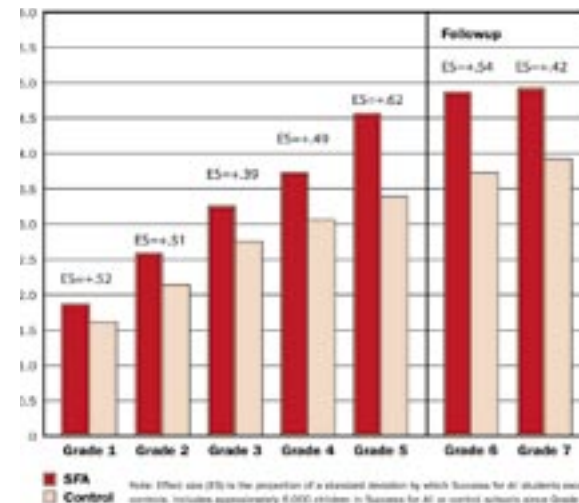
51 Slavin, R.E., and Madden, N.A. (2001). *One million children: Success for All*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

52 Borman, G., and Hewes, G. (2003), "Long-term effects and cost effectiveness of Success for All", *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24 (2): 243-266.

53 Hopkins, Youngman, Harris and Wordsworth (1999), "Evaluation of the initial effects and implementation of Success for All", *England Journal of Research in Reading*, 22 (3).

54 Ibid

Comparison of Success for All and control schools in Mean Reading Grade Equivalents and Effect Sizes



Source: Borman, G., & Hewes, G. (2003). Long-term effects and cost effectiveness of Success for All. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24 (2), 243-266.

There is no doubt, therefore, that SFA is a successful literacy programme. But is it better than the UK's National Literacy Strategy?

Success for All in the UK

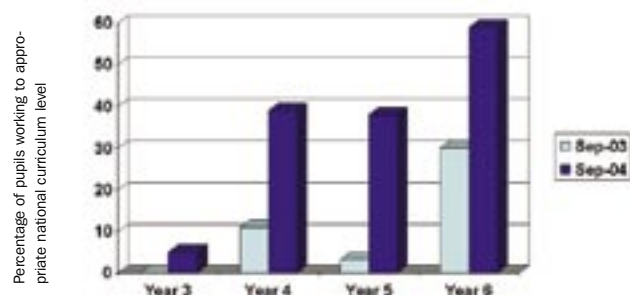
The SFA was piloted in Nottingham in 1997. Using reading progress tests after the first year of implementation, a team from the University of Nottingham found that of the ten year groups using SFA, five had achieved three times the expected level of reading progress, four groups had achieved twice the level of expected reading progress, and one just under twice the level.⁵³ Classroom observations by teachers in the SFA schools have also suggested an improvement in behaviour, and an increase in motivation and attendance. These trends have been attributed to the fast pace and tight structure of the SFA lessons which keep pupils absorbed for the full 90 minutes, as well as the cooperative learning element of the programme which helps improve children's social skills (see section four).⁵⁴

In more recent years, several primary schools in Hull,

London, Walsall and Leeds have adopted SFA as a more intensive version of the NLS. It is thus possible to compare their children's literacy progress before the adoption of the SFA (i.e. when they were only using the NLS) with progress after its adoption.⁵⁵

The graph below shows the percentage of children working to their appropriate national curriculum level in literacy at the Thomas Buxton Junior School in Whitechapel in 2003 (when the NLS was being used) and in 2004 (when the SFA was introduced). This seems to demonstrate that pupil progress was significantly improved following the introduction of the SFA.

The percentage of children working to their appropriate national curriculum level in literacy at Thomas Buxton Junior School 2003-4



Source: <http://www.successforall.org.uk/>

This second graph shows the percentage of Year 6 children achieving Level 4 and above in the KS2 Literacy SATs at Biggin Hill Primary School in Hull, in 1996, 2000 (when they began SFA) and 2004.⁵⁶ The increase in children reaching KS2 in Year 6 was 27 percentage points between 1996 and 2000, and 38 percentage points between 2000 and 2004. Although the NLS was only in operation for two of the four years in the first period (i.e. from 1998), the percentage point increase in the second period, under SFA, is none-the-less impressive – especially when we take into account the diminishing marginal returns that occur as pupils' attainment increases towards 100%.

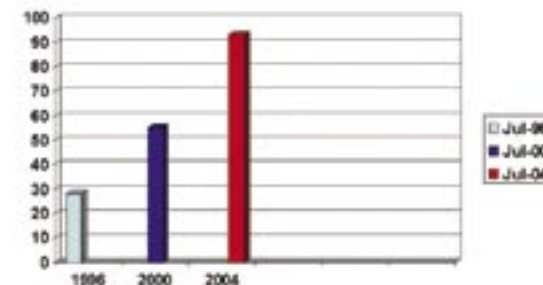
55 When the SFA was first evaluated in 1997, it was found that the methods and objectives of the SFA were compatible with the NLS and could therefore be used as an alternative within the parameters of the National Primary Strategy – see Hopkins et al, op cit.

56 Ibid

57 Ibid

58 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4053329.stm>

The percentage of Year 6 children achieving Level 4 and above in Key Stage 2 Literacy SATs at Biggin Hill Primary School in 1996, 2000 and 2004



Source: <http://www.successforall.org.uk/>

Most of the schools adopting SFA in the UK are located in deprived areas. Thomas Buxton Junior School (above), for example, has over two thirds of its pupils eligible for free school meals and nearly all its pupils speak English as an additional language. However, several of such schools are now performing above the national average in literacy. Several of the SFA schools have also managed to reduce the attainment gap between boys and girls in reading. For example, one local press report from 2001 stated:

“Dorchester Primary on northern Europe's largest housing estate at Bransholme, Hull. Here, where 48 per cent of children get free school meals, the percentage of boys achieving level 4 in English rose from 41 last year to 86 this year. The results for girls were 60 and 64 per cent respectively... in September they started using Success for All (SFA)... What distinguishes it from the national literacy strategy is that children are grouped by ability, not age, and work together co-operatively.”⁵⁷

Many SFA schools have gained positive feedback on their literacy programmes from Ofsted, and a number of SFA schools also appear on the DfES's new “most improved schools” league table, with one SFA school (Goose Green Primary School) named as the second most improved primary in the country in 2005.⁵⁸

Case Study: Kobi Nazrul Primary School

Success For All

Kobi Nazrul is an inner city London school, which serves a local community characterised by high levels of unemployment and overcrowded accommodation. Over 80% of pupils are of Bangladeshi origin and roughly 95% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Most children start Kobi Nazrul speaking very little or no English.

To better serve the needs of pupils, the former head teacher introduced a new literacy programme for pupils from Foundation Year to Year 2. The RML (see above) resources greatly improved the children's decoding and literacy skills but as the children got older, more work on reading, writing and comprehension was necessary to improve their understanding and grasp of English. The school management felt that the NLS was insufficient in raising standards in literacy and that while the NLS suited more able students, it failed disadvantaged children or those with EAL. As a result, the school introduced the Success For All (SFA) programme in 2000.

Initially, staff needed extra training and teachers tended to follow the programme to the letter. Over time, however, teachers have increasingly been able to adapt their lessons and find that there is a great amount of flexibility within the programme to pick and choose appropriate resources, activities and teaching styles. The detailed nature of the plans and resources does however provide a good starting point for Non Qualified Teachers and also has the benefit that cover is much easier to organise without children falling behind.

Children at Kobi Nazrul are placed in ability based classes for their literacy lessons. The classes last 90 minutes and children are divided into groups of 4 within the class. This allows for group, paired and individual work. Because Kobi Nazrul is a one-form entry school, ability grouping has to occur across the school so that children are placed in the appropriate teaching group. This means that in certain groups, children from Years 4, 5 and 6, for example, will be learning together. This also means that literacy is taught across the school at the same time. Despite the use of setting, the school has found no stigma is attached to this process. Staff put this down to the fact that

the school has a strong emphasis on PSHE which focuses on improving children's confidence and self-esteem, as well as the fact that movement from class to class is frequent, allowing for rapid progression. In addition, the senior management have found that children become accustomed to setting if it is introduced early.

The implementation of the SFA has also meant that teaching is far more tailored to the needs of students. Many new pupils arrive at Kobi Nazrul speaking very little English. At most other schools, this would prove problematic, especially in the case of older pupils. At Kobi Nazrul, however, these older pupils can be placed in lower ability groups where they work at their own pace. This allows them to make much greater gains than in a higher ability group where they would find it impossible to access the literacy curriculum and may be subject to bullying.

Continual assessment is another integral component of the SFA programme. Informal tests are carried out half-termly and discussions between staff are held frequently. Based on both teacher and test evaluations children are moved to a more appropriate group. This has meant that moving occurs relatively regularly. In order to make sure that children are not affected by transferring classes, the school has taken pains to ensure a certain amount of continuity. The classrooms, for example, are laid out in the same way and SFA displays follow the same structure. In addition, the structure of SFA weekly plans and resources also provides continuity.

The SFA programme has proved very successful at Kobi Nazrul. Mixed age groups have improved inclusion and social mixing and have contributed to a greater sense of community within the school. It is not uncommon, for example, to see younger and older children play together during break time. In addition, despite the high numbers of children with EAL, Kobi Nazrul was awarded beacon status for literacy and has, over the past few years, consistently performed well beyond local and national averages. In 2005, 85% of pupils achieved a level 4 or higher in English and Maths at Key Stage 2.

From the above, it seems that the SFA programme may be able to achieve better reading outcomes than the NLS. There are several reasons why this might be the case – one factor will of course be the daily extra 30 minutes teaching time under the SFA. It is likely, however, that the other elements of SFA which differentiate it from the NLS are also important contributory factors. In fact, most of the elements included in SFA programmes are those which this report discusses in following sections, due to their proven efficacy in increasing pupil attainment:

First, the focus on cooperative learning in the SFA to improve social interaction is something which is shown to improve learning outcomes when used in the wider school setting (see section six, below).

Second, the use of one-to-one mentoring (as explained in some of the other programmes outlined above) is also shown to be more effective than small group teaching (see sections four and seven, below). The latter is used more frequently in NLS remedial classes whilst SFA uses the former. In fact, the SFA's one-to-one intensive measures for pupils falling behind the mainstream is a very similar tactic to the Reading Recovery programme, which is associated with large catch-up benefits (see above).

Third, SFA groups its children by ability. Whilst such a strategy has proven to have had mixed effects (see chapter four), evidence suggests that its limited use in key subjects can improve the quality of teaching as teachers are able to tailor their instruction to ability levels more readily (see section four for a fuller discussion of this evidence).

Other practices used by SFA programmes are also supported by large evidence bases. For example, there is a broad consensus that intensive preventative measures are more effective than remedial classes employed once a child has fallen more significantly behind.⁵⁹ It could be argued that the SFA takes a more preventative approach by monitoring and reacting more quickly to a child who is just beginning to struggle than the NLS programme allows for.

Most significantly, SFA programmes all have a dedicated Family Support Team to encourage parental involvement in the programme and in the school more widely. This ranges from

59 The body of research supporting the use of pre-school intervention clearly illustrates that earlier and preventative intervention are more effective than later and remedial intervention. See Alakeson's paper on returns to education, *Too Much Too Late*, Social Market Foundation, London 2004.

60 Tizard, J., Schofield, W.N., and Hewison, J. (1982), "Collaboration between teachers and parents in assisting children's reading", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 52: 1-15.

61 Rowe, Kenneth. (1991). "The influence of reading activity at home on students' attitudes towards reading, classroom attentiveness and reading achievement: an application of structural equation modeling", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 61 (1):19-35.

62 Flouri, E., and Buchanan, A. (2004), "Early father's and mother's involvement and child's later educational outcomes", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74:141-153.

ensuring high attendance, to encouraging parents to read with their children at home. Some SFA schools, for example, have a rule where parents must read with their children for 20 minutes at home in order for their team to earn points (SFA classes are split into pairs and teams for reading and cooperative learning). The importance of parental engagement in improving children's educational outcomes, and particularly reading, is supported by a significant body of research, and there is little doubt that this concerted effort on the part of the SFA programme to encourage parental involvement has been a decisive factor in its success. Although section three will look more extensively at strategies to make parents "co-educators" in primary schools and the research evidence which supports the efficacy of this approach, some key evidence relating specifically to parents improving literacy outcomes is outlined below.

A particularly influential early study into the effects of parental engagement on a child's literacy was an evaluation of a project carried out in the early 1980s. For two years, children were followed from Foundation Stage to Year 1 in a group of schools in Haringey. One group of children took reading books home regularly and their parents were given encouragement and support in hearing them read, including home visits by researchers. The reading attainment of project children, as measured by the National Foundation of Educational Research reading Test A, was significantly higher at the end of the two years than that of other children in parallel control classes in the same schools, even though there had been no pre-test attainment differences. In two further schools, the reading attainment of classes given extra teacher help was not significantly different from that of control classes.⁶⁰

To cite but three further studies in the large amount of work carried out in this area: Rowe found in 1991 that for children between the age of five and fourteen, reading activity at home had a significant positive influence on students' reading achievement, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom.⁶¹ Flouri and Buchanan found that parental involvement in a child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education.⁶² Senechal and LeFevre also found that of all school subjects, reading was the most sensitive

to parental influences, thus the most open to positive parental involvement.⁶³ A DfES survey carried out in 2003 also found that the most common activity amongst parents in helping their children to learn was reading with their child – suggesting the message of the importance in doing so had filtered into the popular consciousness and something which could be tapped into and built upon by school literacy strategies.⁶⁴

Several parent-focussed literacy strategies have been implemented both at pre-school level (for example, Bookstart) and at primary school level (e.g. the Pairs Reading and Family Literacy projects). Evaluations of such projects consistently find positive outcomes. For example, the SPOKES programme (which also attempts to address anti-social behaviour in at-risk children by involving parents in educational activities) teaches parents to use the “Pause Prompt Praise” approach to reading with their children. The three-term programme carried out in South London in 2004 found that its participants not only had significantly decreased anti-social behaviour and hyperactivity, but also gained seven months in reading skills, an effect size of 0.43. Race, parent education, parent income, and child age and gender did not affect the degree of change in the intervention group compared to the control group, suggesting that the programme is robust and suited to disadvantaged children.⁶⁵

Our proposals

The National Literacy Strategy is now the cornerstone of the Primary Strategy. Despite its detractors, the government has achieved significant improvements in reading and writing with a combination of national targets, the Literacy Hour and intervention programmes. We can assume, therefore, that the NLS is not due for a major reform in the near future and that we must work within the existing structure rather than attempt to start from scratch.

That is not to say that the NLS cannot be improved upon. From the range of evidence described above, there may be several further strategies that could be adopted to improve literacy teaching within the NLS framework.

- We feel the government ought to consider ability-based grouping for the literacy hour, in order to maximise the amount of instruction time delivered at the appropriate ability level.⁶⁶

63 Senechal, M., and LeFevre, J. (2002), “Parental involvement in the development of children’s reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study”, *Child Development*, 73 (2): 445-460.

64 Moon, N., and Ivins, C. (2003). *Parental Involvement in Children’s Education*. NOP Social and Political. DfES Research Report 589.

65 <http://www.incredibleyears.com/research/current-research-spokes-project-uk.htm>

66 In fact, the “guided reading” element of the NLS, if organised and resources properly, does group by ability within classes to good effect already.

- We would also suggest, following the Reading Recovery approach, that intensive bursts of one-to-one teaching for pupils who begin to fall behind should be used as and when required, but particularly as soon as possible once problems have been detected to give the best chance of closing the achievement gap. These should replace the existing small group remedial measures of the NLS (Early Literacy Support (ELS), Additional Literacy Support (ALS) and Further Literacy Support (FLS)) which are used during set periods of the year and so may not pick up slowing or falling progress in children until significant problems have set in.
- In order to render this effective, such measures should be combined with more regular assessments of pupil progress in order to detect problems sooner, thus reducing remedial teaching needs.
- We also feel more emphasis should be placed on multi-disciplinary approaches to literacy teaching. The synthetic phonics movement has enjoyed a renaissance recently, which is of course to be welcomed as extensive evidence proves its effectiveness. However, more emphasis on speaking and listening skills, to complement reading and writing, could also be developed. This is because a focus on speaking and listening is a component of the successful SFA programme; it has been recommended by the Rose Review; and it must also usually be delivered via small group and cooperative learning, which have the additional benefits of improving a child’s social and interpersonal skills (see section four below).
- Finally, greater use could be made of parents as co-educators in the literacy strategy. The DfES encourages parents to read to their children, and Sure Start and other early years’ programmes also have this as a central element. However, at primary level, this focus seems to fall away, and the NLS seems to provide few formal opportunities for parents to be involved in its delivery. Yet several highly successful literacy programmes use parents in a co-educating role, for example employing them as reading mentors. The 2003 DfES survey mentioned above found that reading at home was the most common method parents employed in helping with their children’s learning. Schools could gain the most from such activity by ensuring that the parent-led reading carried out at home complemented and built upon the methods and materials used in school.

- An effective way of encouraging parental involvement, as some schools already do, is to invite parents into the classrooms to help their children with reading during the literacy hour, in order to teach parents how to use a similar or complementary approach in the home. Given the concerns of Ofsted and teacher groups that the NLS is too much of a burden on the curriculum and teacher time, it would not only be beneficial for children but also helpful for schools if the government were to actively involve parents in delivering the literacy strategy, including using parents to help in the classroom.

Case Study: Norwood Achievement Partnership (NAP)

Year 8 Reading Mentors

The NAP works with one secondary school, Norwood School and 6 primary schools, which together make up an Education Action Zone.

The NAP works with underachieving Year 8 pupils from Norwood School and trains them to be reading mentors for Year 1 children in a local primary school in the EAZ. Students with lower than average reading ages, that have been making little progress since their arrival at school, are selected to take part in the scheme.

Every week, the students visit the local primary school where they read to and play literacy-based games with Year 1 children for half an hour. The books and resources given to the students are graded from easy to very difficult. This means that progression is easier to track and that the students are reading at the appropriate level.

Even though participants tend to be the weakest readers compared to their peers, they are regarded as “experts” by the year 1 child. Subsequently there has been no stigma attached to taking part in the programme. Indeed, involvement has shown to increase pupils’ self-esteem and confidence. Students relish the experience – involvement has a certain status, it is seen as fun and exciting. This is partly because the students are taken out of classes and go to the primary schools. Participation has also increased attainment, with reading ages increasing by up to one year and two months during the five-month project. These pupils’ reading ages had only increased by two months during

the year and four months before participation in the reading mentor project.

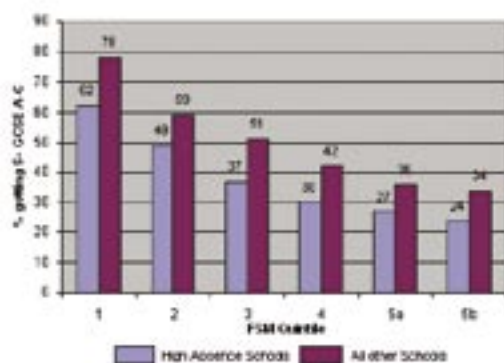
This is particularly impressive given the low reading ages of some of the students at the beginning of the mentor programme. Participation has also improved behaviour: students on report, with punctuality issues, or wearing incorrect uniform cannot go to the primary school when it is their turn. This has encouraged participants to manage their behaviour, arrive to school on time and wear the correct uniform.

Chapter Two: Ensuring good behaviour and attendance

How can good behaviour and attendance prevent fade out?

As one would expect, research shows that high levels of attendance in schools is highly correlated to improved learning outcomes for all pupils. For example, the percentage of time a pupil is absent has been identified as a strong negative predictor of gains in English and maths in studies in the UK and US. As the graph below shows, the percentage of pupils getting five A*-C at GCSE is lower in schools with high levels of absence than in all other schools in the same FSM quintile.⁶⁷ Similarly, a study of San Diego schools found that the percentage of days a student was absent was a strong negative predictor of gains in maths and reading.⁶⁸

Comparison of pupils' GCSE Performance 2002-3: high absence schools compared with all other schools



69 Greenhalgh, P. (1994). *Emotional growth and learning*. London, Canada, & USA: Routledge.

70 Durlak, J. A., and Wells, A. M. (1997), "Primary prevention mental health programs for children and adolescents: A meta-analytic review", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25: 115-152.

71 See, for example, Hull's longitudinal study associating low family income with child aggression <http://www.hull.ac.uk/children5to16programme/conference/joshi.pdf>

72 Schagen, I., Benton, T., and Rutt, S. (2004). *Study of Attendance in England: Report for the National Audit Office*. NFER:Slough.

73 McAra, L. (2004). *Truancy, School Exclusion and Substance Misuse*. Centre for Law and Society, The University of Edinburgh

74 See Pagani, Boulerice, Vitaro, and Tremblay. (1999). "Effects of Poverty on Academic Failure and Delinquency in Boys: a change and process model approach", *Journal of Child Psychology*, 40 (8) and Bor, Najman, Andersen, O'Callaghan, Williams and Berhrens. (1997), "The Relationship Between Low Family Income and Psychological Disturbance in Young Children: An Australian Longitudinal Study", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 31:664-675.

There is also research demonstrating the link between social and emotional problems and poorer learning outcomes. For example, Greenhalgh demonstrated in 1994 how feeling secure and valued promoted learning, whilst anger and unhappiness obstructed it.⁶⁹ A series of US interventions, designed to improve social and emotional skills, resulted in higher levels of attendance and motivation, which in turn led to improved learning outcomes.⁷⁰

For those pupils with which this report is most concerned – namely those who are most vulnerable to having their early years progress slip during primary school – the relationship between attendance, behaviour and attainment is particularly significant. This is because pupils vulnerable to fade out tend to come from more deprived backgrounds than their peers. In turn, evidence shows that deprivation also implies a greater likelihood of truancy, exclusion and social and emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD).⁷¹ For example, the National Foundation of Educational Research's review of 17,000 schools in the UK in 2004 found high levels of unauthorised absence was strongly correlated to large percentages of FSM children, as well as large percentages of EAL children.⁷² McAra's study, on the other hand, found "excluded pupils are significantly more likely ($p < 0.001$) to come from a lower class background and not to be living with both parents than non-excluded pupils. Moreover, a much higher proportion of excluded pupils have an entitlement to free school meals than non excluded pupils. They are also significantly more likely ($p < 0.001$) to live in a neighbourhood of high deprivation."⁷³ Finally, studies such as the Australian longitudinal study by Bor et al in 1997 and the Canadian study by Pagani in 1999 found a strong correlation between deprivation and SEBD, increasing the chance of exclusion and reducing a child's ability to learn whilst in school.⁷⁴

Given the prevalence of SEBD, exclusion and truancy amongst those children who are also most likely to experience fade out of early years' gains, we can surmise that these factors no doubt contribute to the fade out phenomenon by undermining a child's educational experiences. It is, therefore, particularly important that strategies are in place to improve behaviour and attendance amongst those children for which fade out is a possibility.

What is the government's approach?

The current Government's Behaviour and Attendance programme helps schools tackle truancy, bullying and poor behaviour. A targeted programme providing extra resources, called the "Behaviour Improvement Programme" (BIP), has been created for schools facing specific difficulties. The first phase of the BIP began in 2002 with 700 schools participating. This was rolled out the following year to a number of Excellence in Cities (EiC) schools, which also experience higher levels of poor behaviour and truancy. Between its inception and the end of 2006, the DfES estimates that 1700 primary schools will have received extra funding to implement BIP strategies. There are now eleven acknowledged BIP elements, four of which are mandatory for all BIP schools while the other seven elements are recommended but optional.

The four mandatory programme elements are: providing for excluded pupils and reducing permanent exclusions; identifying all pupils in BIP schools at risk of exclusion or non-attendance and allocating them a key worker; implementing a strategy to improve attendance and tackle truancy; and establishing one full service extended school (FSES) in the BIP area.⁷⁵ The seven recommended programme elements include: using learning mentors in schools; establishing learning support units; creating a behaviour and education support team (BEST); carrying out behaviour and attendance audit; employing a lead behaviour professional in school; promoting social, emotional and behavioural skills within the curriculum and teaching strategies; and establishing safer schools partnerships.

Two of these elements – learning mentors and learning support units (LSUs) – are used in EiC and Excellence Cluster Schools even when they are not eligible for BIP funding. Around 1,200 primary schools receive EiC funding.

The government has also recently launched a pilot scheme in the primary schools of 25 LEAs based on one of the optional BIP strategies – promoting social, emotional and behavioural skills within the curriculum. This pilot focuses on providing curriculum materials to promote these skills, using small groups for those pupils who need extra help with their social, emotional or behavioural skills, and providing more training to new teachers and lead behaviour professionals.⁷⁶

75 A FSES is open to pupils, families and the wider community throughout the school day, before and after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays.

76 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement/uploads/BIP%20Toolkit%20-%20Section%205.pdf>

77 The National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) found that, on average, secondary schools have 8.4% of lessons missed per pupil and primary schools 5.7%. 47% of pupils play truant for the first time in year 7 and year 8, following the transition to secondary school.

78 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement/uploads/BIP%20Toolkit%20-%20Section%205.pdf>

79 Hallam, S., Rogers, L., and Castle, F. (2005). *Research and Evaluation of the Behaviour Improvement Programme*. Institute of Education.

Although attendance is less of a problem in primary school than secondary school, an attendance strategy is a mandatory element of the BIP.⁷⁷ Schools have tried out a variety of techniques to reduce truancy, the most effective of which have been rewards for attendance, using certificates of good behaviour and punctuality and through additional responsibilities. According to Ofsted, the most effective inner city schools have a rapid and systematic process for contacting parents when children are absent without authorisation. Some schools identify links between unpopular lessons and absence from school, and others draw up action plans for specific pupils to actively improve attendance.⁷⁸

Evaluations of the first two phases of the BIP found permanent exclusions and unauthorised absences did fall during the programme compared to control schools with similar pupil demographics, though there was no significant impact on attainment (though this will probably take longer to take effect).⁷⁹

It is, however, notoriously difficult to measure levels of poor behaviour in schools, in part because there is no systematic recording process in place for low-level discipline problems. As with the evaluation mentioned above, exclusion levels are often used as a (not very accurate) proxy measure for poor behaviour. This makes measuring the effectiveness of any programme aiming to improve behaviour – including the government's BIP – particularly challenging and reliant to an extent on qualitative and observational data from teachers and parents. It also makes it difficult to assess which element of the government's current programme is most effective.

What does the evidence suggest?

Given that truancy tends to be less of a problem in primary than in secondary school, we will focus on strategies to improve behaviour and tackle SEBD in the remainder of this section. This is because behavioural and emotional issues are the more significant challenge for primary schools. In addition, behaviour strategies also improve attendance as they deal with SEBD which may cause truancy. They also help to motivate and re-engage pupils with learning, which can help improve attendance and act as a preventative measure against later truancy.

Reflecting the difficulty in measuring poor behaviour, as mentioned above, evidence assessing the relative effectiveness of different strategies to improve behaviour and attendance in schools is fairly sparse. A systematic review of existing evaluations was carried out by the EPPI-centre team between 1999 and 2003, and the team found the quality of the data collected by the studies they reviewed quite limiting, with very few judged to be methodologically sound.

The EPPI team reviewed 28 relevant evaluations and synthesised them according to the theoretical model underpinning the intervention (behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, systemic or “psycho-dynamic”). Even with a relative lack of primary research, they managed to surmise certain general principles: behavioural interventions (reinforcing good behaviour with simple rewards and punishment) based on token systems were effective in controlling off-task and disruptive behaviour as long as the system was in place. Systemic programmes, seeking to modify the external factors which affect behaviour (for example classroom lay out) had a positive effect on time on task, particularly for more distractible children. Psycho-dynamic programmes, aimed at the causes of poor behaviour and seeking to achieve long-term change through personal development (e.g. in “nurture groups”) were effective in the short to medium term (over several months).⁸⁰ Social skills curriculum programmes only have a short-term effect on behaviour.⁸¹

Given the lack of good quality primary research in this area, evaluations made by Ofsted and other inspection/review bodies are also important. We can use these to identify the most effective elements within the government's broader attendance and behaviour programme.

What are the most effective elements of the government's strategy?

Learning Mentors

Although learning mentors are an optional element of the BIP, they are a key part of the EiC and Excellence Clusters framework and have proved popular with schools. Learning mentors work with pupils to help them address barriers to learning. They bridge academic and pastoral support roles, working on a

80 Evans, J., Harden, A., Thomas, J., Scanlon, M., and Sinclair, J. (August 2003). *Supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in mainstream primary schools: a systematic review of recent research on strategy effectiveness (1999 to 2002)*. EPPI-Centre report.

81 Evans, J., Harden, A., Thomas, J., and Benefield P. (June 2003). *Support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in mainstream primary school classrooms: a systematic review of the effectiveness of interventions*. EPPI-Centre report.

82 See Ofsted. (October 2003). *Excellence Clusters: the first ten inspections*. HMI 1732: E-publication; Ofsted. (2004). *Excellence in Cities: the primary extension – Real Stories*. HMI, and Ofsted. (2003). *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact*. HMI

83 Ofsted. (2003). *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact*. HMI 1399

84 Ofsted. (October 2003). *Excellence Clusters: the first ten inspections*. HMI 1732: E-publication.

one-to-one basis with pupils to enhance motivation, raise aspirations and help with lack of confidence/low self-esteem, family issues and so on.

In three separate reviews, Ofsted attributed much of the good work being done in EiC, Excellence Cluster and EAZ schools to the existence of learning mentors. The inspectors commented:

“Of all the [EiC] strands, the provision of learning mentors has had the greatest effect on raising standards, promoting educational inclusion, improving the range of provision and developing better working relationships with others.... In schools where learning mentors are having the greatest effect, the attendance and behaviour of targeted pupils are improving and exclusions are falling.”⁸²

In another report, Ofsted inspectors stated:

“Learning mentors are making a significant effect on the attendance, behaviour, self-esteem and progress of the pupils they support... they are the most successful and highly valued strand of the EiC programme. In 95% of the survey schools, inspectors judged that the mentoring programme made a positive contribution to the mainstream provision of the school as a whole, and had a beneficial effect on the behaviour of individual pupils and on their ability to learn and make progress.”⁸³

As well as improving pupil behaviour and attendance through the attention and emotional support being offered by the mentors, Ofsted also noted that they had an important role in raising literacy attainment (see section one of this report) and also easing the transition from primary to secondary school (we discuss the mentor's role in transition in section seven of this report).

Ofsted found, when inspecting primary schools in EiC areas, that many schools had begun to use funds from other sources to increase their mentoring provision, whilst some non-EiC schools nearby had seen the benefits of mentoring and were beginning to introduce mentors themselves using money from alternative sources.⁸⁴ However, like many other BIP and EiC

strategies, Ofsted found that the monitoring and evaluation of mentor programmes were inadequate, and so the most effective strategies were often not recorded.⁸⁵

Social skills training

Incorporating social and communication skills and emotional intelligence within the academic curriculum is something many schools practice, often un-intentionally. It is a recommended strategy for BIP-funded schools, however, that they consciously integrate social, emotional and behavioural skills (SEBS) into their wider curriculum and also with specific class activities/assemblies. This approach has become the basis for a primary attendance and behaviour pilot, with a set of curriculum materials being developed specifically for that purpose.

Before the pilot and curriculum materials were developed, it was noted by the DfES that many schools were implementing their own version of a SEBS programme, often with its own curriculum.⁸⁶ This was because the evidence base from the US is fairly extensive and shows significant improvements in behaviour and social skills following curriculum-based SEBS programmes. One of the most well known is the "Second Steps" programme, which has been adopted by some schools in the UK.⁸⁷ The programme provides a series of curriculum kits that teach social-emotional skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviour in children from 4-14 and to increase their level of social competence. One evaluation of the programme used a randomized pre- and post-test comparison of 790 elementary school children in experimental and control schools. Observers, blind to school conditions, made systematic observations of aggressive and positive social behaviour in class and school playgrounds, and found programme children were 20% less aggressive during lunchtime after the programme, had a 10% increase in social behaviour during lunchtime and were 37% more likely to choose positive social goals.⁸⁸

A systematic review of social skills teaching interventions was carried out by Quinn et al. They found a small but significant positive effect from this type of intervention across the 35 included studies, with bigger effects found for interventions focused on teaching and measuring specific social skills compared with less focused interventions.⁸⁹

85 Ibid

86 Weare, K., and Gray, G. (2003) *What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?* The Health Education Unit Research and Graduate School of Education. (DfES Research Report RR456). University of Southampton.

87 Ibid

88 Second Step. (2003). *A Violence Prevention Curriculum SAMHSA Model Programs.*

89 Quinn, M., Kavale, K.A., Mathur, S.R., Rutherford, R.B., Forness, S.R. (1999), "A meta-analysis of social skill interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders", *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders*, 7: 54-64.

90 O'Connor, T., and Colwell, J. (June 2002), "The Effectiveness and Rationale of the "nurture group" approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education", *British Journal of Special Education*, 29 (2).

91 See, for example, Bishop, A., and Swain, J. (2000a), "The bread, the jam and some coffee in the morning: perceptions of a Nurture Group", *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 5 (3): 18-24, Bishop, A., and Swain, J. (2000b), "Early years education and children with behavioural and emotional difficulties: nurturing parental involvement", and Howes, A., Emanuel, J., and Farrell, P. (2003), "Can Nurture Groups facilitate inclusive practice in primary schools?" in P. Farrell & M. Ainscow (eds.) *Making Special Education Inclusive*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

What other methods have proven to be effective?

In this section, we will review some approaches to improving behaviour and attendance which have been implemented by some schools, but which are not specifically recommended by the government's behaviour and attendance strategy.

Nurture Groups

Nurture groups were first established in London primary schools in the 1970s for children who were finding it hard to behave in the mainstream classroom due to poor early years experiences. Although the funding for the groups was stopped following the disbandment of ILEA, nurture groups became popular once more in the late 1990s when the government endorsed them in the 1997 *Excellence for All* Green Paper.

Nurture groups are used to provide children with an environment that facilitates their emotional, social and cognitive development by recreating the early, nurturing environment experienced by children in good nursery schools. The nurture group teachers aim to create strong bonds and act as substitute attachment figures to help boost the children's self-confidence and self-esteem. O'Connor explains "the acceptance, warmth and understanding afforded by the nurture group staff seem to enable the children to develop the personal and social and emotional skills necessary for successful learning".⁹⁰

Groups are usually composed of eight to ten pupils and two members of staff, a teacher and a teaching assistant. Models do vary and the amount of time a child spends in a nurture group depends on the kind of model used. In various nurture groups, pupils remain in mainstream classes for the entirety of the taught curriculum and spend the rest of the time in the nurture group. In some instances, however, children spend the majority of their time in the nurture group – up to nine half days per week - but take part in mainstream classes for subjects such as music and PE. Pupils are usually taken out of the groups and reintegrated into mainstream classes after a period of between two and four terms. Several studies into the impact of nurture groups all show positive effects on children's behaviour and some on educational attainment, though the majority rely on subjective, observational data.⁹¹

However, a small number of studies have attempted to

quantify the Nurture Group effect. Enfield's nurture group programme, which had persisted during the 1980s, was shown to be effective in helping children return to mainstream education without being statemented or requiring special school placements. 87% of the 308 nurture group children in Enfield returned to mainstream education after a nurture group placement of less than one year, while 13% went on to require statements. For the 20 children who had been eligible for a nurture placement but had not found an available place, only 55% were able to remain in mainstream schools without statements – demonstrating the potential preventative effect of nurture groups for children showing signs of early emotional or behavioural difficulty.⁹²

Cooper et al have been carrying out longitudinal studies of nurture groups in 25 schools in eight LEAs for some years, and have used two different control groups to compare the progress made by children in nurture groups: one consisting of pupils matched with the Nurture Group pupils according to age, gender, educational attainment and level of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in mainstream classrooms, and one consisting of pupils matched for age and gender with the Nurture Group children but without emotional and behavioural problems.

Over two years, 546 children (356 from Nurture Groups) were monitored by the research team using the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Boxall profile in order to quantify behavioural difficulties.⁹³ These measures provided quantitative evidence which indicated greater improvements for the Nurture Group children's social, emotional and behavioural functioning than for the pupils who did not attend Nurture Groups. For example, using the Goodman Questionnaire, it was found that 92% of the nurture group children were in the abnormal or borderline range of behaviour at the start of the programme, compared with 84% of the control group who had SEBD but who had not been placed in the nurture group programme. By the third term, the two proportions of abnormal/borderline behaviour were 63% and 75% respectively – the mean differences between these two scores is statistically significant.⁹⁴

The effectiveness of nurture groups is further verified by

92 Iszatt, J., and Wasilewska, T. (1997), "Nurture Groups: an early intervention model enabling vulnerable children with emotional and behavioural difficulties to integrate successfully into school", *Educational and Child Psychology*, 14 (3): 121-139.

93 The Boxall Profile is a questionnaire-based tool to assess a child's social and emotional and behavioural development. The tool was developed by educational psychologist Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s.

94 Cooper, P., Arnold, R., and Boyd, E. (2001), "Nurture Groups: interim research findings", *British Journal of Special Educational*, 28(4): 160-166.

95 See Weare, K., and Gray, G. (2003) for a review of this evidence

96 DfES. (September 2005). *Guidance for Establishing and Managing Primary and Secondary Learning Support Units*.

97 www.ofsted.gov/publications/docs/1031.pdf

98 Hallam, S., Rogers, L., and Castle, F. Op Cit.

a number of studies which have linked close and supportive teacher-pupil relationships with high levels of emotional and social competence, high levels of staff and pupil morale and performance, greater enjoyment of school, more motivation, better learning, higher attainments, and greater attendance levels.⁹⁵

Although some schools use their BIP funding to establish Nurture Groups, the main BIP equivalent of a nurture group is the Learning Support Unit. These were introduced as part of the primary EiC programme and integrated into the BIP, although they have not been widely adopted and are more popular in secondary schools. An LSU is located in a room away from the main classroom where teachers can employ different learning strategies for disaffected or at risk children. They can be used to tackle anti-social behaviour and anger management, but also to motivate a child to reduce truancy and disengagement. A pupil will only usually be placed in an LSU for a six week block before being reintegrated into the main classroom.⁹⁶

Ofsted has found that schools carry out very different practices within their LSUs, making it very hard to evaluate their benefits or which strategies are most effective. It commented that "Systematic monitoring and evaluation were the weakest feature of most learning support units. Few schools could demonstrate objectively the effectiveness of the unit or identify the most successful approaches for pupils of different age groups."⁹⁷

An IoE research team who evaluated the BIP for the DfES also found that some schools used their LSUs in a way which wholly negated their purpose:

"...some LEAs were providing internal provision for the first days of exclusion at secondary level through Learning Support Units. This was problematic because it was not sufficiently distinctive as 'exclusion' and the role of LSU became blurred, although in some schools Learning Support Units were seen as reducing the numbers of exclusions, for example, one LSU was described as "a disincentive to poor behaviour". Using the LSU in this way was contrary to DfES guidance and because of the blurring of roles was relatively ineffective."⁹⁸

Nevertheless, the NFER did find positive effects of LSUs in five case studies it evaluated for the DfES, particularly in the areas

of improved self-esteem, confidence and social skills, although it was less clear whether LSUs improved disruptive behaviour. There was also concern amongst teachers, seemingly backed up by pupil comment, that reintegrating children into mainstream classes was sometimes problematic with children having become accustomed to the extra attention they received in the LSUs.⁹⁹ It could be argued that such an approach fails to resolve some of the deep-seated causes of poor emotional and social development which can effect long-term behavioural improvement, such as the attachment problems caused by a sudden removal from (or even an absence of) the more caring environment of pre-school. This is where nurture group strategies can add a unique and apparently effective dimension. The absence of a nurture group strategy as one of the mandatory or even recommended BIP elements may reflect what some critics feel is a bias in the government's approach towards tackling behavioural difficulties – as they represent the more significant challenge to classroom management – whilst overlooking children's emotional problems.¹⁰⁰

99 Braun, A., Xavier, R., and West, A. (2002) *Excellence in Cities Primary Pilot Strand Study: Primary Learning Support Units and Multi-Agency Working*. Centre for Educational Research. London School of Economics and Political Science.

100 See, for example, Didaskalou, E., and Millward, A. (March 2002). *Breaking the Policy Log-Jam: Comparative Perspectives on Policy Formulation and Development for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. *Oxford Review of Education*. 28 (1): 109-121.

Case Study: Brettenham Primary School

Nurture Groups

Brettenham School serves a deprived community. 46% of pupils receive FSM and just over 26% of pupils have special educational needs. The school also serves a very mixed and diverse local area: 28 different languages are spoken in the school and roughly 50% of pupils have EAL. A significant minority of these children arrive at school speaking little or no English.

Rainbow Class, Brettenham's Nurture group, was introduced in 1988 and remains funded by Enfield Local Authority. It was designed to help vulnerable children suffering emotional stress and behavioural problems, and who were not ready to access mainstream classes, to improve their social skills and overcome their behavioural difficulties.

The group works for 4.5 days per week, taking around ten children from Reception and Key Stage 1. The classroom itself is provided with comfortable furniture, a kitchen and dining area but no desks, a 'home area' and an outside play area. Within this informal setting, children are offered security and

a safe base. This is complimented by the specialised support offered by the teacher and teacher assistant, both of whom are specially trained. The teaching staff have worked assiduously to develop trusting relationships with the children and have adapted their teaching to the developmental needs of the pupils. The Nurture Group also offers a structured routine. For example, children start each day with "News and Weather", discussion time and breakfast, which replicates a domestic setting. With security and routine, children are able to experience a stable environment where adults and children work together, firm boundaries are adhered to and where mistakes, behaviour and accidents are discussed. Children are able to learn appropriate behaviour and social and communication skills so that when they leave, they are ready to learn.

Children remain in Rainbow Class for up to 4 terms, after which most (around 83%) are reintegrated into mainstream classes gradually by splitting their day between their class and the Nurture Group, before moving back to class full time. Transition from Rainbow is eased also by the fact that children remain on the register of their mainstream class, which they join for assemblies, P.E, music, lunch and playtime and for one afternoon a week.

Parents of Rainbow Class children are encouraged to come and collect their children half an hour before the end of the school day. This allows parents to understand what takes place in the class and communicate regularly and build relationships with the teachers. Parents who have been ambivalent or even hostile to Rainbow Class have become much more positive about their children's school experiences thanks to this approach.

The school firmly believes that Rainbow Class has helped prevent permanent exclusions and SEN referrals in later years. It also has benefited the whole school, as the most needy or disruptive children, who would otherwise take valuable teacher time from their classmates, are given specialised support in the Nurture Group until they are ready to access the curriculum in normal class settings.

The success of Rainbow Class in Brettenham is also made evident by the number of visits the staff receive from former Rainbow Class pupils and other pupils wanting to join the class.

Rather than a source of stigma, pupils make lasting attachments with the nurture group staff, and come back for emotional support as they progress through the school. This is a testament not only to the commitment of the staff, but also the school management which promotes inclusion and nurturing across the school. For example, some of the practices used in Rainbow Class are picked up by other teachers and used in mainstream classes. All reception children are also invited to at least one Rainbow session as a guest so that it is familiar to every year's pupils. This wider school nurturing environment ensures Rainbow Class is not an add-on but rather an integral part of the school's supportive approach.

A Quiet Place

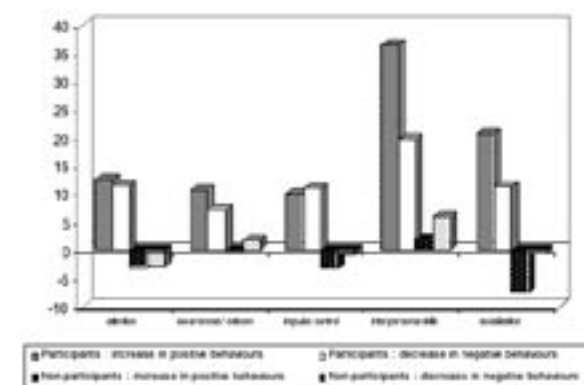
A similar approach to nurture groups has been adopted by the "Quiet Place" programme in Liverpool. Several primary schools in deprived areas of Liverpool have created Quiet Places since 1998. Families most at risk of social exclusion with children who exhibit lack of control and pre-criminal tendencies are targeted for "quiet place" provision. The Quiet Place room is designed to be environmentally stimulating, with soft furnishings, bean-bags, water cascades, areas for sand play, plants and musical instruments. Children are offered counselling, massage and therapeutic play, storytelling, art and music workshops. Children are also given one-to-one attention by qualified practitioners, and taught how to manage their stress levels, improve their confidence and communication skills. Targeted pupils have three 40-minute sessions per week over a six-week period. Parents are also offered their own relaxation and counselling sessions plus advice on dietary strategies and ways to deal with hyperactivity and so on, in order to boost their confidence in dealing with their children at home.

Liverpool University has been evaluating this programme since 2000. In 2002 a sample of 54 children was matched with a control group. Using the Boxall behaviour profile, this evaluation showed statistically significant differences between the two groups for increases in positive behaviours and decreases in negative behaviours. Quiet Place participants showed a mean increase in positive behaviours of 93.35 (Standard Deviation

101 Renwick, F., and Spalding, B. (2002), "A Quiet Place" project: an evaluation of early therapeutic intervention within mainstream schools", Department of Education, University of Liverpool *British Journal of Special Education*, 29 (3).

= 86.48) as opposed to the non-participants, whose mean increase in positive behaviours is -14.48 (Standard Deviation = 77.39), producing a mean difference between the two groups of 107.83. Quiet Place participants show a mean decrease in negative behaviours of 61.89 (Standard Deviation = 92.6), while non-participants show a mean decrease of 0.67 (Standard Deviation = 84.87), producing a mean difference between the two groups of 61.22.¹⁰¹

Average increase in positive behaviours and decrease in negative behaviours for participant and non-participant groups over a six-week period



Source: Renwick, F., and Spalding, B. (2002), "A Quiet Place" project: an evaluation of early therapeutic intervention within mainstream schools", Department of Education, University of Liverpool *British Journal of Special Education*, 29 (3).

A Quiet Place is an interesting approach in that it works with a similar environment to a traditional nurture group, but also includes parents in the programme so that they too can benefit from anger management and stress relieving techniques. This is likely to not only have a positive effect on the Home Learning Environment (shown to be a crucial factor in a child's social and cognitive development), but may also render the programme itself more effective: research indicates that encouraging parents to participate in school level activities not only makes those activities more effective, but also has a secondary effect on children's behaviour. For example, the SPOKES literacy project (as

described in section one of this report) selects children and parents in the most deprived primary schools displaying early signs of poor literacy and behaviour. Children whose parents participate in the programme by reading to and with them show significant reductions in antisocial behaviour and hyperactivity, as well as a more predictable gain in literacy skills.

Case Study: Cooper's Lane Primary School

“Building Bridges”

Cooper's Lane Primary School was experiencing some difficulties with a small number of Year 6 boys who suffer emotional and behavioural problems. The school does not receive BIP funding but decided to organise its own version of a Learning Support Unit called ‘Building Bridges.’ This has been designed with the pupils in mind and responds to their specific needs.

The boys are taken out of assembly and for half an hour every week, work on developing social, emotional and behavioural skills. Activities include discussion, and trust games, as well as role-playing to establish behavioural norms. For example, boys are preparing and acting out scenes showing poor and good behaviour during their Building Bridges session, and will perform the final version at a school assembly.

Poor behaviour was perceived as being related to a lack of positive male role models so the school enlisted the support of a school dad, who together with the school's learning mentor, provide the ‘building bridges’ classes. ‘Building Bridges’ has proved both popular and effective, producing behavioural improvements amongst attendees. It is hoped that the classes will be expanded and offered to children in the lower years.

Our proposals

Suggesting concrete policy proposals in this field is particularly difficult given the complexities associated with measuring disruptive behaviour in schools. The government's current approach seems to be to use a broad, multi-pronged strategy covering in-school structural changes (using BESTs, Key workers, mentors, behaviour audits and lead behaviour partners), specialised provision (FESSs and LSUs) and whole-school

strategies (a SEBS curriculum, attendance and exclusion strategy and safer schools partnerships). This broad approach is sensible given the lack of conclusive evidence identifying the most effective behaviour improvement programmes.

However, a contributory factor to the lack of concrete evidence is the non-prescriptive nature of the government's behaviour and attendance programme. Schools not only have flexibility over which elements of the BIP they use, but also how they deliver them, leading to a real diversity of practices and approaches to classroom behaviour. Whilst this ensures that each school has the flexibility to adopt the practice most suited to their pupils and school circumstances, it makes it very hard to share best practice between schools particularly as the monitoring and evaluation of schools' practices is usually weak.

The evidence outlined above does however allow us to make a number of recommendations which may improve the government's current approach.

- First and foremost, the government should develop a better method of measuring SEBD and classroom disruption in order to more clearly assess the effectiveness of existing strategies seeking to tackle these problems.
- Once the most effective methods within the behaviour and attendance framework have been identified, they need to be more effectively shared with schools nationally through BIP guidelines, so that schools can make best use of others' experiences and select the most effective methods of improving SEBS for themselves.
- Third, the seemingly most effective approach identified so-far – using learning mentors – should become a mandatory element of the BIP, so that all schools have a mentor as standard for at risk children. The wider applications of mentoring (i.e. to improve literacy and to ease transition to secondary school) demonstrate their multi-purpose potential for target-groups vulnerable to fade out.
- Fourth, Nurture Groups should at least be a recommended element of the BIP. The low use of PLSUs illustrates that many primary schools do not feel that LSUs are suited to their pupils' needs. Nurture Groups, however, may be more suited to younger

children as they recreate the nurturing environment of pre-school and rectify the attachment problems some SEBD children display when very young. A meta-analysis of behaviour interventions carried out in 1997 found that "...students treated in self-contained classrooms were more likely to evidence reductions in disruptive classroom behaviours compared to students treated in regular classroom settings".¹⁰² Nurture groups may be an effective primary school alternative to LSUs for pupils who need extra help outside of the mainstream classroom.

- Fifth, we suggest the government provide schools with guidelines regarding how to include parents more systematically in their behaviour improvement strategies. Although the importance of parental involvement is emphasised in the primary school pilot guidance, the crucial role of parents in improving children's SEBS is not given as central a role as it could within the government's BIP, only coming to the fore as part of the FSES family/community strategy rather than a common theme running through all the various BIP elements. Learning mentors and key workers for vulnerable pupils are obvious areas where parents could play a key role. LSUs – or rather nurture groups as we propose – are also an opportunity for parental involvement and have proved successful in the Quiet Place programme.
- Finally, we recommend that the additional BIP funding targeted at schools with particular problems of behaviour and attendance also be targeted towards schools with high percentages of particular socio-economic groups. This is because whilst most schools have their own behaviour and attendance strategies, some of the elements of the BIP (such as LSUs, mentors, FSES and so on) require additional resources which are beyond the reach of many schools ineligible for BIP funding. Nevertheless, these strategies may prove particularly helpful for pockets of vulnerable pupils in these otherwise ineligible schools. The fact that Ofsted noted that schools nearby EiC areas were using their own funding to emulate learning mentor strategies (mentioned above) illustrates there is at least some demand for such programmes, even in schools not falling within the BIP/EiC eligibility criteria.

102 Stage, S. A., and Quiroz, D. R. (1997), "A meta-analysis of interventions to decrease disruptive classroom behavior in public education settings", *School Psychology Review*, 26: 333- 368.

Case Study: Norwood Achievement Partnership (NAP)

Peer Mediation Service

Norwood Schools' Mediation Service is run and organised by the learning mentor and a teaching assistant who is a trained Mediation Trainer. The school is working towards the peer mediators running the service themselves: Year 10 and 11 mediators are responsible for interviewing and assessing new recruits. Year 9 mediators are responsible for publicity and Year 8 mediators are responsible for raising the profile of the service verbally. All of the mediators are responsible for raising the profile of the service through organising a whole school assembly.

When two pupils have an argument, they can choose to go to the Mediation Service and have a peer help to resolve the situation. Mediators must be in the same academic year or older. Mediations are offered during lunchtime and the mediators follow a duty rota. Year 11 students cover their duty in the schools on site exclusion service – Centre 44, where students who have mismanaged their behaviour in class or have been involved in a conflict with another student are sent to for a specific duration as a means of punishment.

For the past two years, all Year 7 students have been offered a one-day introduction to peer mediation training. This has been consolidated by sessions offered during their PSHCE lesson. These sessions cover: Listening – managing one's own behaviour more effectively; Communication – Awareness of body language and impact of self on others; Negotiation – ability to compromise; Team working – collaborative working. Students in Year 7 who apply to join the mediation team are interviewed and if successful offered a place on further training. This takes place over a 12-week period for one hour per week after school.

NAP offers a one-day introduction to peer mediation training for Year 6 pupils in all of the NAP schools. This takes place after SATs and is used to enhance their transition to secondary school.

From April 2004 until September 2005, 464 students have been either introduced to peer mediation training or have trained as a mediator and work in their primary school as a mediator. This does not include the students from Norwood

School who were offered their one-day training in mediation, which took place during October 2005.

Across the school, mediation has developed pupils' skills in listening, communication, problem solving, managing others, negotiation and empathy. The mediation service has also proved a successful part of the school's anti-bullying strategy.

Chapter Three: A co-educational role for parents

103 Cross Government
Respect Action Plan, January
2006

What do we mean by a “co-educational” role?

In this chapter we will explore how parents playing a co-educational role with their child's primary school can improve their child's attainment and reduce the likelihood of fade out. A “co-educational” role is a broad-ranging term to encompass a variety of methods of parental involvement both within the school and at home in helping to deliver school objectives. However, we will not cover here the formal parenting skills being taught to parents as part of Children's Centre Programmes or other social services, nor the obligatory parenting classes for truant or anti-social children provided for under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This term will also not include the variety of formal, established avenues for parental involvement which schools are by law obliged to provide – home school agreements, parent governors, parents' evenings and so on. These exclusions have been made for two reasons: first, these areas of policy have already been strenuously evaluated and considerable work has already been completed on establishing best practice. The time and space needed to review the government's wider parenting policy is beyond the scope of this report. Second, several parenting policies are still very much in flux. The government is currently carrying out a number of pilots to test a variety of strategies, such as early intervention pilots to support families of children between eight and thirteen at risk of youth offending as part of the Respect Action Plan;¹⁰³ Early Learning Partnerships for parents and one to four year olds, run through Children's Centres; incentives for teenage mothers to go to parenting classes; and a National Parenting Academy to train

professionals in giving parents advice. Therefore, it would be very hard to either evaluate the effectiveness of these developing strategies or suggest more effective alternatives at this stage.

We will instead focus on the informal, day to day communication schools establish with parents: cultivating a co-operational relationship between parent and teacher to achieve the joint goal of ensuring their children fulfil their potential. In this respect, we wish to focus specifically on the “communication”, “volunteering” and “teaching at home” elements as described by Epstein’s framework for parental involvement.¹⁰⁴ These are the areas least well developed by current policy initiatives, and where a review of the evidence available may add value to current schools’ practice. Focussing on this area will also allow us to explore what schools can do – rather than the government in its wider parenting strategy – to improve their pupils’ attainment by working with parents.

Epstein’s typology of parental involvement:

Type of involvement	Definition
parenting	providing housing, health, nutrition, safety; parenting skills in parent-child interactions; home conditions to support study; information to help schools know child
communicating	school-home/home-school communication
volunteering	in school help in classrooms/events
teaching at home	help with homework, help with educational choices/options
decision making	membership of PTA/governors
collaborating with the community	contributions to school

Source: Epstein, J. (2001) *School, family and community partnerships: preparing educators and improving schools*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Why can parental involvement mitigate fade-out?

Parental involvement has a uniquely important role to play especially for those children vulnerable to fade out during primary school. There is an extremely substantial body of evidence which demonstrates the correlation between parental interest in a child’s education and academic and social achievement. This

104 Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family and community partnerships: preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

evidence was most thoroughly reviewed by Desforges for the DfES in 2003. He cited dozens of evaluations which demonstrated that, particularly during primary years, parental interest to stimulate learning has a much more significant effect on children’s attainment than the school they attend, or even their family’s income or class background. Sacker attempted to quantify and compare these effects at different life stages:

Age	Parent effect size	School effect size
7	0.29	0.05
11	0.27	0.21
16	0.14	0.51

Source: Sacker, A., Schoon, I., & Bartley, M. (2002) “Social inequality in educational achievement and psychosocial adjustment throughout childhood: Magnitude and mechanisms”. *Social Science & Medicine*, 55, 863-880.

From this it is clear that parental involvement is hugely important for the cognitive development of primary school children. Indeed, evidence suggests that it is exactly this lack of parental involvement and a poor home learning environment which precipitates fade-out amongst low income and otherwise disadvantaged children: low parental aspirations and fewer home learning opportunities are strongly correlated to low income and/or poorly educated parents.

Encouraging the involvement of parents in the education of their children should, in theory, do more for the prevention of losing early years gains than any school-based initiative. However, we must bear in mind that the school is a vital tool in improving parental involvement – it acts as the conduit for parents to become informed of what and how their children learn, and it is where parents can receive the additional support they may require to overcome their own basic-skills needs or lack of confidence in taking a more active role as their child’s co-educator. It is for this reason that many of the within-school strategies we explore in this report (e.g. a focus on literacy, behaviour and transition strategies) mention the important role parents can have in helping to deliver the programme in question more effectively, and how this may have the additional bonus of improving the learning practices in the home.

In this section we will bring together some of these strat-

egies to demonstrate how parents can be more effectively brought onto school premises; learn about what their children are doing at school; and how to encourage them to help teachers meet their children's learning objectives at home.

What is the government currently doing in this area?

As mentioned above, the policy regarding the formal rights and responsibilities of parents and provisions for parenting classes to deal with behavioural problems or truancy are still in development, but are nevertheless fairly advanced. However, the development of a strategy which supports primary schools to foster a co-educational relationship with their pupils' parents has been wholly overlooked. This is somewhat surprising given both the precedent in this area (i.e. the significant progress made in early years' settings to foster partnerships with parents) and the government's recent statements (e.g. one of the objectives of *Every Child Matters* was to ensure that "All schools actively seek to engage parents in children and young people's education, helping parents to understand what they can do at home to work with the school.")¹⁰⁵ Yet despite the greater community and family-focused approach being recommended by the *Extended Schools* strategy, government activity has so far been limited to structured support (such as parenting classes), providing information (such as the new school profiles), and legal requirements (such as home school agreements and parenting orders). The more informal, sociable atmosphere to be found in pre-school seems to decline in primary schools before its total disappearance in secondary schools. Given the benefits of such an approach, and its popularity amongst parents of pre-school children, it seems a missed opportunity not to help primary schools to sustain this close relationship with parents of new pupils, who often come from pre-school settings where such high levels of informal contact are customary.

What does the evidence tell us?

Evidence indicates that there are a number of ways in which parents display their interest in their child's education which can lead to improved learning outcomes. These include active involvement in learning at home or at school, through to positive and enthusiastic parenting styles and high aspirations for

105 <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications/>

106 Desforges, C. (2003). *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment. A Literature Review*, DfES Research Report 433.

107 Parkinson, C. E. (1982), "Rating the home environment of school age children: a comparison with cognitive index and school progress", *Journal of Child Psychology*, 23: 329-333.

108 Melhuish, E., Sylva, C., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B. (2001). *Social behavioural and cognitive development at 3-4 years in relation to family background. The effective provision of pre-school education. EPPE project (Technical paper 7)*. DfEE. London: The Institute of Education.

109 Feinstein, L., and Symons, J. (1999), "Attainment in secondary school", *Oxford Economic Papers*, OUP: Oxford. 51:300-321.

their child's future. For older students, activities which promote independence and autonomy are more relevant to improved learning outcomes, whilst for younger children direct help with school-relevant skills have the most impact on achievement.¹⁰⁶ Several studies, dating back to 1982, have explored the role of parents as educators in specific curriculum areas such as reading and mathematics.¹⁰⁷ All have shown that the amount of direct teaching or "intellectual stimulation in the home" is highly correlated with children's attainment, particularly during early school years.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) team based at the Institute of Education established the phrase "home learning environment" as a broad term to explain parenting style and the provision of opportunities for learning in the home for pre-school and primary age children. Their longitudinal studies found that in three to seven year olds:

"Higher home learning environment was associated with increased co-operation/conformity, peer sociability and confidence, and lower antisocial and worried/upset behaviour and higher cognitive development scores. The effect on cognitive development was particularly pronounced. After age, it was the variable with strongest effect on cognitive development."¹⁰⁸

An analysis conducted by Feinstein and Symons attempted to quantify the impact of parental involvement. Using an index of examination success ranging from 0 to 100 at GCSE, they found that children whose parents had showed the highest level of parental involvement achieved on average 24 points higher on the scale than those whose parents had showed no interest.¹⁰⁹

It is clear, therefore, that parental involvement can create the positive home learning environment conducive for improved attainment, and that this can be measured as significant at both pre-school and at GSCE. But what are the most effective elements of parental involvement? As mentioned above, Desforges' 2003 report produced the most comprehensive review of evidence on the impact of different forms of parental involvement on a child's development. His review led him to conclude that the most effective way in which par-

ents could improve their children's attainment was to adopt an enthusiastic parenting style and improve the quality of interactions in the home.¹¹⁰ A study by Zellman and Waterman, for example, found that "parent enthusiasm" and "positive parental style" correlated more strongly to pupil achievement than parental involvement in school,¹¹¹ whilst a study by Singh found that parents' aspirations had the biggest impact on pupil achievement.¹¹² Similarly, a study of fourteen to eighteen year olds by Catsambis found that high levels of parental expectation and consistent encouragement were positively associated with student's aspirations and college enrolment.¹¹³

Parental involvement, poverty and social class

It has been established by several evaluations that levels of parental involvement in school, interest in a child's education and a stimulating home learning environment all decrease in line with background factors such as SES, parental education levels and, most importantly, material poverty.¹¹⁴

Nechyba et al proposed three ways in which social class might affect parental involvement and home learning. One suggestion is that there is a "culture of poverty" in which working class families place less value on education than middle class parents and hence are less disposed to participate or encourage their children. A second theory is that working class families have less "social capital" in terms of social networks and skills. As a consequence working class parents either are, or feel they are, less well equipped to negotiate with schools and teachers. The third suggestion is that schools are often inclusive and unwilling to actively engage parents, particularly less well educated or less eloquent parents.¹¹⁵ This last theory was supported by Crozier, who found that amongst the working class parents he interviewed there was a general opinion that teachers only communicated with parents on their own terms and did not encourage pro-activity. He found that there was a subsequent "fatalism" amongst such parents in regard to their children's education.¹¹⁶

Sacker et al attempted to quantify the relationships between parental involvement, aspirations, social class and poverty. The team established the following links, demonstrating that at age seven, material deprivation has twice the effect on

110 Desforges, C., and Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A literature review*. DFES: London

111 Zellman, G.L., and Waterman, J.M. (1998). Understanding the impact of parent school involvement on children's educational outcome, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91 (6): 370-380.

112 Singh, K., Bickley, P.G., Keith, T.Z., Keith, P.B., Trivette, P., and Anderson, E. (1995), "The effects of four components of parental involvement on eighth grade student achievement: structural analysis of NELS-88 data", *School Psychology Review*, 24 (2): 299-317.

113 Catsambis, S. (2001), "Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: connections with high schools seniors' academic success", *Social Psychology of Education*, 5: 149-177.

114 See, for example, the work of Leon Feinstein, the EPPE team, Ruth Lupton, Jo Sparkes, etc.

115 Nechyba, T., McEwan, P., and Older-Aguilar, D. (1999). *The impact of family and community resource on student outcomes: An assessment of the international literature with implications for New Zealand*.

116 Williams, B., Williams, J., and Ullman, A. (2002). *Parental involvement in Education* (Research Report RR332). Department for Education and Skills.

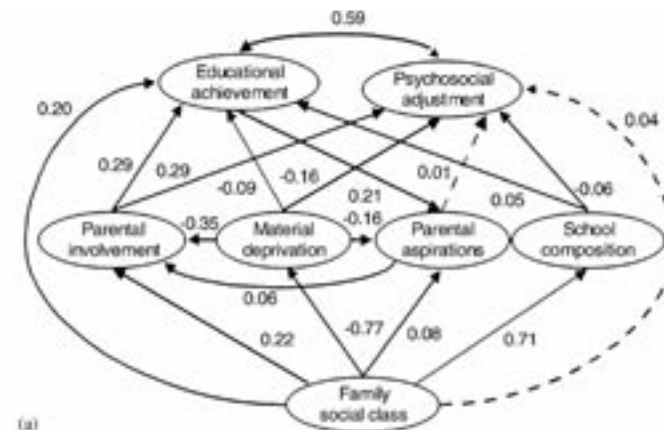
117 Sacker, A., Schoon, I., and Bartley, M. (2002), "Social inequality in educational achievement and psychosocial adjustment throughout childhood: Magnitude and mechanisms", *Social Science & Medicine*, 55: 863-880.

118 Desforges, C., and Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A literature review*. DFES: London.

119 Alakeson, V. (2005). *A 2020 Vision for Early Years*. Social Market Foundation.

120 Melhuish, E., Sylva, C., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B. (2001). *Social behavioural and cognitive development at 3-4 years in relation to family background. The effective provision of pre-school education, EPPE project* (Technical paper 7). DFEE: London: The Institute of Education.

parental involvement than on aspirations, though in turn both have a significant effect on educational achievement:¹¹⁷



Source: Sacker, A., Schoon, I., & Bartley, M. (2002) "Social inequality in educational achievement and psychosocial adjustment throughout childhood: Magnitude and mechanisms". *Social Science & Medicine*, 55, 863-880.

In spite of this substantial amount of evidence, Desforges and others have concluded that low SES and poverty need not automatically imply poor home learning environments and poor parenting styles. He found that whilst levels of parental involvement certainly correlated to SES, parenting style (which is in fact more important for children's achievement, as we have seen above) was less dependent on such factors.¹¹⁸ In fact, positive parenting styles (including sensitivity, boundary setting, supervision and child-centeredness) can protect children against risk factors such as material deprivation and poor parental education.¹¹⁹

As a result, low income parents not involved in their child's school could still have an enthusiastic parenting style and significantly improve their child's attainment. As the EPPE team concluded, "the importance of the home learning environment indicates that what parents do is more important than who parents are."¹²⁰ Or, as Zellman and Waterman observed in their 1998 study of 200 elementary school children, "although family background characteristics seem at first glance to be important predictors of parent school involvement ... (they) become far

less important when we include more pervasive parenting processes in the equation.”

Furthermore, their observations led them to conclude that “the essential independence of the parenting processes... from family background characteristics such as SES suggest that parenting style is not enmeshed in a social context defined by poverty and suggests that it might be both teachable and changeable”.¹²¹ Desforges concurred, stating “good, enthusiastic parenting can be found amongst mothers of all social classes and ethnic backgrounds and where it is not found it can probably be taught.”¹²²

The possibility that SES and poverty can be overcome – if not in the field of parental involvement in school, then at least in parenting style – is an encouraging prospect, and one that should be borne in mind by head-teachers who despair of the lack of parental presence at school.

Involvement in school versus engagement in the home

One of the most interesting findings in the research literature, as we have mentioned above, is that the impact of parenting style and enthusiasm in the home has greater effects than parental involvement with school. Zellman and Waterman measured parental involvement with school activities, parental enthusiasm and school achievement on three scales amongst 200 elementary school children and their parents. Their findings indicated that “how parents interact with their children is more important in predicting child academic outcomes than the extent to which they are involved in school”.¹²³ This is a contentious claim – though Desforges comes to the same conclusion, stating that “parental involvement acted out in the school confers little or no benefit on the individual child. This is a strong finding. It is replicated extensively in the research.”¹²⁴

Why, then, should we consider in this chapter ways in which parents can become more involved in school? As we have seen from above, it is what parents do at home that is the most important factor in a child's development and, fortunately for those children with whom we are most concerned in this project, positive interaction in the home can be learnt and improved upon regardless of existing disadvantages.

We can, in fact, explain the purpose of this chapter by sug-

121 Zellman, G.L., and Waterman, J.M. (1998), “Understanding the impact of parent school involvement on children's educational outcome”, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91 (6): 370-380.

122 Desforges, C and Abouchaar, A (2003)

123 Zellman, G.L and Waterman, J.M (1998)

124 Desforges, C and Abouchaar, A (2003)

125 Formal parenting classes offered under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 tackle truancy and behavioural issues rather than broader home educational strategies, and demand outstrips supply.

126 Desforges, C and Abouchaar, A (2003)

127 Moon, N., and Ivins, C. (2005). *Parental Involvement in Children's Education*. Ipsos MORI.

128 MORI found that AB parents preferred parents' evenings whilst DE parents preferred talking to staff informally. See, Moon and Ivins (2005) DFES Research Report 589. IPSOS MORI.

gesting a more salient question: how can a positive parenting style be learnt?

Given the limitations of formal interventions, such as parenting classes, we must consider whether school can play a role in improving parenting styles and developing learning opportunities in the home.¹²⁵ This is certainly the opinion of Desforges, who states “a little parental involvement in school might go a very long way as a conduit of information (about curriculum, courses, school rules, assessments for example) through which teachers and parents alike can work to support the child. The effect of this basic level of in-school parental involvement might be as an essential lubricant for at-home involvement.”¹²⁶

The school is something which all parents can regularly come into contact with (unlike parenting classes) and can provide an environment in which parents can witness first hand how and what professionals teach their children, and in many schools, practice doing so themselves (see below). The value of such knowledge should not be underestimated. A MORI research study carried out in 2005 found that of those parents polled who stated they were not confident in helping with their child's homework, the two most common explanations given for this were that they did not understand the work their child did (40%), and that they were not used to current teaching methods (38%).¹²⁷ Teaching parents about their child's curriculum, timetable and current teaching methods may therefore have a direct impact on the home learning environment by encouraging more parents to help with their child's homework.

Parents' evenings and other formal channels of parent-teacher communication are, of course, designed to fulfil this purpose. However, turn-out cannot be guaranteed and some parents find the experience intimidating. In addition, parents' evenings only provide a teacher-parent interface in an artificial environment, and does not give parents an opportunity to see their child at school, being taught, or to see other classes in progress. Allowing parents to come to school during the school day has none of these drawbacks, and also seems to be the method favoured by lower SES parents.¹²⁸ MORI also found that parents in lower social classes are less likely to feel very confident when talking to teachers and are less likely to find writ-

ten information very easy to understand.¹²⁹ Thus, the informal “drop in” approach is likely to appeal to just the sorts of parents schools find hardest to engage, and those we must focus on if we are to ensure disadvantaged children do not experience fade out.

Fostering openness

Of course, schools can be intimidating places – especially for less well educated or EAL parents. How can schools cultivate a more open culture to encourage parents to “drop in” more regularly?

One method, adopted by some community and extended schools, is to co-locate community services (such as health and social care services, or adult education classes) in the school building, so that parents become more familiar with the school environment and are more frequently on-site. Other, more direct schemes include using parents as learning or reading mentors, or teaching assistants, which provides close and regular contact with the school in addition to social events, trips and performances which, if held regularly enough, provide a conduit through which parents can get to know teachers and other parents in a more informal setting. Such activities can increase the overall parental presence in the school which, in turn, may encourage other parents to participate. Other schools also organise social events for parents out of school, so that the least confident parents can build networks of peer support to become more involved in the school.

Although we are suggesting here that informal parental involvement in school is useful because it can teach parents how to help their children in the home (i.e. by increasing their awareness of modern teaching techniques, the content of the curriculum, and so on), and despite some evidence suggesting that parental presence in school per se does not improve pupil outcomes,¹³⁰ we would suggest that increased parental presence in school can produce generalised benefits for school children. Even though there is no significant cognitive advantage for children whose parents come into school compared to those children with parents who do not, the additional benefits of an increased adult presence on school premises should not be underestimated. Improved behaviour in the playground, increased numbers of potential role models and learning men-

129 Ibid

130 Nechyba, T., McEwan, P., and Older-Aguilar, D (1999). *The impact of family and community resource on student outcomes: An assessment of the international literature with implications for New Zealand*. Stanford University

tors on site, and more adults on hand to supervise or carry out curriculum enrichment activities and free up valuable teacher time can all contribute to wider benefits for children and create a more learner-friendly environment in the school. Thus, informal parental involvement at school has its own intrinsic value, particularly, for example, for schools whose pupils may lack positive adult role models (see below).

Case Study: Cooper's Lane Primary School

Dads Matter

This parental involvement scheme is specifically aimed at getting fathers and other male family figures into the school to take an active part in children's learning and the life of the school.

The scheme was conceived because a lack of positive male role models both at home and at school was perceived as related to a high level of poor behaviour amongst boys. At school there were very few male teachers, few fathers dropping off and collecting their children and no males volunteering in the classroom. At home there seemed to be little male input in the completion of reading and homework assignments.

The school's response was to set up *Dads Matter*, a group of fathers and male family figures, who get together once a month either in a local pub or restaurant to discuss and develop an agenda for greater involvement in the school. The group is inclusive but is targeted at fathers whose children experience behavioural difficulties. There are approximately sixty fathers currently involved whose children come from a range of school years. Activities include reading and homework tasks, trips abroad and forthcoming events include the “Bring your dad to school day”. Forty fathers are taking part and are offering a range of activities. One father, for example, is bringing in his motorbike to show to the boys.

This scheme has had a tremendous impact on school life: fathers are now much more visible and proactive within the school, both in the classroom and in the playground, and behaviour has improved significantly. Owing to its motivated and inspired leadership, the school has fostered close links with parents and the wider community. *Dads Matter* is proving very popular and is now running into its second year.

A successful strategy to encourage parental engagement with school requires consistent effort and dedication on the part of the head and the teachers to create as many opportunities as possible for all parents to have some way of contributing to the running of the school. As Ofsted, in its review of parental involvement stated, “good practice institutions commit a great deal of sustained energy and resource to this work”.¹³¹ For some schools, this represents nothing short of a complete culture change. Nevertheless, evidence suggests such strategies would be popular with parents. Williams et al found that 35% of the parents he interviewed wanted to be a lot more involved in school, whilst three quarters wanted to be at least slightly more involved in school.¹³² Furthermore, encouraging parents to be more confident in coming into schools and opening more communication between parents and teachers can make the school's job easier – the behaviour and progress of the most disaffected pupils can be improved with parental help.

Dedicated help

Making schools and teachers more open and approachable to parents is the first step towards encouraging parental interest in their child's school career, fostering a sense of partnership with the school and therefore having knock-on effects in improving the home learning environment – where parental engagement and enthusiasm matter most. However, for many parents whose children are vulnerable to fade out, enthusiasm and willingness to be involved may not be sufficient. Information about and training in their child's learning needs is just one method in a range of additional support that can be offered to parents, which also includes basic skills training or help with English for EAL parents, and coping strategies for children with behavioural problems.

A widely used programme in schools is the “Keeping up with the children” course, which shows parents how their children are taught in the literacy hour and the daily maths lesson so they can be confident in supporting them at home. An evaluation of the programme carried out in 2002 found that parents learnt a great deal about the literacy and numeracy strategies, how children learn and how they could help support their own children at home. Many became more involved with their chil-

131 OFSTED. (2000). *Family learning: A survey of current practice*. London: Ofsted.

132 Williams, B., Williams, J., and Ullman, A. (2002). *Parental involvement in Education* (Research Report RR332). Department for Education and Skills.

133 <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/familitresch.html#Keeping>

dren's schools as a result, and others were keen to progress to further courses. Children gained from parents' increased interest, knowledge and involvement.¹³³

Another such programme is SHARE, which has been in operation since 1996 and is now running in approximately 2000 schools and nurseries in the UK. Although SHARE is predominantly a resource to suggest learning activities for parents to share with their children in the home, it also encourages greater involvement in the school as it seeks to link home learning with school practice and the National Curriculum, and is delivered via regular meetings at the school with the SHARE coordinator. Researchers from the IoE randomly sampled 57 SHARE parents from different LEAs to rate their home activity after the programme. The following numbers of parents stated that they were doing more of certain positive activities:

Activity with child	No of parents doing more of this since attending Share workshops (N = 57)
Talking about the world and how things work	42
Playing using toys, games or puzzles	41
Making games to play together	41
Talking about feelings	40
Playing counting games	38
Going out for walks	36
Saying, acting or singing rhymes, poems or traditional songs	35
Doing everyday things and routines together	35
Cooking	34
Going shopping	34
Reading to the child	31
Educational visits	23

Whilst the following stated they were carrying out new activities that SHARE had introduced them to:

New actions after Share	No of parents reporting this
Dedicating slots of time to play with the child	17
Repeating activities from the Share File	12
Deliberately talking more with the child	7
Changing their own approach	6
Trying new types of activity	3
Taking more interest in the work of the setting	2

Source: I Siraj-Blatchford, McCallum, B: *An evaluation of Share at the Foundation Stage*, Institute of Education, University of London: March 2004

Oldham local authority's evaluation of its SHARE programme in 2004-05 found that the most significant benefits (i.e. those most consistently reported by programme participants) were positive impacts in:

- Parent's expectation for their child's education
- Parent's interest in their child's behaviour
- Parent's interest in child's peer relationships
- The relationship between child and parent
- Parent's management of their child's behaviour
- Parent's ability to discipline/supervise their child
- Parent's level of confidence
- Child's level of self-esteem
- Parent's acceptance of problem behaviour
- Child's ability to follow instructions
- Child's ability to control emotions
- Parent's take up of training opportunities
- Child's level of self-esteem¹³⁴

Parents also communicated 44% more often with their child about their learning, 20% more parents found talking to their child's teacher helpful, whilst 60% more parents agreed that their child's teacher knew them. In addition, the research team also found that whilst parents' basic skills (in basic literacy and numeracy) improved through the course of the programme, their perceived difficulties increased – suggesting parents became aware

134 Research and Data Services Limited. (December 2005). Examining the impact of the SHARE Programme.

135 Ibid

of their limitations following participation in SHARE. For example, ability in spoken English increased by 25%, but the percentage of parents reporting only basic spoken English skills increased from zero before the programme, to 50% afterwards.¹³⁵

SHARE is illustrative of the benefits of fostering a co-educational relationship between parents and schools: it provides direct benefits for children, providing them with additional learning support in the home; it provides additional benefits for targeted parents in improving their basic numeracy and literacy skills; and it benefits the school in that hard to teach children are provided with additional support outside of school time, and parents become more engaged with the school.

Case Study: Cooper's Lane Primary School

Share

The Share project is overseen by the home-liaison officer and is run in tandem with other parental schemes in the school. The twelve mothers taking part in Share come into school once a week to meet in a dedicated parents' room, where they are provided with Share resources, shown how to use these and then plan activities for the forthcoming week. How and whether activities planned for the previous week were completed is discussed and this provides parents with the opportunity to resolve any queries and enables the Share co-ordinator to get feedback.

There are numerous "Sharebooks", which are used according to the child's age and learning ability, and provide multiple suggestions and resources for activities. This allows parents to pick and choose the activity for the week ahead depending on the needs and interests of the child. For example, there are activities which improve numeracy and maths skills such as 'Clever Calendar' and 'Have no illusions' while other activities, such as 'Pet Shop Buys' and 'Boxed-in' work on developing children's writing and literacy skills. As part of the 'Boxed-in' activity, for example, children and parents are asked to make a time capsule and include a written message.

At Cooper's Lane, parents coming to the end of a unit put together a Share Success Book. This is a portfolio of all the activities completed by the child and parent together. This can then be used by the parents to gain accreditation for the role

they have played in supporting their child's learning through the Open College Network.

Share at Cooper's Lane is now in its third year and is proving popular with all participants.

Providing a range of opportunities to enable parents to become involved in school and helping them learn how to support their child in the home may still not be sufficient to engage the hardest to reach parents. It is these parents whose children are also most likely to experience fade out and fall behind their peers during primary school. Some schools have responded to this challenge by recruiting a dedicated member of staff to act as a parent liaison, who in turn is charged with reaching out to the least active (usually poorest or EAL) parents. The AMBER (Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions) project, based in Nottingham, calls such members of staff Parent Support Workers (PSWs). As of 2004, there were 57 PSWs working in Nottingham City schools, employed on average for ten hours a week. PSWs have carried out a number of important functions under the AMBER objectives, such as establishing community/parent rooms and facilities in schools; increased parental take-up of parent governor vacancies; provided translation facilities and bi-lingual PSWs for EAL parents; helped parents re-enter employment or adult skills training; and helped staff communicate with parents in cases where intervention was necessary (i.e. where there are behavioural issues or high absences).¹³⁶

Schools in other parts of the country often have some form of family liaison officer, who may carry out home visits where there are instances of SEBD, or a bi-lingual member of staff charged with reaching out to EAL parents. However, AMBER's PSWs, who have a broad remit in finding innovative ways to engage parents and who can act as a single contact point for them, bridging the divide between parents and teachers, have the potential to add real value to schools' activities in this area.

Our proposals

The existing evidence regarding parental involvement in school and activity in the home suggests the following:

136 Yarnit, M. (February 2004). *Amber: Charting the Future Working with Parents and Children in Nottingham Schools*. Associates for Nottingham Adult Community Learning Service and New College Nottingham.

- For a parent, providing learning activities in the home is more important than becoming involved at their child's school;
- The most important element of the home learning environment is parenting style, which should be positive and encouraging to promote self-esteem and academic confidence;
- Positive parenting styles can be learnt, and need not depend on family income or SES; and
- For many parents, their child's school will be the principal means through which such parenting styles can be learnt, as they can discover what and how their children learn, and how to replicate that in the home.

Taking these findings as the premise on which our proposals should be based, and reviewing some of the cases of best practice in this area, we propose the following:

- Fostering a co-educational role with parents should be a priority of all primary schools. The informal contacts and close parent-teacher relationships found in pre-school settings should be used as inspiration, with primary schools attempting to maintain such links with parents arriving in Reception/Y1.
- Schools should be encouraged to implement an open policy for parents, providing several and diverse ways in which parents can become informally involved in the playground or the classroom (as a supervisor, assistant during literacy hour, mentor, or simply as a visitor or observer).
- As part of the extended school programme, schools should also be shown how to provide more structured programmes, such as Keep Up With the Children, to teach parents what and how their children learn in school, and how to replicate this in the home.
- To support both of these strategies, Parent Support Workers should be recruited in targeted schools to act as a dedicated member of staff with the responsibility for opening channels of communication with parents, and encourage greater take-up of the opportunities on offer at the school. PSWs could be funded in the most needy schools by the EIC programme, in the same way as pupils' learning mentors currently are.

Chapter Four: Innovative Class Structures

What do we mean by innovative class structures?

We are using the term “innovative class structures” to describe a variety of pedagogical approaches to class size and composition. There are, of course, limitless combinations of whole-class, small group, triad, dyad and individual teaching methods which also include mixed ability, same ability and mixed age variations, many of which are already in practice in schools throughout the country for practical and/or pedagogical reasons. Around a quarter of maths classes in primary schools in the UK are taught in ability-based sets, for example, in order to cater the level of teaching to the pupils' ability.

Why are class structures important in mitigating fade-out?

Class structures – both their size and composition – are extremely important in that they have a significant effect on both what and how children learn. For children vulnerable to fade out during the primary years, class structures can be used to achieve a variety of important outcomes. For example, small group teaching can help ensure less able children do not fall behind their classmates and give more beneficial teacher-interaction; multi-age teaching can give vulnerable children older role-models and improve social interactions; and cooperative learning can improve social and communication skills.

In the following sections we will review the evidence base, describing which class structuring practices are the most beneficial to those disadvantaged children most likely to lose pre-school gains during the primary years. These have been grouped into three broad areas:

137 This was due to concerns regarding this practice's impact on a child's self-esteem, combined with inconclusive evidence of its benefits and the demise of the 11+ exam.

138 The body of research in this area, dating from the 1960s, is far too large to review here. Some of the most notable studies, however, include Barker Lunn's *Streaming in the primary school* (Slough, NFER 1970; Boaler's work including *Setting, social class and the survival of the quickest*, *British Educational Research Journal*, 23, 575-595. 1997; Ireson's work such as 'Raising standards: is ability grouping the answer?'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25, 343-358. 1999 and, of course, many of Slavin's works, most often cited being the 1988 'Synthesis of research on grouping in elementary and secondary schools'. In *Educational Leadership*.

139 DfES. (2005). *The Effects of Pupil Grouping*. Literature Review DfES research review. 668.

- Ability based learning and mixed age learning
- Variable class sizes and Cooperative learning
- Looping

Ability based learning and mixed age learning

The research body looking into ability based learning and its effect on children's attainment is one of the largest and most fiercely debated in the educational research field. Ability based learning can be carried out via three main methods: streaming, whereby pupils are placed in ability sets for all classes according to their general intelligence; setting, whereby pupils are placed in sets for some subjects (usually maths, science and sometimes English and modern languages) according to their ability in that subject; and within-class ability grouping, whereby whole, mixed ability classes are taught together, but sit in groups based on ability in the subject being taught.

Given that streaming was most prevalent in the immediate post-war period, became increasingly unpopular and was finally abandoned by the majority of schools by the 1960s,¹³⁷ we will focus here on the latter two practices – setting and within-class grouping.

Setting

The evidence regarding setting is often described as equivocal. Different studies, carried out at different times and in different schools, have found setting either slightly improves or slightly reduces pupil attainment.¹³⁸ The variability of evaluation results have led many to conclude that it is not the process of setting per se, but rather the teaching style, materials and other factors combined with setting which make it more or less effective.

A number of meta-analyses in this area have, however, asserted some general conclusions. It was found that overall, there is a slight advantage of setting for higher achieving pupils and a slight disadvantage for lower achieving pupils. This, in a sense, “cancels out” the benefits of setting on attainment over all.¹³⁹ In this report, however, we are mainly concerned with lower attaining, disadvantaged children – thus, the fact that they may be disadvantaged by setting ought to advise us against its use.

There are a number of reasons why this might be the case.

First, and most frequently cited amongst setting critics, is that being placed in a low set undermines a pupil's self-confidence and de-motivates them. Studies by Boaler et al¹⁴⁰ and Ireson and Hallam¹⁴¹ both found that anti-school attitudes and under-achievement were common amongst children in low sets. Macintyre and Ireson's review of self-concept and its relation to actual attainment and setting group found that the two are reciprocal – a pupil placed in a low set loses confidence in his or her abilities, and therefore under performs. This was particularly worrying as they found that placement in the wrong set was fairly common, and transfers from one set to another quite rare.¹⁴² Other studies suggest alternative explanations, showing that teachers often have lower expectations of low-set pupils, and thus do not motivate or challenge them to do better. Also, higher sets often have the most experienced and more highly qualified teachers, and teachers of higher sets are also found to be more enthusiastic and prepared for lessons, whilst lower set teachers spend more time on behaviour management than instruction.¹⁴³ Taking these various findings into account it seems surprising that the negative effects of being placed in a lower set are not more marked for lower achieving pupils. In fact, Slavin's reviews, noted for their methodological rigour, conclude that the effects actually “cluster around zero” overall.¹⁴⁴

This is probably due to the fact that the potential disadvantages of setting are actually caused by variables which sometimes go hand in hand with the setting process. These, therefore, can be moderated or removed altogether. If setting is used prudently, there can be a number of benefits for disadvantaged pupils: it reduces the time spent by teachers managing the class, and enables more direct teaching to occur; it makes it easier for each pupil to progress at an appropriate rate; and it allows more effective targeting and matching of teaching style and resources, including extra learning support, to pupils' needs.¹⁴⁵

However, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils really benefit from ability grouping, it is vital that certain conditions are met. First, a disadvantaged pupil's main point of identification should be with a mixed ability class and grouping by ability should occur only in subjects in which reducing the spread of attainment in the group is particularly important – this can help

140 Boaler, J., Wilam, D., and Brown, M. (2000), “Students' experience of ability grouping - disaffection, polarisation and the construction of failure”, *British Educational Research Journal*, 26 (5): 631-48.

141 Ireson, J. and Hallam, S. (2001). *Ability Grouping in Education*. London: Sage.

142 Macintyre, H., and Irseon, J. (2002), “Within-class Ability Grouping: placement of pupils in groups and self-concept”, *British Educational Research Journal*, 28 (2).

143 Gamoran, A. (1992), “Is ability grouping equitable? Synthesis of research”, *Educational Leadership*, 50, 11-17.

144 Slavin, R. (1988), “Synthesis of research on grouping in elementary and secondary schools”, *Educational Leadership*.

145 Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. (1996). *Achievement for All*. Edinburgh: SOEID.

146 Slavin made these recommendations in Slavin, R. (1987), “Ability grouping and student achievement in elementary schools: a best evidence synthesis”, *Review of Educational Research*, 57 (3): 293-336.

147 Gregory, R.P. (1984), “Streaming, setting and mixed ability grouping in primary and secondary schools: some research findings”, *Educational Studies*, 10 (3).

reduce the stigma associated with low grouping and ensure wider social mixing. Second, setting must reduce student variability in the specific skill being taught, not just in general ability or achievement.¹⁴⁶ Third, schools should frequently reassess pupils' group assignment, and movement between groups should be common practice. This will also reduce stigma and ensure pupils are always placed in the group most appropriate to their ability – an approach successfully used by the Success for All reading programme in the US (see chapter one). Fourth, although teachers must vary their pace and level of instruction to correspond to students' ability, they must take pains to ensure they do not underestimate lower sets. The importance of teacher attitude cannot be over-emphasised. Project Follow-Through in the US, for example, which helped disadvantaged primary school children return to mainstream classrooms, was successful in part due to the programme creators' belief that “intelligent behaviour can be learnt and that backward children can “catch up” academically if taught appropriately... The belief that one can improve the intelligence and attainments of such pupils immediately raises the expectations one has for their future performance”.¹⁴⁷ Frequent movement between sets should help improve this approach, though it is also recommended that the most experienced and qualified teachers should, as a matter of course, be assigned to the lower sets with more challenging pupils – something which research suggests is rarely the case.

Within-class grouping

Within-class grouping is often seen as a more beneficial form of setting in that it reduces the stigma and de-motivational effects of whole-class setting, whilst still allowing for teaching to be catered to ability within a mixed ability classroom. It is also more likely that pupils will be able to move between within-class groups more easily as their ability levels change. The research on the effectiveness of within-class grouping in raising attainment seems to support this theory. Harlen and Malcolm's research review concluded that “the strongest evidence for the effect of ability grouping on achievement was in relation to within-class ability groups for mathematics. Pupils of all abilities gained from this as compared with whole-class teaching. Grouping by ability makes it easier for the teacher to provide

appropriate learning challenges and support for each child.”¹⁴⁸ A review by Sukhnandan and Lee also found that value added scores in Key Stage 3 for the lowest attaining pupils were greatest in mixed ability groups that use flexible within-class setting – suggesting that for these pupils, the benefits of mixed-ability organisational grouping are further enhanced by within-class grouping.¹⁴⁹ This idea of disadvantaged pupils benefiting from a mixed ability setting, but with learning materials and teaching appropriate to their level of understanding was reiterated by Harlen and Malcolm:

“The message that seems to emerge from these observational studies is that it benefits lower-ability pupils to have opportunities to learn with the more able even if at some times they are taught separately to make the class easier to handle.”¹⁵⁰

However, within-class grouping is most successful, like whole-class setting, when certain conditions are met. Lou et al reviewed 51 within-class setting programmes and found that: “students learning in small groups within classrooms achieved significantly more than students not learning in small groups”, but only in those groups which catered the teaching pace, style and learning materials to the ability of the children; and which were formed on the basis of attainment specific to the subject being taught but with other information taken into account (subject attainment alone was no more effective than using general ability as a basis for grouping). Groups of 3 or 4 were also more effective than others.¹⁵¹

Mixed age classes

Another way in which children can be grouped by ability is across year groups, rather than within them. However, the majority of mixed-age groups (also known as composite classes) are not formed in order to achieve more homogenous ability groups, but rather due to financial or administrative reasons in small rural schools. As a result, composite classes are quite rare in the UK. Most are found in rural Scotland, where there is no attempt to reduce the ability range of the classes, often making them very difficult to teach.

Given such difficulties, parents have been worried by the

148 Harlen, W., and Malcolm, H. (1999). *Setting and streaming: a research review*. The Scottish Council for Research in Education.

149 Sukhnandan, L., and Lee, B. (1998) *Streaming, Setting and Grouping by Ability: a Review of the Literature*. Slough: NFER.

150 Harlen, W and Malcolm, H (1999)

151 Lou, Y., Abrami, P.C., Spence, J.C., Poulsen, C., Chambers, B., and D' Apollonia, S. (1996), “Within-Class Grouping: A Meta-Analysis”, *Review of Educational Research*, 66 (4): 423- 458.

152 Veenman, S. (1995), “Cognitive and non cognitive effects of multi-grade and multi-age classes: a best evidence synthesis”, *Review of Educational Research*, 65 (4): 319-381.

153 See, for example, Anderson, R.H., and Parvan, B.N. (1993). *Nongradedness. Helping It To Happen*. Lancaster. PA: Technomic.

154 Mason, D., and Burns, R. (1996), “Simply no worse and simply no better may simply be wrong”, *Review of Educational Research*, 66 (3): 307-322.

155 See, for example, Katz, L. G., Evangelou, D., & Hartman, J. A. (1990). *The case for mixed-age grouping in early childhood education*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. ED 326 302; Kinsey, S. J. (2000). *The Relationship Between pro social behaviours and academic achievement in the primary multi-age classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Loyola University Chicago. And Pratt, D. (1986). “On the merits of multiage classrooms.” *Research in Rural Education*, 3(3), 111-116. EJ 352 966.

use of composite classes. Veenman explicitly attempted to allay these concerns with one of the most thorough reviews of composite classes carried out in 1995. He concluded that “parents, teachers, and administrators need not worry about the academic progress or social-emotional adjustment of students in multi-grade or multi-age classes. These classes are simply no worse, and simply no better, than single-grade or single-age classes.”¹⁵² Veenman’s work summarises a larger European research body which finds very little evidence to support cognitive benefits of multi-age classes. However, evidence from the US is more positive, with various meta-analyses finding generally positive or neutral cognitive benefits, especially amongst ethnic minorities, boys and low income students. This has led some researchers, Parvan and Anderson in particular, to claim Veenman’s analysis is “simply wrong”.¹⁵³

Veenman explained this difference by commenting that his international analysis in 1995 showed small positive gains in US composites and small negative gains in European composites, which cancelled each other out overall. This difference might be explained by the fact that the US use composite classes more often to achieve ability-based groups than in Europe.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the cognitive gain might be explained by homogeneity in ability, supporting the conclusions from the previous section, rather than diversity in ages. It is this, and other variables (such as class size and method of instruction), which makes it very difficult to assess whether multi-age grouping improves cognitive gains.

The evidence is more conclusive regarding the improvement in social skills associated with multi-age grouping. Several studies which cast doubt on the cognitive benefits of composite classes (including Veenman’s) did acknowledge that children in mixed-age settings were more positive about school, had better social skills and self-esteem, and were less aggressive.¹⁵⁵ Katz summarises the potential social benefits of multi-age grouping thus:

- opportunities for children to capitalise on differences in their experience, knowledge and ability
- role models within the same class for younger children
- a reduction in the normative pressure on all children
- a greater range of behaviours and performance is accepted by

children

- a reinforcement of expectations of co-operation
- children facilitating other children's behaviour
- learning how to take turns
- children learning spontaneously how to change the way they speak according to the age of the listener.¹⁵⁶

In reviewing the breadth of this evidence, Kinsey concluded "in light of consistent positive benefits for multi-age grouping in the socio-emotional realm, inconsistent outcomes in the academic realm are surprising."¹⁵⁷

Although evidence suggests multi-age mixing improves pupils social skills and behaviour, teachers are often negative about the prospect of composite classes. This is because teachers are trained to teach in a graded method, textbooks and teaching materials are designed thus, and age-based assessment structures makes multi-age teaching complex and require more preparation. However, as mentioned above, many schools in the US deliberately manipulate the composition of mixed-age classes to create de-facto ability based classes, overcoming many of the complications foreseen by teaching staff and perhaps achieving greater cognitive benefits.

Group sizes and group working

Many of the research reviews we mention above have found it difficult to establish a causal link between ability based, or multi-age grouping, and improvements in children's attainment. This is because there are several confounding variables - such as teaching methods - which make it very hard to establish a causal link to a single activity. Of the many variables, however, one of the most fundamental is surely class-size. Some of those casting doubt on the effectiveness of ability-based teaching, for example, suggest that it is the fact that single-ability groups tend to be smaller than mixed ability groups which has achieved the improvement in attainment. The fact that within-class ability groupings (which are even smaller) produce more significant cognitive benefits further supports this theory.

There are few areas of educational research, however, which have been more hotly debated. Despite the existence of several studies proving a relationship between class size and pupil attainment, some critics have yet to be convinced – mainly

156 Katz, L.G. (1995). *The Benefits of mixed-age grouping*. Eric Digest.

157 Kinsey, S. (2001). *Multiage Grouping and Academic Achievement*. Eric Digest.

158 The most prominent critics of costly class-size reductions include Slavin and Hanushek.

159 Pate-Bain, H., Achilles, C.M., Boyd-Zaharias, J., and MCKenna, B. (1992). "Class size does make a difference", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 74 (3): 253-256.

because reducing class sizes is a particularly costly strategy and some argue there are more cost effective means of improving attainment.¹⁵⁸ However, governments all over the world (including in the UK and the US) seem to have taken notice of the burgeoning work in this area and have invested heavily into reducing class sizes.

We cannot, however, assume there is a linear relationship between class size and attainment. In fact, some studies seem to indicate it is in very small (12-15) and very large (30+) classes that pupils thrive. Others suggest only very young children benefit. It is, therefore, important to review the evidence more closely to establish what size class is optimum for what age and in which subjects before we make more general conclusions.

The most often cited study regarding the impact of class size on pupil attainment is the Tennessee STAR programme, which began in 1985. This study randomly allocated over 7000 elementary school pupils in Tennessee into three types of class: small (13-17); normal (22-25) plus a teaching assistant; and normal (22-25). In both reading and mathematics, pupils in small classes performed significantly better than pupils in regular or regular with teaching aide classes and the benefits of having been taught in smaller classes were still evident at high school level.¹⁵⁹ More relevant to our objectives here, STAR researchers found that some low attaining groups benefited more from small group teaching. This presents the possibility that small group teaching may reduce the attainment gap between deprived and mainstream children.

Average percentage of pupils passing Basic Skills First Test (BSF) reading: Grade 1, STAR

Pupil status	Grade	Class Size		Difference %
		Small %	Regular %	
Minority	1	65.4	48	17.4
Non-minority	1	69.5	62.3	7.2
Difference		4.1	14.3	—

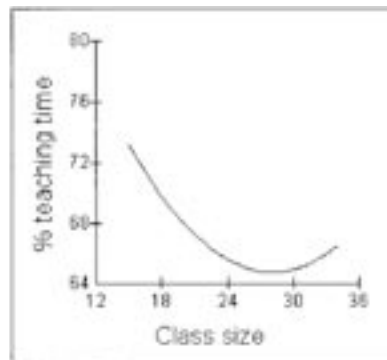
(Source: Nye et al, 1992, p20)

As a result of the STAR findings and other similar smaller scale studies, a number of states ploughed resources into reduc-

ing class sizes in its elementary schools, with differing degrees of improvements in achievement.¹⁶⁰ Of course, the STAR study has not been without its critics. In response to doubts as to whether the findings were robust enough to predict the impact of small class sizes in the UK, a team at the Institute of Education carried out their own longitudinal study from reception to Year 2.

The team's findings clearly show that small group teaching is effective in improving pupil attainment, and particularly for low achievers.¹⁶¹ This benefit is more significant for younger (reception) children, though still present for Years 1 and 2. This can be explained by a number of factors. First, researchers observed that, except for a small increase in very large classes, direct teaching time increased as class size decreased. Conversely, non-teaching time (e.g. administration and management) increased as class size increased.

Relationship between class size and percentage teaching time in morning session (reception year)



Source: Blatchford, P et al: "Are Class Size Differences Related to Pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5-7 Years" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 29, No. 5, October 2003

The researchers found a particularly strong correlation between class size and teacher-supported learning – for example children in larger classes read in front of their teachers in a one-to-one scenario less often and for shorter periods of time.

Second, researchers observed children in small classes interacted more on a one-to-one basis with their teachers compared

160 Wilson, V. (2002). *Does Small Really Make a Difference? A review of the literature on the effects of class size on teaching practice and pupils' behaviour and attainment*. SCRE.

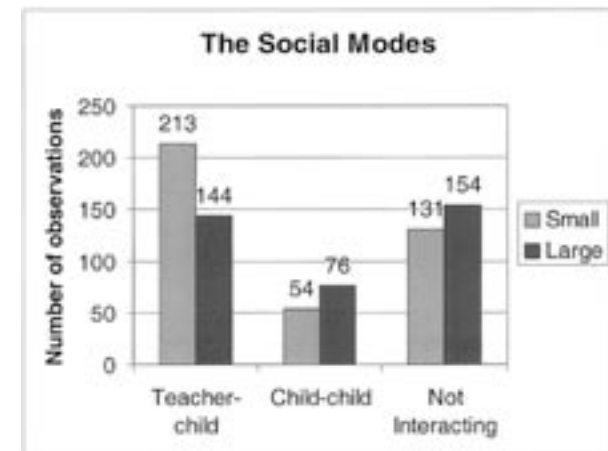
161 Blatchford, P et al. (October 2003), "Are Class Size Differences Related to Pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5-7 Years", *British Educational Research Journal*, 29 (5).

162 Ibid

to larger classes, whilst in larger classes children interacted more with one another, or did not interact at all. Although peer interaction is of course important, it is likely that larger classes have more peer interaction as a result of more off-task time spent waiting for their teacher to come to them to instruct them, rather than planned peer interaction. This was supported by further behaviour observations by the team, who found that

"children in large classes were twice as likely to be off task. This was evident in all three social modes: in contacts with their teachers they were less likely to attend to her and were more off task; with other children they were more likely to be actively off task; and when on their own they were more likely to be off task, especially in the passive form of being disengaged from allocated work."¹⁶²

Differences between large and small classes in the three social modes

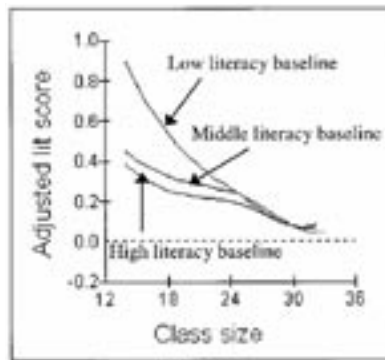


Source: Blatchford, P et al: "Are Class Size Differences Related to Pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5-7 Years" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 29, No. 5, October 2003

These factors go some way in explaining the achievement differences Blatchford et al found between large and small classes. In literacy, a reduction in the reception class size from 30 to 20 pupils resulted in an increase in attainment of approximately

0.35 standard deviations for the low attainers, 0.2 standard deviations for the middle attainers, and 0.15 standard deviations for the high attainers. In maths, the improvement was 0.25 standard deviations for all ability levels. Although similar improvements were not statistically significant in Years 1 or 2, the researchers found that children who had gained in literacy scores from small reception classes sustained those gains if moved to smaller or similar classes in Year 1, but lost them if moved to larger classes.

Relationship between Reception year class size and literacy progress (adjusted for school entry scores)



Source: Blatchford, P et al: "Are Class Size Differences Related to Pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5-7 Years" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 29, No. 5, October 2003

As a result of their findings, the research team made a number of recommendations: first, they asserted that there was a clear case for small class sizes in the Reception Year. They commented that "the UK Government's policy of a maximum class size of 30 is to be welcomed but our results show where resources should be further targeted." They also stated that small classes appear to work best in literacy for children who are most in need academically, suggesting further targeting of resources. In light of the "disruption effect", namely slips in attainment following a transfer to a larger class, the team states that "the effect of small Reception classes carried over into Year 1 only when children moved into a similar or smaller class.... in addition to smaller classes in the Reception Year, it is advisable to maintain

163 Ibid

164 Ibid

smaller classes where possible, and to seek to ensure stability in class sizes across years."¹⁶³ They also found no evidence to suggest that having extra adults in a classroom compensated for large classes.

Of course, proposing an overall reduction in class sizes in primary school is not feasible for sound logistical and financial reasons. That said, as we have seen from above, very large classes also produce large attainment gains and may be suited to certain types of learning – for example, lecture-style classes can be useful for teacher-led instruction of, say, a lesson in history which is later explored and discussed in smaller groups. Such classes could be seen as a weekly or monthly treat, held in the school hall, gym or off-site for perhaps 60-90 pupils at a time. The benefit of this large, multiple-class teaching is the delivery of small-group classes (or one to one booster classes as we explain below) becomes more feasible as teacher time is freed up.

Group working

The research into class sizes outlined above demonstrates a distinct advantage of small classes, particularly for younger children. Their observations are also useful to illustrate the use of within-class grouping and its relationship with class sizes. As we will see below, (and as we have already seen above, regarding ability-based within-class grouping) working in small groups within a larger class can have distinct benefits for children, particularly those who have weaker social and cognitive skills. Schools frequently sit children in groups in class, usually of between four and six. Blatchford et al found, however, that another drawback of large classes was that they were (predictably) made up of larger groups. Teachers attempting to reduce group size found it hard to manage several small groups and so would more frequently opt for groups of seven to ten. Their research found that larger groups provided a less effective educational environment.¹⁶⁴

Of course, having small classes, or children sitting in small groups, does not necessarily imply that children are actually carrying out group work. The 2005 DfES commissioned study into group working in primary schools found that "for the largest part of their classroom experience, pupils are seated in

small groups (of 4 to 6 children around a table). However, these seating groups are rarely assigned learning (or communication) tasks that require group working – which may include cooperative (individual contributions to a shared goal) or collaborative tasks that engage all members of the group in an interdependent manner.¹⁶⁵

Galton found a similar scenario in 1990, where he observed significant disparities between grouping and actual group working in primary schools:

GROUPING	SEATING ARRANGEMENT	WORK ARRANGEMENT
Small group	56.0%	5.0%
Dyads	16.0%	4.0%
Individual	7.5%	81.0%
Whole class	20.5%	10.0%

Source: Galton and Patrick (1990) seating and working arrangements in primary schools.¹⁶⁶

This disparity between seating arrangements and working arrangements is troublesome because it can lead to disruptive behaviour. Galton found that assigning individual work to pupils seated in a small group is associated with more “off-task” activities and lack of attention.¹⁶⁷ However, it is also concerning because group-based work can have real and significant benefits for pupils. Research shows that, for certain types of task, working in small groups is more effective than working alone. For example, several studies have concluded that learning processes related to cognitive development (either new knowledge or application of knowledge) are enhanced by effective social communication and support.¹⁶⁸ Pupils who undertake focused questioning, exploration of alternate answers and explanation for these answers are more likely to solve cognitive-based problems.¹⁶⁹

Although the government’s *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years* recommends group working for problem solving activities, there have been a number of studies which clarify the most effective form of group working according to the task at hand. Greater pupil outcomes may be achieved if such research were used as guidance

165 DFES. (2005). *The Effects of Pupil Grouping*. Literature Review DFES research review 668.

166 Galton, M.J. and Patrick, H. (1990). *Curriculum Provision in the Small Primary School*. London: Routledge.

167 Galton, M. (1990), “Grouping and Group work”, in C. Rogers and P. Kutnick (eds.), *The Social Psychology of the Primary School*. London: Routledge.

168 See, for example, Mercer, N. (2000). *Words and Minds: how we use language to think together*. London, and Light, P. and Littleton, K. (1994), “Cognitive approaches to group work” in P.Kutnick and C.Rogers (eds.), *Groups in Schools*. London: Routledge.

169 DFES. (2005). *The Effects of Pupil Grouping*. Literature Review DFES research review 668.

170 Kutnick, P. (1994), “Use and Effectiveness of Groups in Classrooms”, in P. Kutnick and C. Rogers (Eds.), *Groups in Schools*. London: Cassell.

171 <http://www.kaganonline.com/Catalog/index.html>

172 Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative Learning*. San Clemente, California.

for primary class grouping strategies. The table below is taken from one such research study.¹⁷⁰

Group size	Learning task	Knowledge relationship	Social relationship	Working interactions
Individual	Practice, revision	Unequal (teacher: pupil)	Hierarchical	Individualised, individualised
Dyad	Incremental, restructuring	Equal (pupil: pupil)	Mutual	Collaborative/ cooperative work, brainstorming, joint problem solving
	Incremental	Unequal (tutor: pupil)	Mutual	Peer tutoring
Triad	Incremental, restructuring with computer or other apparatus	Equal (pupil: pupil) With additional pupil working apparatus	Mutual	Collaborative work, brainstorming, joint problem solving
Small Group	Enrichment, restructuring	Unequal (pupil: pupil)	Mutual	Co-operative group work
		Equal (pupil: pupil)	Mutual	Collaborative work
Large group	Incremental	Unequal (teacher: pupil)	Hierarchical	Lecturing, teacher led discussion
Whole class	Incremental	Unequal (teacher: pupil)	Hierarchical	Interactive lecturing.
	Practice, revision	Unequal (teacher: pupil)	Hierarchical	Individualised, individualised

Such studies are supported by the popular “cooperative learning” movement in the US, inspired by Spencer Kagan’s work dating from 1968.¹⁷¹ Cooperative Learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal.¹⁷² Students work together to learn and are responsible for their team mates’ learning as well as their own. The basic elements of this approach are:

1. Positive Interdependence - occurs when gains of individuals or teams are positively correlated.
2. Individual Accountability - occurs when all students in a group are held accountable for doing a share of the work and for mastery of the material to be learned.
3. Equal Participation - occurs when each member of the group is afforded equal shares of responsibility and input.
4. Simultaneous Interaction - occurs when class time is designed

to allow many student interactions during the period.

Slavin has carried out a number of research syntheses exploring the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies.¹⁷³ From this he was able to identify a number of rationales to explain why cooperative learning may improve pupil attainment. First, the “cognitive rationale” – as explained above, suggests pupils often learn best when able to interact with their peers to explore issues for themselves. Second, the reward systems in Kagan’s model are group-based – so every pupil in a group must do well to be rewarded. This improves group interaction and ensures pupils help each other learn and understand. Third, this form of learning takes advantage of what is known as the “zone of proximal development”. This concept, coined by Vygotsky in 1978, suggests that children can learn from more able peers – so that what one learns with the aid of others today can be done independently tomorrow.¹⁷⁴

Slavin found that cooperative learning strategies significantly improved the achievement of students and their interpersonal relationships compared to control groups in 61% of the 67 studies he reviewed.¹⁷⁵ Marzano et al actually found the effect size was 0.78 compared to methods where pupils learnt as individuals, and advocated it as one of the strongest methods for improving pupil achievement.¹⁷⁶

173 Slavin, R. E. (1991), “Synthesis of research on cooperative learning”, *Educational Leadership*, 48: 71-82.

174 Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

175 Slavin, R. E (1991).

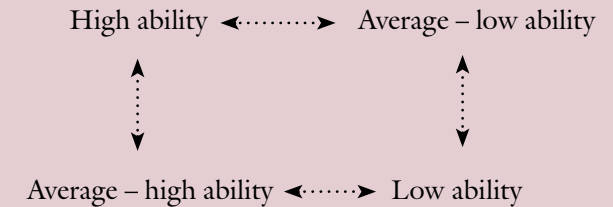
176 Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., and Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works. Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Case Study: Mottram St Andrew Primary School

Collaborative Learning

Mottram St Andrew Primary is a one-form entry located in a relatively affluent area on the outskirts of Macclesfield. The school has embedded Mind Friendly Learning and co-operative learning across the school.

Based on the principles and structures developed by Spencer Kagan, children are seated in mixed ability groups of four for most classes. Children are carefully seated along the following model, and are rotated every six weeks to ensure that they have the opportunity to learn with a mix of classmates. These seating arrangements allow for individual, paired and group learning. In a pair, children either work with the child opposite or adjacent to them but never with their diagonal partner.



The learning activities in class are designed to take advantage of this grouping arrangement. For example, in ‘Timed, Pair, Share’, the teacher announces a topic for discussion and states how long each partner will have to talk. The teacher then provides ‘thinking time’ before the session begins. In pairs, Partner A shares and Partner B listens, then Partner B responds. These roles are then reversed. Often, pairs are asked to share with the rest of the class. All children have to take part, children have time to think before speaking and children have to listen in order to be able to respond.

The Head of Mottram St Andrew believes using this grouping strategy has resulted in far more time-on-task in the classroom, and the children seem very positive too. One Year 6 pupil said, ‘It makes learning fun’ while another said ‘I like working as a group because I can discuss answers and share them before I write them down.’ Comments from visiting teachers have been equally encouraging, one arguing that collaborative learning was ‘making learning vibrant, reflective and accessible to all pupils.’

The Mottram St Andrew approach places a premium on communication and social skills to allow group problem solving. As such, it could potentially be replicated, and provide even greater benefits, in schools with higher percentages of SEN, FSM or EAL pupils.

Whilst the evidence seems to have reached a consensus that small group learning is wholly beneficial, there is a clear divide here between the proponents of the *homogenous* ability-based small-group structures we have discussed above, and Kagan and other group learning theorists who believe that *heterogeneous* groups – not just in terms of ability but also of background,

ethnicity and so on – are one of the key principles of effective group interactions. They believe that by working with children with a diverse range of view points, cognitive development is improved as a wider range of opinions and greater explorations of issues can be undertaken. It also improves social skills as children learn to interact with pupils from different backgrounds and experiences. This also enables the “zone of proximal development” theory as less able children are able to work closely and learn from their more able peers, whilst more able children can benefit from explaining and taking responsibility for less able peers, cementing their understanding of the subject at hand and improving their social skills.¹⁷⁷

This does not mean, however, that we must choose either homogenous or heterogeneous ability groups as a definitive classroom practice. As with many of the class structures we have discussed here, the key is to be flexible and use a variety – in both composition and size – of classroom groupings, according to the subject being taught and pupils in question. There is no reason, for example, that children cannot be grouped for heterogeneous, cooperative learning in geography and science, and homogeneously for their literacy hour (see proposals at the end of this chapter).

The more pressing concern is ensuring teachers are given appropriate guidance on what type of grouping is most effective in what situation. Given the discrepancy between seating and working arrangements noted in UK primary schools above, it is clear there is little such guidance currently available. Similarly, a number of researchers have expressed concern with the lack of social skills training given to pupils. Most children are expected to work in groups spontaneously without being given any guidance on how to get the most from their experience. For those disadvantaged children that we are most concerned with, this is particularly important as they may lack the social abilities or self-confidence to make an effective contribution to group working. A review of grouping research commissioned by the DfES stated:

“For effective group working of any kind, children must establish positive relationships between group members that allow for sensitivity to others, trust of others and effective communi-

177 <http://home.capecod.net/%7Etpanitz/tedsarticles/coopbenefits.htm>

178 DfES. (2005). *The Effects of Pupil Grouping*. Literature Review DfES research review 668.

179 <http://creict.homerton.cam.ac.uk/spring/about.htm>

cation. Development of group working conditions that allow sensitivity, trust and communication often require training for these skills, and children without these skills are less likely to interact (with peers and teachers) and achieve at high levels in their classrooms... Lack of training for effective group work provides a strong explanation for the inconsistent or negative attainment findings in the range of classroom grouping studies often described in the literature.”¹⁷⁸

Despite this acknowledgement, there are very few programmes helping children learn how to work in groups. The principle exception to this is the SPRinG (Social pedagogic research into group-work) programme which ran from 2000-2004, which illustrated how pupil and teacher training, and briefing and debriefing before and after group work, increased its beneficial effects.¹⁷⁹

Looping

Looping is somewhat different to the other grouping strategies we have described so far in this section, in that looping does not seek to manipulate the composition or size of the group, or prescribe particular group working practices, but rather seeks to keep a class together with the same teacher for two or more years.

Looping is the practice where a teacher advances to the next grade level along with his or her class, then loops back to shepherd another group. This practice is not particularly common in the UK, although Montessori and Steiner Waldorf schools have similar approaches in keeping a single form tutor with a class for their entire primary school experience. The two-year looping approach can be found in the US, however, as well as Italy, Germany and Japan.

Why might looping help mitigate fade out?

The evidence supporting the academic benefits of looping is somewhat limited, with only a handful of studies carried out in the US. Most of these, however, suggest that looping can achieve significant improvements in literacy and numeracy attainment. A study carried out in Miami in 2000, for example, used the state (FCAT) exam to test pupil attainment in read-

ing and maths, and compared pupils who had looped with a matched control group. The research team found the looped pupils performed significantly better in both reading and maths in all grades.

Reading Achievement results on the FCAT (Norm-Referenced Test) by Grade Level

	PERCENTILE CORRESPONDING TO THE MEAN SCALED SCORE		DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTILE SCORES LOOPING - MATCHING
	LOOPING SAMPLE	MATCHING SAMPLE	
Grade 2 (n = 159)	68	63	+5
Grade 3 (n = 27)	61	53	+8
Grade 4 (n = 293)	63	58	+5
Grade 5 (n = 98)	38	34	+4

Note: Some of the percentiles are interpolated.

Mathematics Achievement results on the FCAT (Norm-Referenced Test) by Grade Level

	PERCENTILE CORRESPONDING TO THE MEAN SCALED SCORE		DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTILE SCORES LOOPING - MATCHING
	LOOPING SAMPLE	MATCHING SAMPLE	
Grade 2 (n = 163)	71	64	+7
Grade 3 (n = 27)	69	61	+8
Grade 4 (n = 292)	66	57	+9
Grade 5 (n = 98)	59	53	+6

Note: Some of the percentiles are interpolated.

Source: Shneyderman, A: *Evaluation of Looping*, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Evaluation and Research, September 2000

The Families Are Students and Teachers (F.A.S.T) project piloted programs for teacher looping in Ohio. The F.A.S.T. research team found that pupils in the program exhibited higher reading and maths achievement scores on standardized tests than did students in the traditional grade organization, even when both groups were taught by the same teacher.¹⁸⁰

180 Barto, A. (2002). *The Looping Challenge: Are there Benefits of Teacher Looping on Middle School MAP Scores?* Columbia College.

181 Shneyderman, A. (September 2002). *Evaluation of Looping*. Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Evaluation and Research.

182 Liu, J. (1997), "The emotional bond between teacher and students: Multi-year relationships", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78: 156-157.

183 Oxley, D. (1994), "Organizing schools into small units: Alternatives to homogeneous grouping", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75: 521-526.

184 Hampton, F. M., Mumford, D. A., and Bond, L. (1997). *Enhancing urban student achievement through multi-year assignment and family-oriented school practices*. *ERS Spectrum*. 15:7-15.

185 Hanson, B. J. (1995). *Getting to know you—multi-year teaching*. *Educational Leadership*. 53: 42-43.

186 Shneyderman, A (September 2000).

However, potential cognitive benefits aside, the reason why looping might be beneficial for those primary children vulnerable to fade out is because looping is shown to foster closer relationships between parent, teacher and pupil, and also create a more stable environment for the child to learn in. In a teacher survey carried out in Miami, 98% of teachers stated that their pupils in looping classes felt less apprehensive at the beginning of the second year of the loop.¹⁸¹

It is these close and stable teacher-pupil relationships which is the reasoning behind looping programmes in countries such as China, where such relationships are seen as crucial to a child's academic and psychological development.¹⁸² In Germany, too, "Teachers believe that a close, stable relationship between teachers and students is a necessary condition for effective education".¹⁸³ For deprived children, such stability can be crucial. Hampton et al, for example, asserted that children whose lives were less stable benefit most from looping,¹⁸⁴ whilst Hanson found that teachers believed "looping provided a strong support system to an increasing number of children whose lives are riddled with change".¹⁸⁵

As a result, several observational studies of looping report improved behaviour and attendance. The study from Miami mentioned above, for example, found looping children were absent far fewer days than their matched peers, whilst 89% of the principals they surveyed felt looping in their school had reduced disciplinary problems.¹⁸⁶

The average number of days absent

	LOOPING SAMPLE			MATCHING SAMPLE		
	1998-1999 SCHOOL YEAR	1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR	INCREASE/DECREASE	1998-1999 SCHOOL YEAR	1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR	INCREASE/DECREASE
Grade 2 (n = 185)	9.4	8.2	-1.2	9.1	8.3	-0.8
Grade 3 (n = 28)	7.4	5.0	-2.4	5.5	5.4	-0.1
Grade 4 (n = 296)	7.2	7.0	-0.2	6.5	6.9	+0.4
Grade 5 (n = 103)	8.0	6.7	-1.3	6.5	7.8	+1.3
Total (n = 612)	8.0	7.2	-0.8	7.2	7.4	+0.2

Note: the grade levels shown are for the 1999-2000 school year.

Source: Shneyderman, A: *Evaluation of Looping*, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Evaluation and Research, September 2000

The importance of stability and continuity for children vulnerable to fade out is illustrated in more detail in section eight of this report, where we discuss the trauma of transition between school years and from primary to secondary school and how this can often exacerbate the fade-out effect. Looping can be an effective strategy to counter transition trauma, as a child remains with the same teacher and peers for two years a time. Whilst there have been concerns regarding a child's reaction at the end of the two years when he or she is then faced with a new teacher, it may be that looping is useful for the younger primary school children to settle them into a formal learning environment, so that at the end of a two or three year loop they are more confident to start in a new class with a new teacher.

We have also discussed, in section two of this report, the beneficial effects nurture groups can have on a child's self-esteem and separation anxiety as they leave pre-school and start primary. Looping may replicate similar benefits as children are able to foster a closer relationship with their form tutor over a longer period of time.

Looping may also produce a range of other potential benefits for disadvantaged or vulnerable children. For example, many studies of looping, as well as teacher and parent surveys carried out in the US, found that looping not only helped cement stable teacher-pupil relationships, but also fostered closer relations between parents and teachers: "Over the span of a looping cycle, teachers not only build a detailed profile of each student, but they also come to better know the parents of the students. The longer-than-normal connection allowed for the development and promotion of working relationships between home and school."¹⁸⁷ The survey carried out in Miami, mentioned above, found 83% of teachers surveyed said they had better relationships with parents in looped classes.¹⁸⁸ We have seen in section three of this report how important parental involvement in education is for their child. Children most vulnerable to losing their early years gains are also those most likely to have less enriching home learning environments, and parents who might feel intimidated by their child's school. Helping parents become familiar with their child's teacher and build an ongoing relationship, encouraging them to become more involved, is therefore likely to benefit most such disadvantaged children.

187 Bogart, V. (2002). *The Effects of Looping on the Academic Achievement of Elementary School Students*. Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. East Tennessee State University.

188 Shneyderman, A (September 2000).

189 Burke, D. (1997). *Looping: Adding Time, Strengthening Relationships*. ERIC Clearinghouse.

190 Shneyderman, A (September 2000).

Finally, looping is seen by teachers in the US as being a "gift of time". That is, at the beginning of the second year of a two-year loop, teachers do not have to spend time learning new names and personalities, establishing rules and expectations and settling children into their new class, but rather start instruction much earlier. Studies suggest an extra month of teaching time is gained on average at the beginning of every looped year.¹⁸⁹ The Miami teacher survey mentioned above found 88% of teachers felt that looping increases the time available to less able students to learn basic skills.¹⁹⁰

The potential disadvantage to looping is, of course, if a pupil and teacher have a personality conflict and the pupil must remain with that teacher for two, not one year. Some parents in the US are also concerned that their child may be stuck with a poor quality teacher for a year longer than necessary. These concerns are of course valid, however it is common practice amongst looping schools to place only their most experienced teachers in looping classes, which will often reduce these risks.

Our proposals

In reviewing the research evidence and instances of good practice around the use of pupil grouping and the various sizes and compositions available, it is clear that the key to a successful group based approach is flexibility. There is no single most effective grouping strategy to follow – different types of group working, as we have seen, are more or less effective according to the background and age of the pupils in question and the subject or skills being taught. As such, it is impossible for us to prescribe a definitive grouping plan that schools should follow. However, we can synthesize a number of guiding principles from the evidence reviewed above:

- Teachers must be given guidance regarding the most effective group strategies for different situations. With this information, schools may then consider using alternative grouping strategies, depending on the pupils they are teaching and their lesson objectives.
- The grouping strategies open to teachers should include pair and triad working, small group and whole class work, mixed ability, mixed age and same ability.

- Based on the evidence reviewed, we would recommend that a pupil's main point of identification should be within a mixed ability class.
- We would ask schools to consider using ability based grouping only for subjects where reducing the spread of attainment in the group is particularly important, such as mathematics.
- Schools may also want to consider using multi-age classes where ability grouping is deemed necessary, as a means of improving social skills.
- Wherever practicable, we suggest schools consider within-class ability grouping as a preferred ability based option.
- Where ability grouping is used, schools need to reassess pupils' group assignment frequently, and ensure that movement between groups becomes common practice.
- Teachers must vary their pace and level of instruction to correspond to students' ability, but they must also take pains to ensure they do not underestimate lower sets.
- Schools may consider using small classes (of 12-15 pupils) more often. To make this feasible, one approach could be to have large classes (30+) with direct instruction at one point of the school day to free up teachers and timetable time for small classes at another point of the school day.
- We would encourage schools to ensure that class seating arrangements reflect working arrangements. For example, we would recommend that individual work assignments were not given to pupils sitting in small groups.
- We would encourage the wider use of small group and cooperative learning for certain types of task – in particular cognitive development and problem solving. We would recommend that pupils be placed in heterogeneous groups for these tasks and encouraged to explore solutions as a team.
- In order that children are really able to benefit from group working, we would suggest that schools offer teamwork training and have group-work objectives explained in advance of group tasks.

Chapter Five: Providing additional support

What do we mean by additional support?

Additional support is a general term we are using here to cover a variety of schemes, carried out to provide support outside of or in addition to the normal school curriculum. This includes extended and wrap-around services, booster and revision classes, mentoring, and so on. As with several sections in this report, many of the programmes and approaches we mention here can be found elsewhere – for example in section one (literacy) and section seven (transition strategies). However, it is worth drawing the various sources of additional support together to demonstrate the importance of such practices in guarding against fade out.

Why is additional support important for mitigating fade out?

There are a number of reasons why some pupils lose the academic and social gains made during pre-school. For some pupils, a poor home learning environment may mean that they do not progress as quickly as their peers in literacy and communication skills, or a disruptive childhood may produce emotional and behavioural problems which stand in the way of their academic progression. For others who are simply less able than their classmates, the experience of falling behind may lead to demotivation, which in turn undermines performance, and so on.

Given the multiplicity of factors at play, no single strategy can provide a solution (the variety of approaches covered in this report serves to illustrate this point). However, additional support – whichever guise it takes – is one of the most crucial elements to ensuring that vulnerable pupils get the help they need

to stop them from falling behind their peers. Keeping up with the mainstream is beneficial for a number of reasons – first, the cumulative effect of failure (i.e. those who fall slightly behind will fall further behind unless the problem is addressed) means that well timed boosts for certain pupils can prevent problems later on, which may require more costly remedial classes or special education placements. Second, keeping vulnerable children in mainstream classes helps to promote their social adjustment and stops them from losing confidence and becoming de-motivated or labelled as “failures”. Despite criticisms that catch-up classes can prove stigmatising for pupils, many support schemes (as we shall see below) have designed ingenious strategies to minimise this risk. In addition, stigma is surely much greater for pupils who, having not been offered catch-up classes earlier on, are placed in remedial or streamed classes later. Finally, keeping children within a certain range of ability (or rather above a minimum standard) helps teachers teach more effectively as they have a less heterogeneous mix of abilities to cater for, thus reducing the need for streaming and other strategies.

Additional support is also particularly beneficial for pupils from disadvantaged or difficult home circumstances, because study support in the morning or after school provides opportunities for structured activities and time with peers, and a safe learning environment. It also gives children access to activities and facilities which they may otherwise never have the opportunity to enjoy. Finally, extra-curricular activities can also act as a way of encouraging truanting children to come to school, whilst others provide a vehicle for greater parental involvement – two factors which are also particularly important to ensure disadvantaged children do not fall behind their peers.

Types of additional support

1 – Study support

We are using the term “study support” here to refer to a range of activities that take place outside of school hours – i.e. before and after school, in lunchtime, weekends and during the holidays. The DfES defined study support in 1999 thus:

191 DfEE. (1999). DfEE Research Report 110.

192 White Paper. (2001). *Schools: Achieving Success*. Parliament. House of Commons: England.

“Study support schemes are linked to schools, the activities are open to a group of pupils, and attendance is voluntary. In order to qualify as study support, the purpose of the activities should be to assist pupils’ learning, raise achievement, and/or to promote positive personal and social change (e.g. attitudes to learning, motivation, self-esteem, teamwork).”¹⁹¹

This definition encompasses a range of activities, from homework clubs to outward bound courses. In the US, such activities have usually been designated into two different forms - curriculum “extension” activities, defined as those directly related to academic study, such as homework clubs and subject based schemes, and curriculum “enrichment” activities, which are intended to broaden children’s opportunities, develop personal and social skills, and to enhance self-esteem. They include activities such as choir or drama clubs, sports and outward bound courses. This distinction is less frequently employed in the UK, and in practice most schools offer a combination of extension and enrichment activities.

The emergence of new community schools in Scotland, drawing upon the full-service model used in the US, raised awareness of “extended schools” as a policy approach. However, the UK has had a tradition of “community schools” for decades. This was acknowledged in 2001-02 when the government first began to actively promote extended schooling. The White Paper “Schools: Achieving Success” explained how several schools in the UK already offered study support in out-of-school hours, while others offered sports and/or arts activities, or Internet access, and some already worked closely with other agencies such as health, childcare providers or adult education. As a way of increasing the number of schools offering such services, the Paper recommended that legislation be introduced to remove the barriers schools might face in seeking to provide more support to pupils, families and communities, and suggested pilots to “test out such “extended schools”.”¹⁹²

A poll carried out by MORI in 2004 found that 90% of primary schools offer study support activities, with 94% of those providing PE/sports, 77% offering music and 58% offering ICT. The survey found, however, that special interest clubs, other curriculum-related clubs, and literacy, literature and

English language-related clubs were offered in very few primary schools, and this figure had been declining since 2000.

What are the benefits of study support?

Improving academic attainment

Evaluating and quantifying the impact of study support is quite challenging. This is because there is a huge diversity of study support being offered in schools around the UK, which makes it very difficult to isolate and evaluate a single model reliably. Also, as Cummings et al explain, it is also because of the “inherent difficulty of identifying outcomes from initiatives such as these. This is to do with the typically multi-strand nature of extended school activities, the complex contexts (often characterised by the presence of many other related initiatives) in which they operate.”¹⁹³ As a result, many studies are descriptive and focus on the implementation of study support initiatives, rather than the outcomes. Others rely on qualitative data, such as interviews with parents and teachers, to relate the benefits of study support activities. One such study, carried out by the NfER for the then DfEE, found that most practitioners and experts involved in the delivery of study support believed the benefits were two-fold – some activities improved study skills and attainment in key subjects, whilst others improved self-esteem and motivation and encouraged better attendance at school.¹⁹⁴

These opinions have been corroborated by some notable exceptions to the mainly qualitative and descriptive body of research in this field. For example, Cummings et al carried out an evaluation of the first 25 extended schools pilots funded by the government in 2002-03. The team found that increased pupil attainment could be directly attributed to some study support initiatives. For example, one LEA ran a series of arts-based activities in its schools and saw GCSE A*-C results rise from 63% to 77% in Art, from 50% to 75% in Music and from 64% to 81% in Drama. Another LEA offered a programme of revision sessions during the school holidays, which improved attainment and attendance so that A*-C passes at GCSE rose from 13% to 26%.¹⁹⁵

The NfER carried out a longitudinal study in order to quantify the “study support effect” over three years for 8000

193 Cummings, Dyson, and Todd. (2004). *Evaluation of the Extended Schools Pathfinder Projects*. DfES research report 530.

194 Sharp, Osgood and Flanagan. (1999). *The Benefits of Study Support: A Review of Opinion and Research*. NfER.

195 Cummings, Dyson and Todd (2004).

pupils in 51 schools. Although the pupils in question were from secondary rather than primary school, the results are still informative. The study support activities included in the study were study skills, subject based clubs, sports, and drop in ICT clubs. The team found that once background and school factors had been taken into account, students who had participated in study support did significantly better in their GCSEs. They would score on average three and a half grades more than students of equal ability who do not participate in study support in their best five GCSEs. The same effect was found using the number of A-C passes as a measure of GCSE attainment. Using multiple regression models, the research team were able to demonstrate the significance of study support and separate it from background and school effects (see below) on A-C results, best five GCSE results, and English and maths GCSE results.

Table 3.5a GCSE multiple regression models

	Best 5	No. A-C passes	GCSE English Language	GCSE Mathematics
Model 1: SATs: R ²	57.2 %	57.1 %	56.6 %	65.1 %
Model 2: SATs plus GENDER: R ²	59.1 %	59.5 %	58.0 %	65.2 %
R ² change (i.e. GENDER effect)	1.9% ^{**}	2.4% ^{**}	1.4% ^{**}	0.1% ^{**}
Model 3: SATs plus GENDER plus SCHOOL: R ²	68.9 %	62.4 %	63.1 %	70.4 %
R ² change (i.e. SCHOOL effect)	9.8% ^{**}	2.9% ^{**}	5.1% ^{**}	5.2% ^{**}
Model 4: SATs plus GENDER plus SCHOOL plus STUDY SUPPORT: R ²	70.5 %	63.6 %	64.3 %	71.2 %
R ² change (i.e. STUDY SUPPORT effect)	1.6% ^{**}	1.2% ^{**}	1.2% ^{**}	0.8% ^{**}
	n=2461	n=2532	n=2577	n=2656

(**significance at p<0.001)

The team also identified the most effective types of study support in raising academic achievement: subject-focussed study support for Year 10 and Easter revision programmes for Year 11 proved the most effective at raising attainment in all schools reviewed, whilst Year 10 aesthetic activities and Year 11 subject-focussed support also had an impact in every school, but only on the results of pupil's best five GCSE results. Sport, Drop-in and Peer education had a positive impact on attainment in most, though not all schools. Finally, and most significantly for the objectives of our report, the team found that minority ethnic and FSM pupils gained more from study support than

their peers – on both the best five results and the A-C passes as measures of GCSE attainment, the impact of study support on Black and Asian students was found to be over twice that on the White students.¹⁹⁶ The research team concluded:

“the effect of study support on academic attainment is statistically highly significant and educationally important. It was found at individual pupil level in all the schools in the sample.”¹⁹⁷

Behaviour and attendance

As we have seen above, the form of study support falling into the “extended curriculum” category, which is directly related to subjects being taught, can improve academic attainment in participants. Whilst enriched curriculum programmes do not have direct relevance to curricula subjects, they have also been found to be effective in improving social skills, motivation and self-esteem. More practically, they can help improve attendance by offering activities on school premises which attract children. For example, Ofsted noted:

“In many primary schools, the provision of breakfast clubs has greatly improved attendance and punctuality. In schools that specifically target groups of pupils who have a history of poor attendance, there has been significant improvement, in most cases as a direct result of FSES [full service extended schools] initiatives.”¹⁹⁸

The NFER's longitudinal study also found a significant effect on behaviour and attendance for all types of study support activity, finding that pupils' attitudes to school improved as a result of participation in sport, aesthetic and subject-focussed activities, which in turn had a positive impact on attendance. Subject-focused study in Year 11 was correlated to raised attendance in all of the schools the team reviewed. They concluded:

“We have heard frequently from students and staff not only of the almost complete absence of disruptive behaviour in study support sessions but also, and more significantly, of the changed behaviour of students who are frequently disruptive in the class-

196 MacBeth et al. (2001). *The Impact of Study Support: A report of a longitudinal study into the impact of participation in out-of-school-hours learning on the academic attainment, attitudes and school attendance of secondary school students*. DfES Research Report 273.

197 Ibid

198 Ofsted. (May 2005). *Extended schools: a report on early developments*. Ofsted.

199 MacBeth et al (2001)

200 Ibid

201 Ibid

room. While study support is not a panacea, it is an extra source of support for young people with low self-esteem and caught in the vicious circle of low achievement-low motivation and minimal engagement with school. Involvement in study support, learning with and from others, and helping others to learn can lead to a re-engagement with school and a new motivation for learning. This process we have described as the “virtuous circle”.¹⁹⁹

The ability of non-subject based study support to motivate children and raise self-esteem is all the more important given trends in participation. It is well established that lower income pupils, poor achievers and so on, tend to participate less in voluntary study support activities. For example MacBeth et al also found a correlation between students' low baseline measures of self-esteem, poor school attendance and lower participation rates in study support.²⁰⁰ However, it is also known that such pupils are more likely to volunteer for “non-academic” activities, such as sports and art, than study skills or subject-based programmes. For pupils with low self-esteem, then, who are most in need of the motivational benefits of study support but are least likely to volunteer, sports and arts activities are an important means of ensuring their participation. As a result, researchers have concluded that sport can have “a uniquely positive effect on the enhancement of self-esteem” for the most vulnerable children.²⁰¹

As we have seen from above, study support activities can be targeted to improve academic or social skills, and to boost self-confidence. They can also improve attendance if the activity in question attracts pupils and is held on school premises. Whilst extended schools often offer wider family and parenting services, study support for pupils can also act as a means of encouraging parental involvement in their child's education. For example, sports activities have often been used as a means of encouraging fathers into school, whilst English classes have been used as a means to help EAL pupils and their families improve their English together and at the same time “de-mystify” the school environment, so that parents feel more confident in coming to the school and talking to teachers about their child.

An example of successful study support – “Playing for Success”

Playing for Success (PFS) was established in 1997 jointly by the DfES, LEAs, and the FA Premier League and the Nationwide League. The programme seeks to raise educational standards by setting up Study Support Centres in professional football clubs and other sports venues. The centres use the environment of the sports club to improve numeracy, literacy and ICT, motivation and attitudes to learning. The programme targets underachieving pupils in Years 6 to 9, with just over half of all participants under eleven. There are currently 154 football and other sports clubs signed up to Playing for Success, with 97 centres currently operational. Around 160,000 pupils have benefited from the programme so far, and over 55,000 will participate each year when all of the centres are open.²⁰²

Each year, the NfER and the DfES carry out an evaluation of the impact of PFS on pupils' academic attainment and attitudes to learning. The research team's findings have been fairly consistent over this period in demonstrating that the PFS programme can make a significant impact on a pupil's attainment and self-esteem in a very short time. The latest (fourth) evaluation for the 2003 period, for example, found that primary school pupils improved their numeracy scores by 17 months, bringing their performance much closer to the level expected for their age group (pupils chosen for the PFS programme had numeracy scores well below the average expected for their age). In reading comprehension, primary pupils made similar progress to their control group peers, though the secondary pupils out-scored their control group by eight months. ICT skills also improved significantly for both KS2 and KS3 pupils. The table below demonstrates the numeracy and literacy advantage achieved in primary and secondary pupils for the past three years' evaluations. The variation in effect can be put down to the specific activities offered and emphasis placed on literacy, numeracy or ICT by individual programmes, which differs from year to year (see below).

202 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/playingforsuccess/index.cfm?SectionID=1&CategoryID=2>

Progress in months achieved by pupils attending *Playing for Success*

Year of evaluation	Reading comprehension		Numeracy	
	KS2	KS3	KS2	KS3
	2000	ns	6	21
2001	15	ns	18	14
2002	ns	8	17	24

Based on test results for 2800 pupils

Source: Sharp, Blackmore, Kendall et al., *Playing for Success: An Evaluation of the Fourth Year*, RR402 NfER, April 2003

In terms of motivation and self-esteem, PFS has also proven to be consistently effective. Independent study skills and self-image both improved amongst participants compared to the control group in all of the NfER's evaluations. Their findings are confirmed by teacher opinion. The table below gives the results of a teacher questionnaire, demonstrating that self-confidence seems to have been the most noticeable effect.

Teachers' ratings of the impact of the Centre on pupils who attended during the Easter term

	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	No response %
Pupils' self-esteem and confidence improved	93	8	0	0
ICT skills improved	93	7	0	0
The Centre had a positive impact on pupils' motivation at school	84	15	1	0
Literacy skills improved	68	29	1	2
Study skills improved	64	33	0	3
Numeracy skills improved	63	35	1	1
The Centre had a positive impact on homework completion	18	69	3	10
Pupils' school attendance improved	9	75	7	10

Source: Sharp, Blackmore, Kendall et al., *Playing for Success: An Evaluation of the Fourth Year*, RR402 NfER, April 2003

These results are all the more impressive given the short-term

nature of the PfS programme. In 2003, 34% of primary school children only attended the PfS Centres for between 15-19 hours during the entire year. 31% attended for less than 15 hours, 19% attended for 20-34 hours, and 16% over 35 hours during 2003.

How, then, can such improvements in attainment and attitude be achieved in such a relatively low-intensity form of study support? First and foremost, PfS has succeeded in combining academic activities with a sports element. This overcomes the key problem associated with study support – low participation amongst groups most in need of the services on offer. The NFER found that “the football/sports club setting proved attractive to pupils, and was a strong element in motivating pupils to become involved in Playing for Success. They felt privileged to be selected, rather than singled out as in need of extra help.”²⁰³ Despite the strong football associations, a significant proportion of participants stated that they were not that interested in sports, and around half of those participating each year are girls.

Second, PfS allows for academic activities to have practical applications in a non-school environment, demonstrating the relevance of numeracy and literacy, and alleviating the impression of “being taught”. For example, pupils at PfS centres might measure the pitch or use gate receipts and merchandise sales to improve numeracy and data handling, whilst compiling player profiles and writing match reports might be used to improve literacy.

Third, some Centres offered opportunities for pupils to play sport, including coaching in sports skills, as well as club merchandise or match tickets as incentives and rewards for good work and attendance. Finally, most PfS Centres host celebration events at the end of the course to acknowledge the pupils' achievement. These are often attended by the club's players, as well as the pupils' parents and teachers. Some are even held during matches so that pupils can come on to the pitch at half time.

The rapid expansion of the PfS programme to lower league football clubs and other sports clubs demonstrates the popularity of the programme's approach amongst pupils, illustrating the potential of carefully designed study support schemes to improve attainment and self-esteem amongst those pupils least likely to be attracted by traditional “homework clubs” and the

203 Ibid

204 <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/young-people/VRH.html>

like, held on school premises.

2 – Mentors

Many of the sections in this report cover innovative programmes which use mentors as a means of delivery and improving outcomes. Several literacy programmes, for example, have proven successful thanks to reading mentors. Learning mentors have been viewed as the most effective element of the government's behaviour and attendance strategy, whilst peer mentoring programmes are an integral part of many schools' primary-secondary transition strategies.

The evidence from each of these areas suggests that mentoring can have a significant and valuable impact on the learning outcomes, motivation and self-esteem of more vulnerable and low achieving pupils. In this section we will bring together some of this evidence to demonstrate the “mentor effect” in guarding against fade-out amongst disadvantaged pupils and suggest what form of mentoring might prove the most effective overall.

Mentors and literacy

As we have explained in section one, those children most vulnerable to fade-out benefit particularly from literacy support. Sufficient literacy is the key to all other learning, and poor literacy skills have been linked to a lack of motivation in school and behavioural problems. Reading mentors provide one-to-one support, allowing those pupils with lower reading ability to read in front of an adult and benefit from constant guidance. This principle underpins the Reading Recovery programme, where 84% of participants in 2003-04 learnt four times faster than the average rate, as well as local schemes such as the Volunteer Reading Help Programme, where older children, parents, teachers and adult volunteers train to become reading partners to primary school children, producing a six month reading gain within ten weeks.²⁰⁴

Mentors and behaviour

Children most vulnerable to fade-out are also most likely to find that a lack of self-esteem, low motivation and emotional problems act as obstacles to their success at school – either

because they are disengaged or because they are more likely to be excluded. Learning mentors operating in EiC areas and in BIP funded schools have an important role in providing pastoral care and support to ensure children are not held back from achieving in school by their emotional or social problems. In three separate reviews, Ofsted attributed much of the good work being done in deprived schools to learning mentors. The inspectors commented:

“Of all the [EiC] strands, the provision of learning mentors has had the greatest effect on raising standards, promoting educational inclusion, improving the range of provision and developing better working relationships with others.... In schools where learning mentors are having the greatest effect, the attendance and behaviour of targeted pupils are improving and exclusions are falling.”²⁰⁵

Schools which are not given EiC or BIP funding, but who see the good work the learning mentors are doing, are using funding from their budgets to replicate the programme in their own schools.²⁰⁶

Mentors and transition

In addition to learning mentors, several schools now also have “transition mentors”. These operate like learning mentors but work with Years 6 and 7 specifically to help pupils adapt and make a smooth transition between primary and secondary school. For example, Leicestershire County Council employs seven transition mentors to work in designated primary schools. Their task is to:

- Raise educational achievement
- Increase resilience
- Reduce crime
- Increase self-esteem and self-confidence
- Reduce fixed term exclusions²⁰⁷

205 See Ofsted. (October 2003). *Excellence Clusters: the first ten inspections*. HMI 1732. E-publication, Ofsted. (2004). *Excellence in Cities: the primary extension – Real Stories*. HMI, and Ofsted. (2003). *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact*.

206 Ofsted. (October 2003). *Excellence Clusters: the first ten inspections*. HMI 1732. E-publication.

207 http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/going_to_school/la/plans_policies/childrensfund/transition_mentor.htm

208 Younger, Warrington at al. (2005). *Raising Boys Achievement*. University of Cambridge for DfES, RR 636.

209 DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., and Cooper, H. (2002), “Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytical review”, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30 (2): 157–197.

Other schools find that peer mentoring is an effective transition strategy. Pupils from secondary schools visit their feeder primaries and befriend pupils, providing support via a series of regular meetings in Year 6 and then in Year 7. This allows primary pupils a chance to get to know at least one person in their new school before they arrive and have someone to go to if they have problems in their first few weeks.

Although evidence seems to demonstrate a link between successful strategies in these areas and the use of mentors, there have unfortunately been few attempts to isolate and quantify the “mentor effect” in order to establish a mentor’s added value in academic attainment, behaviour and transition. As a result, the reasons why some schemes are unsuccessful have seldom been identified. A research report commissioned by the DfES in 2005 stated that:

“In some contexts, it is clear that mentoring schemes have been developed which have helped students address weaknesses and improve their learning skills, reconciled career aspirations and necessary short-term academic targets, and identified strategies which have helped students to meet those targets. In other contexts, however, the outcomes have been less encouraging, with students’ resistance to change, a refusal to engage with mentoring, and an outright rejection of offers of support.

Thus whilst the vast growth of mentoring schemes within the last decade has involved an extensive commitment of time and energy by teachers, support staff and volunteers, it is often not clear if, how or why mentoring contributes to raised academic achievement.”²⁰⁸

The research body in the US is more developed than in the UK. A meta-analysis by DuBois found that mentoring programmes in the US had a modest effect of 0.14 (around one eighth of a standard deviation), though this included mentoring programmes which had not been targeted solely at at-risk pupils, which demonstrated larger gains overall.²⁰⁹

The largest mentoring programme in the US, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), demonstrates larger effect sizes in anti-social behaviours as well as academic achievement. For example, Tierny et al randomly assigned 959 10-16

year olds (93% of which were 10-14 years old) who were eligible for BBBSA due to deprivation into two groups – one group was assigned mentors, the others were put on the BBBSA waiting list for 18 months. 18 months later, the research team found that:

Participants were 45.8% less likely to start using illegal drugs and 27.4% less likely to use alcohol than were their control counterparts. Participants were also 32% less likely to have hit someone in the previous 12 months. Participants also reported 3% better grades than the control group – the former had a grade point average (GPA) of 2.71, while controls reported a GPA of 2.63. The participants also missed 52% fewer days and 37% fewer classes than their control peers and scored higher on their perceived academic competence test scores, indicating they had gained self-esteem and confidence from the mentoring programme.²¹⁰ The table below summarises the mentor-effect of the BBBSA programme:

Table 16 New Youth Benefit from Big Brothers Big Sisters Relative to Similar Non-Program Youth 18 Months After Applying

Outcome	Change
Antisocial Activities	
Initiating Drug Use	-45.8%
Initiating Alcohol Use	-27.4
Number of Times Hit Someone	-31.7
Academic Outcomes	
Grades	3.0%
Scholastic Competence	4.3
Skipped Class	-36.7
Skipped Day of School	-52.2
Family Relationships	
Summary Measure of Quality of the Parental Relationship	
Trust in the Parent	2.1%
Lying to the Parent	2.7
	-36.6
Peer Relationships	
Emotional Support	2.3%
Number of Youth	959

Note: All impacts in this table are statistically significant at at least a 90 percent level of confidence.

210 Tierney, Grossman and Resch. (2000). *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters.*

From the evidence found in the US and the UK, we can synthesise what is deemed to be “best practice” in mentoring programmes. DuBois’ meta-analysis, for example, concluded that the most effective mentoring schemes in the US were those with the following characteristics:

- Treated children who were somewhat vulnerable but had not yet succumbed to severe problems
- Developed relationships which were characterised by:
 - more frequent contact
 - emotional closeness
 - lasted six months or longer
- Established programmes that increased relationship quality and longevity, including:
 - intensive training for mentors
 - structured activities for mentors and youth
 - high expectations for frequency of contact
 - greater support and involvement from parents
 - monitoring of overall program implementation.

Similarly, a report carried out by a team in Cambridge on behalf of the DfES found that the most effective mentoring relationships were ones which:

- “were developed within an ethos which accepts that mentors will mediate and negotiate with subject teachers on behalf of “their’ student, and subsequently challenge “their’ student to achieve more;
- were practiced by mentors who could establish and sustain rapport with students, who can encourage, support, direct and challenge, without becoming condescending and counter-productive;
- involved senior staff who were able to protect time to establish a regular dialogue with students;
- developed relationships which were clearly different from those which normally characterise teacher-student relationships, and which are perceived by students as genuine and caring for them as individuals;

- were framed within a context which allows disengaged students to protect their own images and their own construction of a lad-dish masculinity or a ladette-like femininity.”²¹¹

The triangulation between mentor, pupil and subject teacher was viewed as particularly important. Mentors who visibly interceded on their pupil's behalf, and in their interests, gained credibility with pupils and established a stronger rapport which in the long term yielded more positive results regarding motivation and commitment on the part of the pupil.

The research team felt that those schools which established mentoring schemes that were not based on these principles would simply waste resources, as frequently the perceived lack of commitment by mentors would result in disengagement of the mentee, or would result in a “bullying” or demeaning approach by the mentor which would be resented by pupils who did not welcome obvious support and guidance.²¹²

As we can see from above, successful mentoring, “is not obvious or simply a matter of commonsense” but can be a complex and delicate process to build beneficial relationships between mentee and mentor.²¹³ Despite this, the evidence indicates that mentoring has the potential to have a broad and positive impact on pupils' academic and social skills. As such it is a valuable, multi-purpose tool to guard against fade out.

3 – Booster classes

Booster classes are used in many primary schools, particularly for maths, English and science. Some schools receive extra funding for booster classes from the DfES, including initiatives such as Additional Literacy Support (ALS), Extra Literacy Support (ELS) and Further Literacy Support (FLS) for different stages in the National Literacy Strategy, and a range of mathematics support initiatives incorporated under the Springboard programme.

However, studies into the use of booster classes suggest that intervention takes place most often in the period prior to national assessments. For example, Galton et al found that 74% of the sample of 50 schools they studied used some form of booster class in Year 6, whilst only 18% used boosters in Years 3, 4 and 5. The booster classes in Year 6 were used as a means

211 Younger, Warrington et al (2005)

212 Ibid

213 Ibid

214 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003). *Transfer and Transitions in the Middle Years of Schooling (7-14): Continuities and discontinuities in learning*. DfES: London.

215 Beverton, Harries et al. (2005). *Teaching Approaches to Promote Consistent Level 4 Performance in Key Stage 2 English and Mathematics*. DfES Research Report 669.

216 Galton et al. (2003).

of preparing pupils for KS2 exams and transition to secondary school. The team's interviews with primary head teachers about their use of booster funding confirmed that the majority was being used for pupils in Year 6 to raise the percentage scoring above the expected KS2 standard, rather than investing to boost attainment earlier on.²¹⁴ The researchers felt this demonstrated how testing could skew resources and teaching priorities.

A research report from the DfES was concerned about this trend, stating: “if the school co-ordinator has identified specific needs for pupils as a result of Key Stage 1 tests then the intervention needs to be in Year 3 and not left until Year 5 or 6.”²¹⁵

The additional effort invested in Year 6 seems to be reflected in trends in pupil progress. Galton et al's sample schools' attainment statistics, for example, demonstrated that progress in reading and maths was much greater in the last year of primary school compared to other years.²¹⁶

Average pupil progress in sample schools in reading and maths

Years	Reading		Maths	
	Mean	S.d.	Mean	S.d.
Year 2 to Year 3	1.6	3.6	0.3	3.1
Year 3 to Year 4	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.2
Year 4 to Year 5	2.5	3.5	2.4	3.1
Year 5 to Year 6	5.4	4.1	4.5	3.5

Source: Galton et al. (2003)

This lack of investment in boosters early on sees attainment stagnate and in some cases deteriorate in Years 2 to 3 for pupils below the median. In the case of reading, pupils in the 95th percentile actually regress. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which lower achievers are hampered by this pattern of attainment which sees early stagnation and a rapid spurt at the end of primary school. However, comparing different patterns of progression, Galton et al found that increasingly accelerated progress reduced overall attainment, particularly in maths, where pupils made 2.4 points (equivalent to between a third and half a level) less progress overall with increasing progress than steady year on year progress.²¹⁷

Progress pattern categories versus total progress for reading and maths

Progress categories	Mean total progress	Mean total progress
	(points)	(points)
	Reading	Maths
Equal-sized steps	13.4	11.7
Increasing steps	12.9	9.3
Decreasing steps	12.5	12.4
Variable steps	12.9	10.5

Source: Galton et al., 2003

A small scale study by Watson also found that Year 6 booster classes temporarily raised pupils to Mathematics level 4, but that this was not sustained over a period of six months to a year. The research seemed to demonstrate that the focus on targeted boosters for exam purposes were masking the real conceptual difficulties that the pupils experienced, and thus rendering apparent progress short-lived.²¹⁸

Despite the criticisms of the use of booster or springboard classes in UK schools, such schemes do have the potential to be particularly beneficial for disadvantaged children vulnerable to fade out, if used correctly. However, a DfES research report published in 2005 commented that “How these [booster] programmes are actually used in schools, their impacts on pupils’ gains in English and mathematics and how teachers make decisions and judgements in selecting pupils are questions which previous research has not yet addressed.”²¹⁹ This lack of evaluation means we cannot identify with certainty the most effective form of booster intervention. Nevertheless, some existing booster schemes are informative in this respect.

The Reading Recovery programme has proven particularly successful in providing a literacy booster for children with the weakest reading and writing skills in their first year of primary school. RR lessons take place in supplementary daily 30 minute sessions, and are delivered on a one-to-one basis by specially trained teachers over a 12-20 week period. International and domestic evidence indicates RR children can make large and long-lasting gains following intervention. The Institute of Education’s annual review of RR activity in the UK, for exam-

217 Ibid

218 Watson, A. (2002). Unpublished presentation at BERA mathematics symposium.

219 Beverton, Harries et al. (2005). *Teaching Approaches to Promote Consistent Level 4 Performance in Key Stage 2 English and Mathematics*. DfES Research Report 669.

220 Dou til, J. (2005). *Reading Recovery Annual Report for UK and Ireland 2004-2005*. Reading Recovery National Network.

221 See Chapter two

222 http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html

ple, found 81% of the 5,370 pupils (many of whom were non-readers) subject to RR in 2004-05 caught up with their class by the end of the programme. 84% achieved “accelerated learning” – gaining a 21 month improvement on their previous reading ability (accelerating at four times the normal rate for their age group).²²⁰ RR is understandably costly to deliver, and government funding for the programme has only recently resumed after being withdrawn in 1995. Nonetheless, studies show that RR can improve the literacy gains of children even at the end of KS2, five years after participation.²²¹ This off-sets the initial costs and in the context of this report, is particularly beneficial for children who might otherwise fall behind. The impressive and long-lasting results RR can produce has made the scheme popular with schools, many of whom still fund RR programmes from their own budgets.

Other successful booster classes, like those forming a central element of the Success For All literacy programme, share similar characteristics with the RR scheme. They are intensive – usually delivered on a one-to-one basis – and in addition to existing classes rather than a “withdrawal” class. They are also delivered early on – as soon as a problem is identified. Regular assessment makes this possible for the SFA programme.

The use of booster classes is particularly common in Finland. The Basic Education Act entitles all pupils to remedial classes in all taught subjects. A government subsidy provides a maximum of one weekly lesson per school and a lesson every two weeks for each pupil entitled to remedial teaching, covering a maximum of 86% of costs. Immigrant children are given extra funding for more remedial classes if they need them.²²² Booster classes are usually delivered by a team of dedicated teachers who circulate around groups of local schools to teach the classes. They are usually delivered on a one-to-one or very small group basis, and are frequently used to resolve very small problems within a component of a subject, rather than whole-subject teaching. For example, schools may use a few booster class sessions to help a primary school child pronounce the Finnish letter “R”, which presents problems for a number of children. As a result of this approach, around 20% of pupils between seven and 16 (Finnish Basic Education) receive booster classes and it is not viewed as abnormal or stigmatising. They are also provid-

ed as a result of teacher referral, rather than following a formal assessment, and so are viewed less as a result of failure.²²³

223 Information provided by a head teacher at a school in Helsinki, April 2005.

Case Study: Nightingale Primary School

Reading Recovery

Nightingale is a one-form entry primary school in inner London. The local community it serves is characterised by economic and social deprivation, with roughly 61% of pupils receiving FSM and 60% of pupils having EAL. The school intake is ethnically diverse with 78% of pupils coming from ethnic minority groups. Data from the 2001 Census shows that in the ward where the school is located and where 90% of the pupils live, 32% of households are in overcrowded conditions.

Reading Recovery began at Nightingale in the early nineties, and has recently been re-established thanks to funding from the Every Child a Reader initiative, a partnership between charitable trusts, the business sector and government. Every Child A Reader has provided £100,000 per annum to 5 schools allowing them to offer Reading Recovery for 3 years.

As with all Reading Recovery schools, Nightingale offers the programme to pupils who have completed the first year of primary school and are the weakest readers. The children are chosen following a rigorous selection process. They are tested on their ability to identify letters, hear and record sounds in words, to recognise page and text directions, their spelling and vocabulary, their understanding of significant concepts about printed language, book level and accuracy when reading. The four children with the lowest scores in a class are then selected and follow the programme for between 12 and 20 weeks.

Children have a one-to-one thirty-minute session daily. The Reading Recovery teacher takes children out of different classes each week to ensure they do not fall behind in a particular subject, and children are never taken out of literacy lessons. RR sessions are focused and intensive and use a variety of approaches to engage, stimulate and motivate the pupils. Every lesson is meticulously planned by the RR teacher beforehand, according to the weakness of the individual child. Sessions always start with the book read at the end of the last session. This part of the lesson works on fluency and allows the pupils to experience suc-

cess, giving them confidence for the rest of the session. The next part of the session is based on guided reading with the child being asked to spell on the white board, and salt board and with letter magnets to tackle words from the text which the child cannot read. There is also a practice book for children to write words with phonetic-based guidance. The final part of the session allows the child to create his own sentence based on a story he has read in the session, which is then written and cut up by the teacher for the pupil to rearrange in order.

Reading Recovery books are selected from a book guide which contains a wide variety of texts. Texts are finely levelled on a gradient of difficulty. Level 1- the easiest – contains very patterned texts. Level 24 texts include ‘Amazing Grace’ and ‘Jamaica and Brianna’ (both texts are used for KS1 English SATs). Most children that start the Reading Recovery programme are at the very earliest stage of learning to read – Dictated Text – which is pre book level. These graded books ensure that the child is reading at the appropriate level.

The RR programme requires significant amounts of teacher time and planning, which means the RR teacher can only teach four children at a time. As mentioned above, every lesson is planned according to the pupils’ needs, often picking up words that had proved difficult from the previous session. During directed reading, the RR teacher makes copious notes, noting which words proved difficult to the child and how they were mis-pronounced, for example. After the half-hour session, the teacher must then analyse performance and plan how to progress the following day.

This personalised and labour intensive approach clearly pays off, however: the results at Nightingale have been astounding. Children leave the programme having achieved accelerated learning, often reaching the highest book levels. Children must have reached level 16 by the end of the programme and only two children in the past two years did not reach this level by the end of the course. The need for further remedial action has also been negligible. Over the past 2 years, only one child, who was subsequently diagnosed with dyslexia, required further support. The staff have also noticed that RR children often outperform their peers, even at KS2.

Our proposals

In this section we have reviewed additional support and the various forms in which it can be provided: as extended schooling, mentoring and booster/catch-up classes. The versatility of the programmes available to schools means that they can tailor what they offer to the particular needs of the most vulnerable students, though like most of the educational practices we cover in this report, guidance regarding the most effective combination of support and the most effective approaches within each strategy is hard to come by. Pockets of good practice have yet to be shared at a national level. From the evidence and examples we have covered here, we suggest the following as a general guide for schools to follow:

- Schools should consider introducing a mixture of curriculum enrichment and curriculum extension activities offered before and after school and during lunch break.
- As far as possible, we would urge schools to seek and respond to the opinions of parents and pupils in order to offer enrichment activities which are most in demand. This will help ensure higher participation which in turn may improve attendance in school amongst target groups.
- In order to improve participation in subject-based activities, schools may consider ways to “conceal” the obvious academic aspect of the activity within, for example, sports, ICT or other practical subjects.
- We would strongly recommend that mentors be employed as standard for those pupils falling behind their peers in either social or academic skills, and those at risk of emotional problems or disengagement. However, mentors should be separate from academic teaching staff and encouraged to build long-term relations with their mentees – if necessary, maintaining contact beyond Year 6 to allow some stability through the transition to secondary school.
- Booster classes should be intensive, preferably one-to-one sessions and should be viewed as short-term preventative interventions rather than general remedial education for low achievers. We would suggest that they are provided as early as possible

– as soon as a problem is detected, rather than in the run-up to KS exams.

- In literacy, preventative intervention can be achieved by using the SFA's eight-weekly assessment regime to monitor progress in reading and make adjustments accordingly. In other subjects KS1 and internal assessment may provide early indicators, though teacher referral and recommendation should also be used so that pupils at all stages of the Key Stage Curriculum can have access to a boost according to need.
- Where possible, boosters should be in addition to normal classes so that children do not have to be withdrawn from their normal classes.

Chapter Six: An innovative curriculum

What is the Primary National Curriculum?

The National Curriculum, introduced in 1988, applies to all schools in England. Programmes of study outline what pupils should be taught in each subject and targets set out the standards pupils are expected to achieve at the end of each Key Stage. By law every school is required to provide a “balanced and broadly based curriculum” which “promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development” and “prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.”²²⁴ Schemes of work are provided defining the objectives and expected outcomes of each subject unit or lesson, and suggest teaching activities and resources. It is expected that teachers adapt these schemes of work and differentiate their teaching methods and resources to match pupils’ differing learning abilities.

The school day has remained largely unchanged since the end of the 19th Century, divided into subject based lessons and breaks. And, with the exception of the recent addition of personal, social and health education (PSHE), primary schools continue to offer the same diet of subjects, which are prescribed at the various key stages.

As an extension to PSHE, the government has most recently made some steps towards introducing social skills and emotional literacy into the primary curriculum. This has become the basis for the Primary Attendance and Behaviour Pilot, with 25 LEAs participating.²²⁵ Accompanying the pilot is a set of curriculum materials developed specifically to develop the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). This curriculum

226 In *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), Goleman identified self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social competence and social skills as the five key elements of emotional intelligence.

227 Weare, K., and Gray, G. (2003).

228 See, Kinder, Wakefield and Wilkin. (2005). Talking back: pupil views on disaffection, 1996 or A systematic review of what pupils, aged 11-16, believe impacts on their motivation to learn in the classroom. Motivation Review Group.

229 Lupton, R. (2004). *Schools in Disadvantaged Areas: Recognising Context and Raising Quality*, CASE. 76.

224 http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/3776_designing_and_timetabling_primary_web.pdf

225 See Chapter 2 for more information on the pilot.

resource is intended to facilitate the teaching and development of five key aspects: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills.²²⁶ The DfES has also noted that many schools have been implementing their own version of a SEBS programme, often with their own curriculum.²²⁷

How can a National Curriculum prevent “fade out”?

The curriculum is the lynch-pin for what and how children are taught in school. As such, it has the power to create a love of learning or disaffection at an early age. A wisely designed curriculum can prove an effective vehicle for promoting social, emotional, behavioural, life and learning skills; for ensuring smooth transitions between school years and school stages; and most importantly, for motivating and engaging disaffected pupils. In addition, a flexible curriculum can allow for forms of group work which have proved beneficial to lower achievers, as well as thematic and/or project-based learning (PBL), making the curriculum more accessible to lower achievers and keeping those most at risk of disaffection and fade out interested in learning. The question we must address here is whether the current parameters and demands made by the National Primary Curriculum allows for such innovation.

How might the current National Curriculum contribute to “fade out”?

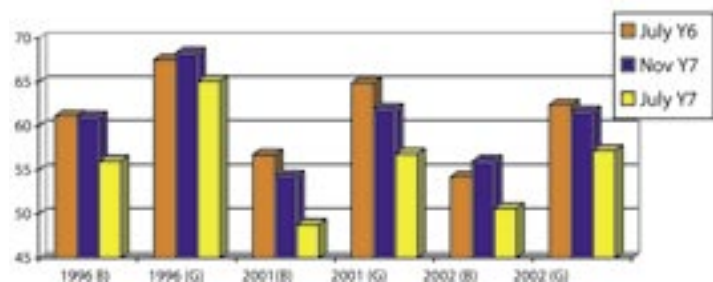
Critics claim that the National Curriculum, as it stands, is ill equipped to deal with disadvantaged pupils. Indeed, surveys of pupils’ attitudes cite the curriculum as a major cause in disaffection, disengagement and truancy.²²⁸ Many teachers believe that the curriculum is too test-driven, and that its focus on knowledge acquirement as opposed to skills development renders it ineffective in meeting the needs of and motivating lower achievers. A perceived lack of flexibility, both in the delivery and the design of the curriculum, has also been identified as a problem for schools serving disadvantaged communities.²²⁹ In addition, the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and national assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum, which some claim has had a negative impact on students in terms of motivation and engagement. It has become increasingly evident

that changes in curricula and pedagogy are necessary to tackle the current mismatch between the social, cultural and economic needs of children and the education they are receiving.

Testing

A study conducted by Galton et al found that the focus on the core curriculum in Year 6 in the run up to KS2 assessment to the exclusion of art, music and drama, together with the revision in core subjects at the start of secondary school to bring all pupils up to the same level, resulted in dips in enjoyment, motivation and general academic progress.²³⁰

School enjoyment as a percentage of maximum possible score



Source: M. Galton, J. Gray and J. Ruddock, *Transfer and Transitions in the Middle Years of Schooling (7-14): Continuities and discontinuities in learning*, DfES Research Report No443, 2003

Even though the first analysis in this graph is taken at the end of Year 6 (after the SATs and when music, drama etc. are reintroduced into the curriculum) and therefore may represent an artificially high base, this graph clearly shows a downward trend in enjoyment between the summers of Year 6 and Year 7, especially amongst boys. Also, in the 2003 study, of 50 primary head teachers interviewed, 58% admitted to reducing the scope of the curriculum taught in Year 6. As such, Year 6 was increasingly being divided into two parts. In the first part of the year pupils concentrated on maths, English and science (the three subjects assessed in the KS2 tests) with a return to the “normal” curriculum after the assessments where the creative arts, PE, history and geography are “reintroduced” into the timetable.²³¹ It is likely that this explains the decreasing enjoyment for pupils

230 Galton et al. (2003).

231 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

232 Ibid

233 Assessment and Learning Research Synthesis Group. (2002). *A Systematic Review of the Impact of Summative Assessment and Tests on Students' Motivation for Learning*. EPPI-Centre: London.

in the run up to exams. In addition, dips in enjoyment and motivation can also be explained by the transmission style of teaching that teachers adopt in response to testing.²³² Also, even though the earlier KS1 assessment now includes an emphasis on teachers' judgement with more flexible and informal tests to be taken any time of the year, national targets and league table reporting still encourage teachers to “teach to the test” and behave in similar ways as in the run up to KS2. The Motivation Review Group also found that, after the introduction of the National Curriculum tests in England, low achieving pupils had lower self-esteem than higher-achieving pupils. Beforehand, there had been no correlation between self-esteem and achievement.²³³

In summary, the narrowing of the curriculum caused by the need to revise for the various Key Stage assessments, compounded by the teaching methods used to prepare the children for the national tests, can demotivate pupils and decrease their enjoyment for learning. This is especially the case for low achievers or those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not yet be ready for such a shift in pedagogical objectives and still need help in learning how to learn, rather than be expected to respond to structured syllabuses and a transmission style of teaching. These are also the pupils most likely to lose confidence during the testing process itself. Thus, the way in which pupil achievement is assessed may require reconsideration if we are to prevent the loss of enthusiasm for learning which contributes to fade out.

Skills and knowledge

The National Curriculum remains primarily focused on the acquisition of knowledge rather than the development of life and learning skills.

Life and Learning skills

Even though it is intended that skills such as communication, leadership and teamwork be developed through learning, there remains no formal mechanism for assessing these skills. Exams continue, in the most part, to measure pupils' knowledge rather than their wider skills or ability to learn and evaluate. This is due in part to the fact that it is more difficult to assess life and

learning skills formally, leading to their exclusion from the performance management framework and therefore often from schools' top priorities.

Social and emotional skills

Even though promoting children's spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development is a key component of the National Curriculum, the development of social and emotional skills remains an "add on", or where it is encouraged, it is usually as a remedial action to promote positive behaviour.

The Attendance and Behaviour Primary pilot and the accompanying Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum resource do mark a step in the right direction. Even though initial findings suggest improvements in behaviour from this strategy, it still has some weaknesses. Some critics feel that there is a bias in the government's approach towards tackling behavioural difficulties – as they represent the more significant challenge to classroom management – whilst overlooking children's emotional problems.²³⁴ In addition, the way in which extra funding is accorded may put schools which experience low level disruption, which is harder to measure and quantify, at a significant disadvantage. Even though the pilot and the greater emphasis on SEBS are welcome, it is also indicative of how much further the government could go. Indeed, there remains ample scope for the development of a National Curriculum which includes the promotion of emotional and social competence as an integral component that is practiced in every classroom, rather than developed as a separate subject or addition to PSHE.

Lack of Flexibility

The lack of flexibility, both in the content and delivery of the curriculum, also remains a problematic issue. While Excellence and Enjoyment has allowed some schools to explore new teaching methods and re-examine subject based learning, lack of flexibility, both in terms of what is taught and how it is taught, continues to be cited as a major problem by both pupils and teachers.²³⁵ The National Curriculum is regarded by teachers as overly prescriptive and a barrier to innovation and prevents

234 See, for example, Didaskalou, E., and Millward, A. (March 2002), "Breaking the Policy Log-Jam: Comparative Perspectives on Policy Formulation and Development for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties", *Oxford Review of Education*, 28 (1).

235 DFES. (2003). Excellence and Enjoyment.

236 For an example, http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/3776_designing_and_timetabling_primary_web.pdf

teachers from gaining ownership of what is taught.²³⁶ Indeed, the flexibility embedded in the primary strategy discussed in Excellence and Enjoyment does not sit well with the planning frameworks provided by the NLNS and, since the implementation of the "literacy hour" and "daily maths lesson" many schools have been forced to narrow the scope of the curriculum. In addition, the centralised nature of the curriculum does not lend itself to meeting the individual needs of pupils. As a result, those pupils whose interests or learning styles differ from the curriculum become disengaged or demotivated. Lack of flexibility, due to the need to cover content within the lesson and core and foundation subjects within the timetable, also constrains class structures and schools' ability to diversify the timetable. There is, for example, little room for teachers to provide additional one-to-one support, enrichment activities or other strategies proven to help disadvantaged children keep up with their peers within the normal school day.

The legal requirement that pupils aged five to seven are taught in classes no greater than 30 is an additional constraint. Given that research shows that optimal class sizes differ according to both student needs and abilities and the subject (see chapter four), the current regulations seem rather arbitrary. These stipulations make it very difficult for schools to tailor teaching styles to the needs of their pupils. Given that disaffection, disengagement and demotivation (contributory factors to fade out) start to affect pupils in primary school, there is certainly scope for a more flexible curriculum to facilitate the introduction of more options or new forms of delivery to help keep children motivated and enthusiastic.

Whilst this message seems to have been taken on board by the government for secondary schools (the 14-19 strategy was designed to increase flexibility in part to reduce disengagement by less academic pupils, who are more likely to "drop out"), a similar national strategy has not been implemented in primary schools.

Continuity and Progression

As we will see in chapter seven, the disruptive effects of transition from pre-school to primary and primary to secondary school can prove a significant factor in the fade out of early years gains. The government has acknowledged this, and the DfES has issued guidelines to help schools consider how they can best support curricular continuity between and within Key Stages 2 and 3.²³⁷ These guidelines suggest, for example, the use of curricular bridging units. Bridging units are projects that are begun at the end of Year 6 and completed at the start of secondary school, providing pupils with some continuity of pedagogy and curriculum and allow secondary school teachers to assess the competencies of new pupils. In practice, however, they can prove problematic. Continuing projects from primary school can often be repetitious and can demotivate pupils who are not feeling adequately challenged. In addition, where one secondary school has many feeder schools, bridging units can prove impractical.²³⁸

Recently, Galton et al concluded that “while continuity is important to reduce the level of anxiety at transfer, a degree of discontinuity is also essential since it provides an external indicator of pupils’ newly acquired status as secondary pupils”.²³⁹ This is especially important for pupil attitudes. For example, Galton found that before transfer, most pupils said that one of the subjects they were most looking forward to was science and the prospect of carrying out experiments. However, Year 7 provides few opportunities for this as science lessons tend to be more abstract in the first years, and so new pupils’ expectations were seldom met. Galton found significant “dips” in pupil attitudes to science in Year 7. Indeed, pupils’ concentration declines more in science than it does in either English or mathematics.²⁴⁰ It seems that pupils are, to a certain extent, looking forward to starting new work at “big school”. It is vital then that progression and “curricular discontinuity” should not be sacrificed for the sake of continuity, otherwise high expectations among pupils will be followed by disaffection and disengagement.

Therefore, in order to smooth transition to secondary school, a balance must be struck between continuity, to prevent anxiety and difficulties adjusting to secondary school, and progression, to prevent a drop in enthusiasm and motivation.

237 http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/downloads/ws_cur_cont011604.pdf and http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/downloads/ks3_trans_prog074804.pdf

238 See Chapter 7

239 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

240 Hargreaves, L., Galton, M. (2002). *Transfer from the primary classroom: 20 years on.*

241 Locus of control refers to an individual's perceived control over events. A person with internal locus of control feel responsibility for his/her behaviour and feel in control of events whereas a person with an external locus of control will feel that others are in control or that luck or fate is responsible for certain events.

242 Feinstein, L. (2000). *The Relative Economic Importance of Academic, Psychological and Behavioural Attributes Developed in Childhood.* Centre for Economic Performance: London.

243 Toffler, A. (2003). *Learning for the Twentieth Century. Partnership for 21st Century Skills.*

244 OECD scenarios. (2001). *Schooling for tomorrow.*

As we will see in chapter seven, this requires a multi-pronged approach implemented in Years 6, 7 and 8, with the curriculum as one tool of many.

What should a primary curriculum designed to prevent the fade out of early years' gains look like?

A curriculum to develop skills

There is a substantial corpus of research which indicates that non-cognitive “softer” skills, including attitude, self-esteem, leadership and competences for learning, are crucial to later life chances. Heckman illustrates that IQ is not an indicator of eventual life success, earnings, or even school grades and that other factors such as persistence, social skills, self-control and the ability to concentrate are more instrumental. These findings were mirrored in Feinstein’s work. He came to the conclusion that future earnings and future educational progress were governed by different soft skills in youth – for example, attentiveness and “locus of control”²⁴¹ had a significant effect on future educational attainment, whilst peer relations and self-esteem were more important in predicting future earnings and that “market productivity is not, therefore, the later correlate of education production, governed by the same factors, simply transferred to the labour market.”²⁴²

Learning to learn, will also be of vital importance in a world where people are increasingly expected to have a number of jobs rather than one occupation. Alvin Toffler pertinently claimed that “the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.”²⁴³ The OECD believe that a curriculum “should give pupils the tools with which to cope with the complex, rapidly changing world in which they live, with many such tools being about personal development and citizenship rather than cognitive knowledge itself.”²⁴⁴

This holds enormous potential implications for intervention programmes aimed at improving the life chances of disadvantaged children: a child whose poor home learning environment and subsequent low educational investment has led to under-developed cognitive skills and few qualifications may still have his life chances improved significantly if his self-

esteem, social and leadership skills, etc., can be encouraged. Given that there is a negative correlation between soft skills and socio-economic background²⁴⁵ and that “softer kinds of skills such as leadership can – like other kinds of human capital – be acquired in schools”, a curriculum which develops such life skills could be particularly useful for improving the life chances of disadvantaged children.²⁴⁶ There are already various curricula which seek to teach both skills and knowledge in use in the UK. These include the Royal Society of Arts’ *Opening Minds* project, the International Primary Curriculum and the Primary Years Programme, devised by the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

The Royal Society of Arts’ “Opening Minds” Project

The Royal Society of Arts’ (RSA) *Opening Minds* project has developed out of research into how children learn, advocating interdisciplinary learning, thematic teaching, experiential education and teaching that is responsive to learning styles. Underpinning the project is the idea that the current content-based curriculum is incapable of equipping children with the skills they will need in later life, arguing that life and learning skills “will not develop in a systematic and progressive way unless they are the explicit outcomes of education, outcomes that are supported, rather than led by, subject knowledge”.²⁴⁷ The RSA is currently working with approximately 50 schools around the UK to deliver a competence-based curriculum through cross-curriculum projects, rather than subjects.

The *Opening Minds* curriculum is based on the following five categories of competences.²⁴⁸

- Competences for learning
- Competences for citizenship
- Competences for managing situations
- Competences for relating to people
- Competences for managing information

245 See chapter two

246 Weinberger and Kuhn (2001). *Leadership Skills and Wages*. University of California.

247 <http://www.thersa.org/newcurriculum/>

248 http://www.thersa.org/acrobat/opening%20_minds_competences.pdf

249 Ibid

250 Bayliss, V. (2003). *Opening Minds: Taking stock*. RSA: London.

Individual competences within these fields include, for example: understanding how to learn; developing an understanding of ethics and values; being able to use varying means of managing stress and conflict; understanding how to manage risk and uncertainty; and developing a range of techniques for accessing, evaluating and differentiating information. These skills are delivered through cross-curricular projects rather than within the constraints of traditional subject boundaries.

The competence-based curriculum is introduced in Year 7 and is maintained in Year 8, but subject teaching is reintroduced in Year 9 in preparation for KS3 assessment. Some schools have switched to deliver the entire National Curriculum through projects to teach competencies. Others have some project time, and have kept some subject based teaching.

Evaluation of the pilot phase of the RSA project showed improved attainment between control and pilot groups in the same school. Other outcomes include calmer atmospheres in schools, significantly better motivation and improved confidence.²⁴⁹ Pupils at either end of the achievement scale tend to benefit most, which demonstrates the potential of this approach in creating “stretch” for the most able pupils whilst also ensuring low attainers and disadvantaged children also benefit from such an approach.²⁵⁰

Case Study: Brompton Westbrook Primary School

Opening Minds

Brompton-Westbrook Primary School in Kent has some unique characteristics: it is ethnically quite diverse and has a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs. A significant proportion of pupils come from families who serve in the armed forces and pupil mobility is, as a result, exceptionally high at 53%. According to the most recent Ofsted report, “the area the school serves suffers significant social deprivation”.

In order to better meet the needs of its pupils and raise standards in basic skills, Brompton-Westbrook has integrated National Curriculum requirements with the RSA’s *Opening Minds* framework for competences. Based on an understanding of child development and pupil needs, the school has embraced various elements of the RSA’s *Opening Minds* framework, such

as citizenship, emotional literacy and a focus on learning. The school has also carried the ethos of independent investigative learning of the Foundation Stage through to Key Stages 1 and 2, encouraging greater social and problem solving skills.

The school delivers project-based lessons designed by both pupils and staff. The flexibility built within the curriculum means that projects can respond both to the local context and external events. In the wake of the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, for example, pupils began a project on Islam, and were able to use resources from the locality, inviting outside speakers and parents. Projects of this kind have ensured not only strong community links and greater parental involvement but also that the curriculum motivates and engages pupils.

The overriding philosophy at Brompton-Westbrook is that schools need to teach children rather than a *curriculum*. Various adjustments to the traditional school day have been made in line with this thinking. For example, 'play time' has been replaced, and instead teachers integrate outside activities within lesson time. This includes field trips and conducting lessons outside. This has proved helpful in reducing the disruptions in classroom usually experienced after breaks and lunchtime.

The school's inspired leadership and innovative curriculum have led to rapid improvements in the school. Jane Heyes, the head, has noticed a marked improvement in attendance, motivation and enjoyment since the implementation of the RSA curriculum, with no permanent exclusions being necessary.

A curriculum which is accessible and engaging

Project-based Learning (PBL)

As we have seen above, the RSA's competences are taught through cross-curricular projects. While there is as yet no single definition of project-based learning, the term alludes to a model of classroom activity which differs from traditional teacher centred, direct instruction and subject specific teaching.

"Project-based learning is a hands-on education process where students "do" what they need to learn."²⁵¹

251 Joseph Walters, Harvard University - <http://www.qesnrcit.qc.ca/reform/bestprac/pbl/Theory/index.php>

252 Thomas, J. (2000). *A review of research on project based learning*. The Autodesk Foundation, California

253 Boaler, J. (1998), "Open and Closed Mathematics Approaches: Student Experiences and Understandings", *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*. 29 (1).

While there are certainly various kinds of project-based learning (thematic/ multidisciplinary), the basic characteristics include a constructivist, student-centred approach based on understanding and exploration. In his review of research on project-based learning, Thomas sets out five criteria which need to be met in order to answer the question: "What must a project have in order to be considered an instance of PBL?" These criteria are:

- Centrality: PBL projects are central, not peripheral to the curriculum;
- Driving Question: PBL projects are focused on questions or problems that "drive" students to encounter (and struggle with) the central concepts and principles of a discipline;
- Constructive Investigations: the central activities of the project must involve the construction of knowledge on the part of students;
- Autonomy: Projects are student-driven to some significant degree; and
- Realism: Projects are realistic or authentic, not school-like.²⁵²

Even though there is still scope for greater research into the area, evaluations of various PBL programmes have found gains in students' problem solving and critical thinking capabilities with no disadvantages to knowledge acquisition. For example, Boaler conducted a longitudinal study of project-based learning in mathematics in two secondary schools serving similar pupil intakes. In one school (Phoenix Park), mathematics was studied through projects while the other school (Amber Hill) maintained a more traditional approach. Boaler found that pupils from Amber Hill developed an "inert" knowledge of mathematics which was of "limited use to them in unfamiliar situations". These pupils found it difficult to apply their knowledge to complex questions in the examination setting, despite the fact that the teaching they had received had been very examination oriented. The pupils who had been taught using open-ended projects however, had "developed an understanding of the procedures they encountered and a flexibility in thought and approach which made their learning useful in new and different settings".²⁵³ So, despite the fact that the examination setting of the mathematics GCSE was very different from what Phoenix Park students were used to, their results were significantly bet-

ter than those at the control school. While 11% of both school cohorts achieved an A-C grade, 88% of Phoenix Park students passed the exam compared with 71% at Amber Hill ($n=332$, $\chi^2 = 12.54$, $p < 0.001$).²⁵⁴ It also suggests that lower achievers in particular can benefit from such an approach.

Apart from the gains in problem solving and critical thinking that project-based learning can produce, other outcomes have included improved self-reliance and a more positive attitude towards learning.

Both competence based curricula and PBL focus on the development of skills as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge. This focus is imperative because skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork can act as pathways to both educational and career success. These approaches also encourage a depth of understanding, which is flexible, responsive and transferable to real life contexts. That project-based learning has the ability to relate topics and subjects to the “real world” is particularly beneficial to lower achievers. Practical PBL makes subjects more accessible and real life situations are often easier to explain and understand than abstract ideas. Given that pupils frequently complain of education's irrelevance and uselessness, introducing PBL could prove an effective means of re-engaging disaffected students. As such, the introduction of a skills-based curriculum which allows for the use of project-based learning may prove an effective means of guarding against the fade out of early years gains.

Several schools are already using project-based learning. This has been shown to increase motivation and enjoyment. Results from the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) suggests that thematic PBL has allowed children to develop essential skills while enjoying a mix of subjects, thereby guaranteeing both breadth and depth, which, as aforementioned, is currently proving problematic for a number of schools.

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC)

The IPC is currently used in over 90 schools in 38 countries. It combines academic and personal development and encourages international-mindedness. Underpinning the IPC is the notion that learning should be engaging and active. So, IPC units of work are thematic, multidisciplinary and based on topics which

254 Ibid

are relevant to and will interest children. The IPC also incorporates recent research, and curriculum resources are written in such a way as to respond to children's differing learning styles and multiple intelligences. Units of work include topics such as “chocolate”; “explorers and adventurers”; “time detectives” and “survival”. These are cross-curricular and incorporate elements which would traditionally be regarded as history, geography, science, ICT, music, art and PE (see table below). English (or the language of instruction), maths and a second language are taught as stand-alone subjects. This means that the IPC is relatively easy to use in conjunction with the NLNS. For example, Maths and English could be taught in the morning, leaving the afternoon free for IPC units of work.

Curriculum Matrices: Units of Work for eight to nine year olds

Theme	Title	Ar	Gg	Hi	ICT	Mu	PE	Sc	Soc	Tec	Per	Int
Visual representation	Paintings, pictures and photographs	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Significant people	They made a difference	x		x	x	x			x		x	x
Clothing and music	Fashion	x			x	x		x		x	x	x
Archaeology	Treasure	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x
Community	Living together		x	x	x				x		x	x
Food and Farming	Survival		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Explorers and adventurers	Explorers and adventurers	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x
People of different ages	Young and old	x		x				x	x	x	x	x
Habitats	Do you live around here?	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x
Food	Chocolate	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x

Ar = Art; Gg = Geography; Hi = History; ICT = Information Communication Technology; Mu = Music; PE = Physical Education; Sc = Science; Soc = Society; Tec = Technology; Per = Personal Development; Int = International Mindedness

Source: <http://www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com/matrices8-9.php>

The IPC is an off-the-peg programme: the initial instalment of £8000 is followed up by a smaller payment of £500 annually and schools are provided with curriculum resources. These are already prepared, each with specific learning targets and activities aimed at different learning styles. Each unit of work includes advice on assessment, and the IPC's Assessment for Learning Programme provides further support in this, as well as

providing child-friendly rubrics to enable self-assessment. The IPC sets out explicit learning goals, defined by levels of knowledge, skill and understanding, personal development and international-mindedness, with mile-posts for children aged 6-7, 8-9 and 10-12. Personal development is fostered through teaching enquiry, adaptability, co-operation, communication, morality, thoughtfulness, respect and resilience and the development of international mindedness or global awareness is supported by themes in the units of work.

Case Study: Sir William Burrough School

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC)

Sir William Burrough School serves a community which is ethnically diverse and suffers high levels of economic deprivation: 54% of children are eligible for Free School Meals and 83.7% have English as an Additional Language. Despite this, the school continually exceeds local and national performance targets: last year 95% of pupils achieved Level 4 or above in English at the end of KS2 and 97% of pupils achieved the same level in Science. Their success lies in the spirit and ethos staff have managed to cultivate over the past few years. Senior management and staff truly place excellence and enjoyment at the heart of the curriculum and try to impart a love of learning to each child.

In line with this thinking, the school introduced the IPC in 2003-4. This has encouraged the children to enjoy rich and varied learning experiences. Learning is thematic and cross-curricular, utilises interactive digital technology and is supplemented by visits from external speakers and trips across London. For example, a recent topic of enquiry was "Volcanoes". This included learning about how they are formed, where they are, extracts from texts about Volcanoes and a talk by one of the school Governors. This then covers areas of learning which would traditionally come under the headings of Geography, Science, History and English. The enriched and stimulating curriculum has greatly enhanced enjoyment of learning across the school and kept staff and pupils motivated and enthused. The IPC, used in conjunction with "You Can Do It!" resources has developed the children's learning skills, improved non-cog-

255 See, for example, Hull's longitudinal study associating low family income with child aggression, <http://www.hull.ac.uk/children5to16programme/conference/joshi.pdf>

nitve abilities such as confidence and resilience and allowed creativity to flourish.

The IPC, which is an off-the-peg programme, has also allowed senior management and staff to focus on teaching and the needs of the pupils, without having to spend too much time planning and finding appropriate resources. Curriculum materials, resources and activities are provided and suggested to the school. Given the wealth of options, the school is able to pick and choose topics according to pupil needs and interests.

Schools are responsible for enforcing and implementing the IPC, but are encouraged to undergo self-evaluation and external review, in part to ensure children's entitlement to a full and broad curriculum. A curriculum which allows for multidisciplinary learning, encourages team work, is interactive and makes use of local resources, can engage and motivate pupils. Greater flexibility to allow schools to adopt such an approach could help them cater teaching for those pupils vulnerable to falling behind their peers during the primary years.

A curriculum that incorporates social, emotional and behavioural aspects of learning

As aforementioned, social and emotional skills, such as resilience and persistence, can act as pathways for educational success. Such skills can also improve behaviour, attendance and motivation to learn, thereby helping to improve the school experience overall. Given that children at risk of fade out tend to be the most disadvantaged, and that this also implies a greater likelihood of truancy, exclusion and SEBD (see chapter two),²⁵⁵ there is a clear rationale for introducing a curriculum which promotes SEBS as an integral component rather than as an "add on". A well-planned curriculum can provide all children with the emotional security and self-confidence to help them succeed in primary school and help them cope with the potentially difficult phase of moving to secondary school.

There are a number of emotional literacy programmes developed both here and abroad. The longest running US programme, "Second Steps" promotes social and emotional

competences in primary classrooms as a preventative measure for reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviour in order to improve children's learning experiences. Evaluations of this programme find that programme children are 20% less aggressive during lunchtime, have a 10% increase in social behaviour during lunchtime and are 37% more likely to choose positive social goals.²⁵⁶

Opening minds

The development of social and emotional skills is also an integral component of the RSA's *Opening Minds* curricular framework, which we describe above. "Relating to people" is one of the categories for competences and includes skills such as "managing personal and emotional relationships" and being able to understand and use "varying means of managing stress and conflict." These skills are nurtured across the curriculum, as one of five cross-cutting skills with equal weight, rather than taught as a separate subject or part of PSHE. Initial findings suggest that this focus has contributed to improvements in behaviour, self-esteem, confidence and motivation. In the RSA's progress update, schools discussed improvements in relationships around the school, both between staff and pupils and pupils themselves. One school recorded significant differences in behaviour between RSA and control groups in Year 7.

256 *Second Step*. (2003).
A Violence Prevention
Curriculum. SAMHSA Model
Programs.

Shares of various behaviour incidents generated by project and control groups in Year 7

	Pilot Group 1/3 of year group	Control Group 2/3rds of year group
Medical/Injuries	22%	78%
Yellow referrals	25%	75%
Lunch time referrals	4.2%	94.8%
Emergency cover	15%	85%
After school detentions	16%	84%
Internal exclusion – number of days	12.5%	87.5%
Internal exclusion – number of students	12.5%	87.5%
External exclusion – Number of days	3.3%	96.6%
External exclusion – Number of students	16.6%	83.4%

Source: Bayliss, V: *Opening Minds, Taking Stock RSA*, 2005

These findings are particularly salient and suggest that the introduction of a SEBS focus could improve behaviour, motivation and non-cognitive skills (such as confidence and self-esteem) among students, thereby helping to prevent "fade out".

You Can Do It! Education

Another alternative SEBS programme is the US "You Can Do It!" (YCDI), based on the research of Dr Michael Bernard. This is used in schools across the UK and US and is aimed to improve children's social, emotional and behavioural well-being via Four Foundations: confidence, persistence, organisation and "getting along". These are supported in turn by eleven "Habits of Minds" which together make up a child's positive mindset (see below).

YCDI Positive Mindsets (Four Foundations) and Negative Mindsets (Four Blockers)



Source: <http://www.youcandoiteducation.com/research.html>

The YCDI provides a compendium of lessons, each of which contains a set of objectives, resources and materials, suggested activities, lesson plans and student worksheets. Results from evaluations carried out in the US, UK and Australia all suggest improvements in social, emotional and behavioural skills as a result of YDCI,²⁵⁷ whilst others also found an increase in cognitive skills. Pina, for example, found an increase in GPA scores of 0.43 amongst YCDI pupils,²⁵⁸ whilst Campbell found the following improvements on predicted test scores amongst primary pupils in the UK:

257 <http://www.youcandoiteducation.com/research.html>

258 Pina, L.J. (1996). The effects of Program Achieve on under-achievers' effort on school work and homework Performance: Unpublished Master's Thesis. College of Education. California State University: Long Beach.

259 <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/downloads/ks3flexcurric079804.pdf>

260 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

Increase in standardised achievement test scores in Grade 6 as a result of You Can Do It! Education

Table 1. Increase in Standardized Achievement Test Scores in Grade 6 as a Result of You Can Do It! Education (Campbell, 1998)

	*Predicted Achievement (Baseline, September, 1996)	Actual Achievement (Post, 1999)
Maths	40%	63%
English	21%	39%
Science	43%	74%

Source: Campbell, J. (1998). *An evaluation of the effects of infusing You Can Do It! Education in the culture and instruction of the classroom on student characteristics and achievement. A program evaluation conducted at Brierley Hill Primary School, Dudley, England.*

The evidence illustrates that a well-designed curriculum with SEBS as an integral component could prove essential in improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children. These skills are both an ends and a means: they can improve attainment, behaviour, motivation and enthusiasm for learning but they are also fundamental in promoting children's moral, cultural, mental and physical development while preparing them for the "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life".²⁵⁹

A curriculum which strikes a balance between continuities and discontinuities

A well-designed curriculum should smooth the transition from primary to secondary school, and from one school year to the next. While research suggests that administrative and pastoral schemes to support transfer are now relatively well established, much more work needs to be done to meet the academic anxieties of children moving up a class or to a new school. A curriculum which encourages a certain amount of continuity, but challenges and engages pupils is key.

The use of bridging or transition units is the common response to this issue, however, as we mention above, they are only feasible in situations where a secondary school only has a few feeder primaries. Even in these cases, it is rare that teachers share information about pupils with colleagues in other subject areas.²⁶⁰ Another method of easing transfer is by using "through" curricula. The case for curricular continuity has been taken up in Scotland, where *A Curriculum for Excellence*,

undertaken in 2004 by the Curriculum Review Group is intended to produce a “seamless 3-18 curriculum to ensure pupils move smoothly from pre-school to primary to secondary”. This approach is starting to be adopted in the UK, for example in Serlby Park school and the Hadley Learning Community, which opens in September 2006. The campus will comprise a primary, secondary and special school, a children's centre, community services and facilities for adult learning, sports and arts. It is intended that this will provide stability for pupils throughout their school careers.

Finally, the *Opening Minds* project supports transfer by making the structure of the first two years of secondary school resemble primary school. Improved attainment suggests that this is a successful strategy,²⁶¹ but research indicates that maintaining a primary school ethos at the beginning of secondary school may only delay the stress and adjustment trauma until Year 9 if there is insufficient emphasis on progression.²⁶² Galton uses the term “discontinuity” to describe progression from primary to secondary school, and states it is essential to ensure that pupils' high expectations are met and that such expectations do not give way to disaffection and disengagement.

Curricular approaches to easing school transitions are, therefore, particularly challenging and not all strategies will work in all contexts. Where there are too many feeder schools to render curricular bridging units feasible, there may be a case for introducing some elements of the secondary school curriculum into Year 6 rather than sustaining elements of the primary school curriculum into Year 7. Most importantly, the years 6-7 curriculum must balance familiarity with progression, to enthuse and motivate new year 7s without causing anxiety. This might be achieved by emphasising symbolic signs of progression (e.g. having a more practice-based Year 7 science and DT syllabuses), whilst maintaining an underlying continuity (e.g. picking up and building on elements of the last KS1 modules) and in pedagogic style (see chapter seven).

Flexibility to allow variety in pedagogy

The National Curriculum is fairly prescriptive in terms of content, which in turn restricts the timetable. A more flexible curriculum could allow for changes in the timetable, thereby

261 Bayliss, V. (2003).

262 See, for example, Ward, R. (2002), “Transfer from middle to secondary school: a New Zealand study”, *International Journal of Education Research*, 33 (4).

263 See for example, Blatchford, P, Basset, P, Goldstein, H., Martin, C. (2003). *Are Class Size Differences Related to pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5-7 Years*. Institute of Education, University of London.

facilitating the use of group and class structures more beneficial to those at risk of falling behind. Such class and pupil groupings could be responsive both to the needs of the pupils and more appropriate to the type of teaching/learning required. This could achieve greater personalised learning and could particularly help lower achievers, thereby helping to reduce fade out. As discussed in chapter 4, there is strong evidence that small group teaching and one-to-one teaching raises attainment, particularly helping low achievers.²⁶³ While this evidence is usually the basis for a reduction in class sizes across the board, it could equally support greater use of small groups within a more flexible timetable. For example, greater use of lecture style teaching where pupils are in large groups in the morning could free up adequate teaching time to give all pupils some one-to-one support. Even though the recent introduction of support staff has created more opportunities for small group work, this has not been accompanied by any alterations in teaching methods.

A more flexible curriculum and timetable could also allow for a more systematic use of nurture groups, learning mentors, and other support strategies to ensure low achieving children do not fall behind their classmates.

A more flexible approach to assessment

Flexibility in terms of how pupils are assessed could also prove effective in reducing “fade out”. Indeed, given the negative effects of testing on lower achievers, a reconsideration of assessment methods may be necessary. Although there is a need to ensure that a balance is struck between the needs of children and the need to ensure national minimum standards, there are certainly alternative forms of assessment we might consider. The Success For All (SFA) literacy strategy, for example, uses more frequent assessment. All children are assessed internally every eight weeks, and children are moved into different ability groups accordingly. The reasoning behind the SFA approach is that if a child is struggling, this can be detected quickly due to 8-weekly assessments. The intensive booster class, provided as soon as a dip in progress is detected, will serve as a short preventative rather than long-term remedial measure. This has the dual benefit of offering early intervention whilst also reducing the pressures of exams because tests are internal and regular.

Other options may be to use continual assessment (for example adopting the French school model, which allows an external examiner to review a child's work which has been completed throughout the year instead of in one exam).

Our proposals

On reviewing the evidence and cases of best practice, it seems that the most effective curricula are those which are tailored to the needs of pupils and the local context. Exploring alternative curricula has required courage and effort on the part of senior managers, staff and pupils but in most cases has proved effective in raising achievement and improved attitudes to learning, often in areas of severe economic and social deprivation. Taking this into account, our proposals can be summarised as follows – a curriculum designed to mitigate fade out:

- should be sufficiently flexible to allow schools to make it accessible and engaging for all ability levels. Individual schemes of work and syllabuses within subjects should be less prescriptive to allow for more group working where it may improve social or problem solving skills.
- should be flexible enough to be delivered in cross-curricular themes to allow for project-based working and multi-disciplinary classes, where schools feel it is suitable for their children.
- should be more skills focused. Subject/knowledge elements should be balanced with requirements for the development of skills, including communication, teamwork, planning, problem solving, leadership, initiative, and so on. These should have equal weight to the more accepted skills, such as ICT and numeracy, as they are becoming increasingly critical to educational success and fundamental to adult life chances. Children most at risk of fade out also particularly lack these skills and thus they may prove a valuable guard against falling behind their peers.
- should encourage children's personal development with social, emotional and behavioural skills as an integral component, promoted in all subjects rather than as an add-on. These skills can improve attainment and enable children with emotional and behavioural problems to access the curriculum, thereby helping

make sure they do not fall behind and suffer fade out.

- should strike a balance between continuity and progression. An over-emphasis on the former may lead to boredom and disengagement, whilst an under-emphasis may cause transition anxiety. Both can contribute to fade out. Familiar elements (bridging units where feasible) or building upon Year 6 themes, mixed with symbols of progression, may resolve this. Incorporating secondary curricular elements into Year 6, rather than prolonging too many primary elements in Year 7, may also be effective.
- should allow for more flexible forms of assessment, such as more regular formative assessment, and continual internal or peer-school monitoring.
- schools should ensure continuity and progression across and through the Key Stages.

Chapter Seven: A focus on transitions and transfers

Pupils' attainment is particularly vulnerable at times of transition and transfer.²⁶⁴ Initial feelings of excitement and apprehension at the prospect of moving to secondary school can lead to anxiety or disengagement which have negative effects on both attainment and behaviour. Therefore, in terms of preventing the fade out of early years' gains amongst certain pupils, it is important that the problems associated with transfers and transitions are dealt with effectively. This is becoming all the more important as fewer children start enrolling at their local secondary school and secondary schools start taking pupils from an increasing number of feeder primary schools, making it less likely that children will start their new school in a familiar peer group. This is in part a result of the government's choice agenda, and particularly affects London.

Why do transfers and transitions lead to "fade out"?

There are a number of reasons why transitions and transfers can prove problematic. The move from the "family ethos" of the primary school to the large, anonymous "bureaucratic" ethos of secondary schools can be daunting for students. The initial concerns voiced by students refer to fears of getting lost, not arriving to class on time and having to negotiate new spaces. These fears tend not, however, to be long lasting. Indeed, the Hamilton Middle School study found that the "initial reaction" phase lasted roughly three days. Fears then start to focus on social and academic issues.²⁶⁵ These included, fears of bullying, having to find new friends and being separated from existing friends. On a wider level, pupils are preoccupied with "fitting

266 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

267 Ibid

268 I. Schagen, T. Benton, and S. Rutt, (2004). *Study of Attendance in England*. National Audit Office: London.

264 Even though the terms transition and transfer are often used interchangeably, here we take transfer to mean the move from one school or one school system to another, such as the move from primary to secondary school and transition to mean the move from one school year to the next within the same school, such as the move from Year 7 to Year 8.

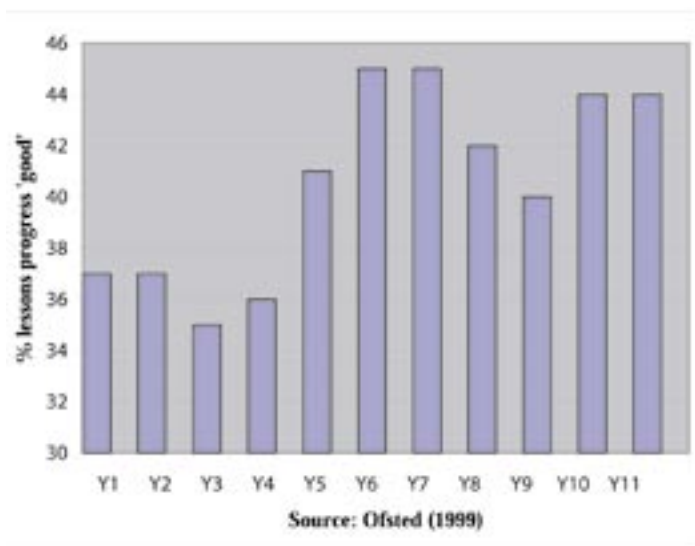
265 Ward, R. (2000), "Transfer from middle to secondary school: a New Zealand study International", *Journal of Educational Research*, 33.

in" and belonging to the school community. Insufficient continuity in the curriculum and pedagogy can also prove problematic for pupils and indeed many are worried that they will have too much work, will not be able to cope and that they will miss the close teacher-pupil relationships they enjoyed at primary school. In addition, there are students who, because of social, emotional and behavioural problems or a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills, are simply not prepared for the move to secondary school and will find it difficult to access the full curriculum. Unless remedial action is taken promptly, these children's inability to access the curriculum and therefore keep up with their peers can only accumulate each year, with disengagement and non-attendance as likely outcomes.

While many students are anxious at points of transfer, others are optimistic and excited. For some students, however, this excitement can lead to disappointment and disengagement if the work in Year 7 is overly repetitious and insufficiently challenging. In this sense, as we shall see below, both continuity and sufficient progress are important for successful transfer. The process of disengagement is compounded at transition points where some years are seen as more or less important than others. For some pupils, Year 8 is seen as a "fallow" year: it no longer carries the importance of the Year 7 entrance year and does not require external examination. The assumption of many students is that Year 8 does not matter. This has negative implications in terms of attainment and can consolidate negative labels, with students seen as "shirkers" rather than "workers".

The trauma associated with having to adjust to a new social and academic environment can result in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, dips or hiatuses in attainment, progress (see below)²⁶⁶, motivation and self-esteem. A 1999 study by researchers at Cambridge University found that 40% of pupils lost motivation and made no progress in the year after they transferred to secondary school²⁶⁷. This demotivation can result in increases in unauthorised absences. Indeed, a further study found that almost half (47%) of all pupils play truant for the first time in the first two years following the transition to secondary school²⁶⁸.

Dips in Pupils' Progress in Lessons Observed by Ofsted



269 Cited in Anderson, L., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S., and Splittgerber, F. (2000), "School Transitions: beginning of the need of a new beginning?", *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33: 325-339.

270 Galton, M., Gray, J., and Ruddock, J. (1999). *The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment*. DfES report, 131.

271 <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/getpubcats.asp?sid=023#011>

272 Schagen, I., Benton, T., and Rutt, S. (2004).

273 Cited in *ibid*

274 For a fuller discussion of the link between lower SES and parental involvement, see chapter 3.

275 Anderson, L., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S and Splittgerber, F (2000)

Finn has summarized this process quite succinctly:

“Unless students identify with the school to at least some extent, feel they belong as part of the school, and believe themselves to be welcomed, respected, and valued by others, they may begin the gradual disengagement process of which officially dropping out is the final step.”²⁶⁹

Galton et al state that “patterns of performance which are later well established begin to become more obvious at this stage... In short, some of the seeds of social exclusion in the latter stages of the secondary school are potentially being planted”.²⁷⁰ Thus, if we are to guard against the loss of early years' gains and improve the life chances of those born into disadvantage, we must address the issues surrounding transition and transfer. The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 found that of the ten reasons most often given for leaving school, seven were school related. These included disliking school (58% of boys and 44% of girls); failing at school (46% and 33%); and not being able to keep up with schoolwork (38% and 25%). 32% of boys claimed that they felt that they did not belong at

school.²⁷¹ Clearly, the correlation between unsuccessful transfers, disengagement, “fade out” and “dropping out” makes this a critical issue.

Who has the greatest difficulty with transfers and transitions?

The NFER's study of 17,000 schools in the UK in 2004 suggests that there is a strong link between lower SES and increased vulnerability at points of transition and transfer, with high levels of unauthorised absence strongly correlated to large percentages of FSM children, as well as a high percentage of EAL children.²⁷² Further research by Galton et al confirms that those most at risk of dips in progress, motivation and attainment include those on FSM, pupils with SEN and EAL and pupils from some ethnic groups, although this depends on which subject is being assessed. Rice suggested in 1997 that students with a lower SES background tend to “lack the parental support structures” which can ease school transfers.²⁷³ According to Rice, these structures included: parental involvement in school life and work, both at home and within the school; whether parents supplement what is taught within the school; parental interest in children's school experiences and the extent to which parents discuss school with their children. This may not be a factor of SES per se, but rather a function of parental involvement – although the two tend to be inter-linked.²⁷⁴

Transfers and transitions may also be particularly difficult times for lower achievers. This may be because such pupils are simply not academically prepared for Key Stage 3 or do not receive the same level of support and personalised learning as in their primary school. In a study conducted by Scott et al, pupils who fell into the lowest quartile in standardised tests set by the post transfer school, were 26 times more likely to drop out than pupils in the highest quartile, and twice the national average drop out rate.²⁷⁵ Put simply, those who are not prepared will struggle to keep up with their classmates. If this is not resolved, the gap between lower and higher achievers will simply widen making it increasingly difficult for lower ability pupils to catch up.

Another factor which can exacerbate the trauma of transferring from primary to secondary school is the existence of

social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). These pupils tend to lack the social confidence, self-esteem and emotional maturity to deal with new situations, changes in routine and less close relationships with class teachers. Pupils who displayed disruptive behaviour at primary school tend to find making the transfer from primary to secondary school particularly difficult.²⁷⁶ Continued poor behaviour and an increased risk of exclusion may be one outcome if these difficulties are not resolved.

When these factors operate together (as is often the case for the most disadvantaged children), problems associated with transfer will be worse and the likelihood of successful transfers will be significantly reduced.

What is the government's approach?

The DfES has issued guidance to encourage smooth transfers from Key Stage 2 to 3. Their focus is on curriculum continuity, which they define as knowing which topics have already been covered; knowing what skills and understandings have been well established; and knowing the pace and style of previous lessons in the subject. The DfES emphasise the importance of teacher exchanges and teacher liaisons, following the KS3 framework and using QCA bridging units, and exchanging information necessary to ensure curriculum continuity.

However, children are increasingly coming to secondary school from a large number of feeder primary schools. While the DfES guidelines suggest that teacher liaison, teacher exchanges and joint planning between secondary and feeder schools on transition and bridging units are preferable, this is simply impractical when a school, such as Norwood Secondary School (see below), accepts children from 46 feeder schools.

Bridging Units

Bridging or transition units are projects or curriculum materials that are begun at the end of Year 6, after SATs, and completed at the start of Year 7. They are intended to provide pupils with some continuity of pedagogy and curriculum and allow secondary school teachers to assess the competencies of new pupils. As Galton found in his review of transfer initiatives, the use of bridging units is increasingly common.²⁷⁷ The QCA has

276 Ibid

277 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

278 Ibid

279 Ibid

developed these units in maths, English and science, and several Local Authorities and schools design their own.

The use of bridging units can, however, be problematic. First, continuity is achieved by familiarising pupils with content. As such, bridging units do not necessarily promote continuity of pedagogy, school structures or environment. However, children have most difficulty adjusting to precisely these changes. Continuity of content from primary school risks being repetitious and can demotivate pupils who are not feeling adequately challenged. As we shall see below, it is the progression to new content which is the key source of excitement amongst new secondary pupils. As can be seen from the excerpt below, building on what may be seen by pupils as "last year's work", whilst trying to confer "the newly acquired status of becoming a secondary school student",²⁷⁸ is remarkably difficult.

Teacher: *The units have made the pupils feel more comfortable when they first arrive here but I think we lose a lot of enthusiasm by going with the Bridging Project. I gave my class exercise books for the first time last week and they were so excited because all they had worked on with me was worksheets since the beginning of September and most of the summer term in primary school. So for the people who are enthusiastic and confident in maths, they feel they are being held back, because they are not getting books, they are not working from secondary school material.*

Source: M. Galton, J. Gray, J. Ruddock (2003)

Bridging units work best when there is joint planning and evaluation between teachers in the feeder and transfer schools, although even in this case it is rare that teachers share information about pupils with colleagues in other subject areas.²⁷⁹ Even though they are intended to promote continuity across the Key Stages, the main benefit of using these units is that they encourage better links between primary and secondary schools and allow dialogue on a wide range of issues, including classroom practice and content coverage. This is especially the case when schools come together to develop these units.

Where a secondary school has a high number of feeder

schools, however, it is virtually impossible to ensure joint planning. This makes designing bridging units practically impossible and increases the chances that there will be a significant amount of variation in the work completed. If one school, for example, works beyond what is expected, that will have implications for the beginning of Year 7 where pupils will probably cover the same ground.

Galton also found that there was less motivation amongst staff and pupils for Bridging Units where they were not designed by both the transfer and feeder schools. As discussed in chapter six, schools often narrow the curriculum in Year 6 to focus on mathematics, English and science, which are the three subjects assessed in SATs. Bridging units are started after SATs, when schools are returning to the full curriculum and reintegrating “fun” subjects such as drama, art and music. In this context it is easier to understand why there is so much ambivalence towards more maths/science work which may make up part of a bridging unit.

In sum, bridging units tend to promote stagnation rather than continuity and progression. They are valuable when they encourage avenues of communication between primary and secondary schools. However, this is practically unfeasible for secondary schools that take pupils from a large number of feeder schools. Indeed, Galton recommends that schools “balance the costs incurred and the observable benefits in comparison with other initiatives, such as peer observation and post-induction, which may provide more effective ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning”.²⁸⁰

Limitations of the government's approach

Previously, Beacon Status had been awarded to schools and LEAs which had developed successful transfer and transition programmes, but the scheme has now been abandoned. Currently there are no comprehensive or holistic government initiatives which deal specifically with the issue of transfers and transitions. Pockets of good practice do, however, exist around the country. This includes the use of nurture groups, buddy-ing schemes, reading mentors, pre and post-transfer induction courses and so on (see below). These have been planned and organised either by individual schools, clusters of schools or

280 Ibid

281 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

282 The percentages were calculated on responses from 88 participating schools. Initiatives in bold were rare in 1999.

with Local Authority support.

Such schemes, however, can only be introduced and organised if sufficient funds are available. While various pots of money do exist for school initiatives, most stipulate intended outcomes and objectives (e.g. see BIP funding in chapter two), and no dedicated funding exists for transition and transfer programmes. EiC funds and the Leadership Incentive Grant, however, are flexible enough for participating schools to divert revenue streams towards such programmes. There are, however, only 2000 EiC funded primary and secondary schools in the UK. For schools which cannot access these funds, the costs of such schemes in terms of staff and resource costs can prove prohibitive.

What is happening now?

The government's approach to transfer and transition – namely, the strong emphasis in the guidelines on curricular continuity via bridging units in particular, is reflected in schools' practice. In their 2003 study, Galton et al reviewed transfer initiatives across nine participating Local Education Authorities. They discovered that schools were increasingly concentrating on curriculum continuity and paying less attention to administrative and social aspects of transfer.²⁸¹ The table below shows the various types of initiative.²⁸²

Classification of Initiatives on Transfer 1999-2003

Type of initiative	Percentage of Initiatives	Examples
Administrative (designed to smooth transfer process)	6	Meetings between senior staff, Heads of Year, subject coordinators, SENCOs etc., Electronic data transfer, Target setting, communication with parents
Social (aimed at reducing pupils' anxieties about the move to the new school)	32	Induction day, Open evenings, Use of secondary school facilities by Y6 pupils (ICT, drama, sports). Increased support for pupils 'at risk', Buddy/mentoring schemes, Joint celebration events, Extended pre-transfer induction activity
Curriculum (maintaining continuity and progression)	46	Informal observations by secondary staff in feeder schools, Joint training days. Foundation programme taught by single teacher in Y7 Bridging Units, Summer schools for gifted and low achievers
Pedagogic (helping Y7 teachers to build on effective primary practice)	9	Y6 and Y7 teacher exchanges, Shared (focussed) observation in both year 6 & 7 classes, Use of Advanced Skills Teachers, booklets on good practice, Citizenship, thinking skills and cognitive acceleration teaching programmes, joint marking exercises
Management of Learning (helping Y7 students in learning to learn)	7	Extended post-transfer induction programmes mainly in PSHE & Humanities including acquisition of study skills, thinking strategies etc. Identifying preferred learning styles. Improving motivation, of disaffected learners, peer tutoring.

The percentages were based on responses from 88 schools. Initiatives that were rare at the time of the Phase I review in 1999 have been highlighted in bold.

Source: Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

Galton et al found that 46% of initiatives focussed on curriculum continuity and progression and over three-quarters of these used some form of transition or bridging unit. These findings represented a significant shift from 1999, when 90% of initiatives dealt with administrative and/or pastoral matters. Recent changes also include an increase in data transfers and targeted interventions for those perceived as "at risk" during the immediate post transfer period. Teacher exchanges between Years 6 and 7 have also increased.²⁸³

Alternative approaches

Administrative initiatives

Various initiatives, which are designed to smooth the adminis-

283 Ibid

284 Ofsted. (2002). *Changing Schools: An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Transfer Arrangements at Age 11*. London: HMSO.

285 Ibid

286 <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/ims/data-management/cbds/>

trative and bureaucratic aspects of transfers, already exist. These include meetings between staff at secondary and feeder schools and the transfer of pupil records. The ability to store and record data electronically has improved this aspect of school communication significantly.

All schools currently transfer pupil data. This data often includes pupils' personal and assessment information. Increasingly, this data is being recorded and transferred electronically. For secondary schools, this removes the need to collect and enter data onto school systems, thereby reducing clerical burdens.

More importantly, the transfer of accurate and relevant information enables effective planning by staff. Teachers at the transfer school can plan in advance how best to adapt the curriculum and/or teaching styles to the needs of the new intake. And, by being able to measure pupils' attainment trajectories across the Key Stages, it is easier to recognise which pupils are falling behind, allowing for effective targeting of additional support and helping prevent or at least minimise dips in motivation and attainment.

Such transfer of pupil data has, however, proved rather problematic. Secondary schools have for example, "reported too much variation in the range and quality of information they receive".²⁸⁴ This variation has then forced many schools to disregard the information and set their own exams at the beginning of Year 7, often cognitive assessment tests, reading tests and/or standardised tests in English and mathematics, leading to unnecessary duplication of effort.²⁸⁵

This variation exists despite the framework provided by the Common Basic Data Set, which is essentially a spreadsheet into which schools can put pupils' basic personal information such as date of birth and next of kin. The CBDS provides a standard for data used in schools, local authorities and the DfES. While this is a good starting point, it is important to remember that the CBDS is "a set of data definitions or a data dictionary and not a list of data that should be held by schools".²⁸⁶ It is not, therefore, exhaustive and depending on what secondary schools require, can prove insufficient. This is especially the case if schools are hoping to set pupils upon arrival. Ofsted has noted that many primary schools did not actually know what the

information was going to be used for and this had implications for the information provided.

Joint planning between primary and secondary schools in deciding what information is necessary for a successful transfer is clearly vital. This planning would have to take place across the Local Authority where schools receive children from a high number of primary schools, though could take place at the cluster or pyramid level where only a few schools were involved.

Teacher Exchanges

Traditionally, visits to primary schools will have been made by Year 7 co-ordinators and Special Educational Needs Coordinators to identify pupils “at risk” and provide them with extra support as they transfer to secondary school. Very few Heads of Department visited primary schools and when they did, this rarely had any impact on the Year 7 curriculum or pedagogy.

Recently, however, more mutual visits and exchanges have been taking place between primary and secondary schools. These visits can be relatively informal, for example, where the visiting teacher acts mostly as a classroom assistant. Other schools take part in structured exchanges where, for example, a secondary school teacher takes a Year 6 class for the morning. Increasingly, Year 6 teachers are invited to take a Year 7 class. These provide Year 6 teachers with a better understanding of the standard of learning and teaching expected at Year 7, thereby allowing them to better prepare their students for transfer. These visits and exchanges are also vital in promoting curricular continuity and allow teachers to gain a better understanding of the pedagogic approaches used, the standard of work, and the breadth and depth of what is being covered. They also provide an opportunity for staff to meet the pupils. These teacher exchanges provide Year 6 pupils with “taster lessons” thereby providing them with a better understanding of the realities of a secondary school class.

Even though teacher exchanges can be difficult to organise, especially where there are many primary feeder schools, and can prove burdensome in terms of time and resources, they are extremely useful in providing staff with a better understanding of classroom practice in Year 6. This is imperative if schools are

to promote curricular and pedagogical continuity and ensure a smooth transfer from primary to secondary school.

Hand-over meetings

Even though data transfer is essential in ensuring a smooth passage from primary to secondary school, it cannot be used in isolation. There may be information which is omitted or even cases where the information is out of date. Hand-over meetings between senior management and Year 6 and 7 staff, which focus on the most vulnerable children, could complement data transfer. Again, this could prove challenging if many feeder schools are involved. However, a few highly targeted meetings could provide an opportunity for secondary schools to devise personalised learning and transfer strategies more suited to the needs of these pupils with the input from their Year 6 teachers.

Illustrative work samples

Illustrative work samples could also complement the transfer of pupils' assessment data. Pupils could either send an exemplar to the new school before transferring in the autumn, or bring the work in on their first day of school for Year 7 teachers to see and discuss with them. This gives pupils a talking point with their new class mates, whilst also allowing teachers to gain an idea of the ability levels of their new intake, perhaps more clearly than via previous SAT scores.

Social and pastoral initiatives

Social and pastoral initiatives tend to focus on easing pupils' anxieties as they move from primary to secondary school. These can include, for example, pre- or post-transfer induction courses, buddying schemes, mentoring programmes, or maintaining a primary school ethos in Year 7.

Induction Courses

Before transfer and during the immediate post transfer period, children are often concerned with “organisational” aspects of transfer. These include for example, concerns about getting lost, not arriving to class on time and finding lockers. This “initial reaction” tends not to be long lasting and is easily resolved.

One approach, for example, is the use of pre-transfer induc-

tion days (i.e. induction courses which take place before students start secondary school, usually after SATs are completed at the end of Year 6). This allows new pupils to familiarise themselves with the school and provides them with an opportunity to meet other pupils before school formally starts. Because of logistical and timetabling pressures, these induction courses tend to last for one day only.

In his review of transfer initiatives, Galton found that several schools had introduced post transfer induction courses, particularly where schools accepted pupils from a high number of feeder schools.²⁸⁷ Post-transfer induction courses take place in term time once school starts. The “normal” timetable is suspended and students take part in a number of group sessions, workshops and activities, which are intended to help them settle in to their new school.

²⁸⁷ Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

²⁸⁸ A concept coined by LaHelm and Gordon (1997), referring to pupils who can manage their own learning effectively.

Case Study: Norwood Achievement Partnership (NAP)

Transition Day Conference

The NAP works with one secondary school, (Norwood School) and 6 primary schools, which together make up an Education Action Zone.

NAP originally organised a one-day transition conference within a two-form primary school in the EAZ. The day was such a resounding success that NAP decided to look at ways of offering the day to all of the Year 6 children in the zone schools.

This year, the NAP is hosting a conference on the last day of Easter term for 215 Year 6 pupils, from all six primary schools in the Zone. They will come to Norwood School to experience a day in the life of a secondary school. It is meant to resemble, as far as possible, a real school day and give children some practical advice before starting ‘big’ school. Each child takes part in three workshops: Hopes and Fears, Practicalities and Different Structures. The children will rotate around the school to the three workshops whilst following a timetable.

The workshops are activity based with an element of fun, and facilitated by Year 6 teachers, learning mentors and experienced teaching assistants. 15 children will attend each workshop, grouped by their secondary schools in order to give them the opportunity to meet and make friends with other children

going to the same school as them. The children will queue up for their tuck and their lunch just as they will in their secondary school.

Despite the fact that Norwood School’s intake is formed of 46 feeder schools each year, and so many of the children visiting the Conference at Norwood school will not actually be attending in the autumn, the school feels it is still beneficial for all primary pupils in the area to come to see how a secondary school functions, even if it is not the one they will be attending.

The rationale behind using post-transfer induction courses is that pre-transfer induction days do not provide children with enough time to adapt to their new surroundings. Post-transfer induction courses tend to be longer, with some lasting up to two weeks. This therefore allows for a more gradual and lengthier induction. In addition, this extended induction time allows teachers to evaluate and assess the new intake, without having to rely on SAT results or primary teachers’ assessments when placing them in sets. This is particularly welcome when the quality and quantity of information received by secondary schools is variable.

As with pre-transfer induction days, post-transfer induction programmes enable pupils to familiarise themselves with school rules and school policy. They provide a forum for discussing what is expected of pupils both in terms of learning and behaviour and provide information about which teachers or tutors pupils can seek help from. They also offer an opportunity for pupils to meet and bond with their classmates.

Because time is not such a constraint with post transfer induction courses, schools can develop broader programmes. Indeed, Galton found that many post transfer induction courses focus on the management of learning, introducing pupils to concepts of time management, thinking and studying skills. These induction courses are designed to develop “professional pupils”.²⁸⁸ According to Galton, the typical post transfer induction programme includes at least some of the following aspects:

- familiarisation exercises where pupils have to use maps/timetables etc to find the quickest legitimate routes from form room to their other classes (mathematics, science, art etc), learn about the school and other pupils.

- study skills programmes designed to support work in the subject areas.
- self-knowledge and self-awareness activities where pupils identify preferred learning styles, work at improving social skills, and endeavour to enhance self-esteem etc.
- sessions to improve learning by identifying useful thinking strategies (e.g. concept maps)
- diagnostic testing aimed at identifying individual pupil strengths prior to banding and setting – usually Cognitive Aptitude Tests (CAT).²⁸⁹

In their review, Galton et al came to a rather surprising assessment of diagnostic testing. One would assume that further testing on arrival at secondary school would create undue stress and indeed worsen the transfer process. However they found that even though the children found these tests challenging, they actually preferred being set and banded according to CAT rather than SAT results or even their primary teachers' evaluations. The following excerpt suggests that pupils felt that the CAT results were fairer.

- Interviewer:** So why do you think you were doing more tests since you were already tested in primary schools?
- Pupil 3:** I think it's about which class we're in for English and if we do other tests we know what class we're in.
- Pupil 2:** Yeah! It's to put you in the right teaching group. Like if I got all of them right I'd be in the highest teaching group and if I got them all wrong I'd be in the lowest. And it's to get you into the right teaching group which helps you settle in.
- Interviewer:** Couldn't they use the results from primary school to do that?
- Pupil 3:** No because that was a bit cheating.
- Interviewer:** Go on. Why would it be cheating?
- Pupil 3:** Because here you didn't know what to do so it's the same for everybody. We didn't do lots of practice like for the Year 6 tests in some schools.

289 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

290 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

Galton found that pupils were generally “enthusiastic” about post transfer induction courses and that the pupils found them an effective means of “learning what it was like to become a secondary pupil”. Indeed, “it gave them confidence to cope with their new environment, helped them to meet new staff in a more relaxed atmosphere than in subject classes and taught them how to plan and organise their work”.²⁹⁰

Induction courses are clearly an effective strategy for minimising the stresses associated with transfers to secondary school. While pre-transfer induction days are of value and strongly recommended, the lengthier and fuller post-transfer induction courses are preferable as they tend to cover more ground and allow for a more gradual introduction to life as a secondary school pupil.

Buddying schemes

Buddying schemes can also help pupils settle into their new schools, and overcome any anxieties or concerns they may have, by pairing the new pupil with an older pupil already at the school. Pairing can take place either before or upon arrival at the transfer school. For example, some buddying schemes operate by pairing a new Year 7 pupil with an older student, say, from Year 11. The older student can then answer any questions and offer advice and support on a range of school issues that may be causing concern for the new pupil. It can also be a successful anti-bullying strategy. The idea is that, by having the support of an older pupil, students in intermediate years are less likely to bully new pupils.

Increasingly, schools are using the Internet to pair pupils before transfer. Here, Year 7 pupils are assigned a buddy in Year 6 and use e-mail to keep in contact. These arrangements are then continued after transfer, through Years 7 and 8. This is more effective in that it allows pupils to ask their “buddies” in Year 7 about their concerns before arriving at school. This can help them feel more prepared and confident about the forthcoming move and is a particularly useful strategy where pupils may not have had the opportunity to visit the school before starting. Even though buddying schemes are no substitute for visiting the school before term officially starts, they are nevertheless an effective means of easing transfer.

Home visits

Even though home visits can often prove a burden on teacher time and resources, they can be extremely valuable in easing transfers from nursery to primary and primary to secondary school for the most vulnerable pupils. They allow the transfer school teachers to better gauge the needs of pupils and they can also prove instrumental in forging early parent-teacher relationships.

Home visits allow parents and children to discuss any reservations they may have about the transfer to primary or secondary school, while giving staff at the transfer school the opportunity to meet children and parents individually before school starts. This can improve targeting – in terms of children who may have SEBD but are not on the SEN register, for example.

Encouraging greater involvement from parents is a perennial struggle for most secondary schools. Home visits can break some of the barriers that exist between parents and schools by personalising the school and giving parents a point of contact. Parental involvement is key in deciding educational outcomes for children, as we discuss in chapter three, with the earlier parents getting involved, the more likely that this support will continue from primary and into secondary school. Home visits to children who are about to start school full time can be extremely effective in encouraging parental involvement.

Nurture groups

In certain cases there will be students who are simply not prepared for transfer. This may be because they lack basic skills such as speaking English, or may have SEBD, which makes it difficult for them to learn in the mainstream classroom. If these problems are not dealt with rapidly, a gap will widen between these children and their peers. Accessing the curriculum will be increasingly difficult for these children. Eventual outcomes can include severe disruption within the class, non-attendance and/or exclusion from the mainstream class or even the school.

As discussed in chapter two, nurture groups are currently being used with great success in Enfield for pupils starting primary school but who are not ready to learn – often due to poor quality or no pre-school experience. These groups meet pupils' nurturing needs, developing their social, emotional and behav-

291 Bayliss, V. (2003).

oural skills, preparing them for learning in mainstream classes by Year 2 at the latest. The high level of full re-integrations into form classes across the borough amongst pupils who might otherwise be excluded or statemented suggests that the scheme is highly successful.

Currently, nurture groups are only used for children in Reception and Year 1. There is scope, however, for extending this nurturing principle to the transfer from primary to secondary school. Indeed, this is currently under consideration in Enfield where local authority co-ordinators and teachers feel that replicating the existing nurture scheme in Year 7 has potential.

Curriculum and pedagogy

Although we have considered bridging units already, there are numerous other approaches to create curricular and pedagogical continuity within this field.

Maintaining primary structures at Year 7

Supposedly, the greater the difference between the environments at primary and secondary schools, the more difficult it is for pupils to adjust. This idea provides the abiding rationale for maintaining a primary ethos in Year 7. As we mentioned in chapter six, the RSA's *Opening Minds* project was partly designed to ease transfers by making the structure of the first two years of secondary school resemble primary school. Projects are taught in longer sessions of up to two hours, known as block scheduling. In addition, the number of teachers allocated to each project is limited to allow for closer pupil teacher relations. Having pupils taught in longer lessons with fewer teachers is meant to replicate in part form-based learning in primary schools. Improved attainment and motivation suggests that this is a successful strategy.²⁹¹

Other schools are planning to introduce primary elements without adopting the RSA's competence based approach. For example, Serlby Park Community School in Bircotes, northern Nottinghamshire is redesigning the Year 7 curriculum to allow for block scheduling in the morning, and the introduction of project based learning. Pupils will remain in their forms with their tutors for two hours every morning, where they will devel-

op core skills and competences through PBL, thereby replicating the form based classes used in primary school for at least part of the day.

However, the results of this approach are mixed. While Nisbet and Entwistle found that maintaining a primary ethos at the beginning of Year 7 and gradually introducing more secondary school elements had a profound and positive effect,²⁹² recent research suggests that maintaining a primary ethos needs to be done with care. It can, in certain circumstances, increase stress and adjustment trauma.²⁹³ Usually, anxiety is highest in June before transfer, declines by November and continues to fall until June the following year. In the ORACLE study by Galton et al, this was shown to be the case for all schools except two where a primary ethos had been maintained in Year 7. In both of these schools, anxiety actually increased during the first year, and peaked just as the children left the primary area and were integrated into the main school at the beginning of Year 8. These high levels of anxiety were attributed to the fact that results from the end of Year 7 exams were used for setting and banding in Year 8. Not only were pupils concerned about doing well academically, but also about being separated from friends.²⁹⁴

The key to such strategies then, is timing, and choosing the appropriate elements of the primary school ethos to replicate in Year 7 (and 8). Solutions could be, for example, introducing block scheduling into the timetable or allowing pupils to remain in their classroom for the majority of lessons. Also, it is important that children in Year 7 are not simply kept separated from the rest of the school. This merely delays transfer rather than solves the problems associated with it.

3-18 schools

The case for curricular continuity has been taken up in Scotland, where *A Curriculum for Excellence*, undertaken in 2004 by the Curriculum Review Group is intended to produce a “seamless 3-18 curriculum to ensure pupils move smoothly from pre-school to primary to secondary”.²⁹⁵

Despite the introduction of the National Curriculum, which was designed in part to better link the various Key Stages, transitions and transfers are not a seamless process.

292 Nisbet, J. D., and Entwistle, N. J. (1969). *The transition to secondary school*. London: London University Press.

293 For a review, see, Galton, M., Morrison, I., and Pell, T. (2000), “Transfer and transition in English schools: reviewing the evidence”, *International Journal of Education Research*, 33 (4).

294 Ibid

295 This can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/11/20178/45862>

Several schools are attempting to recreate the 3-18 effect by teaching each educational stage on one site thereby creating 3-18 schools. By operating on a single site, they essentially remove the issue of transfer as children merely progress through the school, rather than actually move to a different school. Children are familiar with the students, teachers and facilities before they start Key Stage 3. Pupils at all levels of the school are encouraged to interact and these schools work hard to develop a community ethos. Many of the social aspects of transfer do not apply, as the overwhelming majority of pupils will continue at the school with their classmates. Teacher liaison and exchanges (see below) are also made easier in 3-18 schools. In addition, these schools will increasingly become service hubs and extended schools. This means that they will provide a focal point for the local community – which may encourage greater parental involvement.

Case Study: Serlby Park

3-18 community school

Serlby Park School is situated in the village of Bircotes in a rural, former mining area of northern Nottinghamshire. Social and economic deprivation is endemic: unemployment is far beyond the national average at roughly 30%; a higher than average number of pupils receive FSM and have SEN. Only 1% of the local population is university educated. The community it serves is relatively isolated and is majority white/English. Serlby Park, a 3-18 Business and Enterprise Learning Community, has been in operation since September 2005. It is the amalgamation of 3 schools: Bircotes and Harworth Community School, North Border Junior School and North Border Infant School. It is currently operating on a split site, but within the next two years will be functioning on a single campus so that pupils from 3-18 will be learning in the same building.

The school promotes a community ethos across the school by encouraging strong links between the children in the primary and secondary stages: Pupils from the secondary site can volunteer at the infant and junior site, and currently 14 pupils from Year 10 are on childcare placements. In addition, pupils from

the junior site visit the secondary site regularly to use sport, drama and music facilities. Also, teaching for subjects such as Modern Foreign Languages is starting to occur across the senior and junior phases. Such links forged between the different stages of the school means that for the vast majority of pupils, transfer from pre-school to primary and secondary is a fairly seamless progression.

However, approximately 10% of the Year 7 pupils each year come from primary schools in neighbouring villages. In order to ease the transfer for all Year 7 pupils, Serlby Park have used QCA and local authority transition units, which they have adapted to better suit the needs of the pupils. They believe that more needs to be done however, and are currently designing a new Year 7 curriculum which will be introduced in September 2006. The primary ethos will be maintained for the first two hours of each school day by allowing pupils to remain in their form, with their form teacher, and work on projects which are thematic and skills based – a significant element of Serlby's primary school approach. The SMT hope that this will motivate and engage pupils, while easing some of the problems associated with transfer. They also hope that projects which are based on independent learning, communication, problem solving and teamwork will continue to develop pupils' non-cognitive skills in secondary school in the same way as they are in Serlby Primary.

The senior management and staff at Serlby Park work tirelessly to involve and engage the local community. The school has been particularly successful at engaging parents, with schemes such as "Positive Parenting" for mothers and "Lads and Dads". The school tries to involve parents as early as possible, encouraging parents to become school governors or classroom helpers at the nursery and primary stages in an effort to maintain parental support as children move from primary to secondary school.

Research by Wilkin et al suggests that extended schools impact positively on pupil behaviour and attendance.²⁹⁶ A study by Battistich in 1991, also found positive improvements in motivation and attainment where students had a "high sense of community".²⁹⁷ As such, curricular continuity, supported by

296 Weare and Grey (2003).

297 Ibid

298 Adeyemo, D. (Date), "The Buffering effect of emotional intelligence on the adjustment of secondary school students in transition", *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 6-3 (2).

299 See, for example, Sjoberg, L. (2001). *Emotional intelligence and life adjustment: a validation report*. SSE/EFI working paper, 8.

"through" curricula, may prove an effective means of reducing fade out.

A focus on SEBS

As we explain above, children with SEBD often find the move to a new school particularly challenging. Although it may not be a dedicated transition strategy per se, ensuring that the primary school curriculum incorporates the development of key social and emotional skills as an integral element, will no doubt ease the trauma of transition for new Year 7 children.

As we explain in chapter two, Adeyemo found a strong statistical relationship ($P > 0.05$) between primary pupils with high emotional intelligence scores and children who were well adjusted and comfortable in secondary school.²⁹⁸ Such skills, Adeyemo suggests, are those which allow individuals to better adapt to changing life events, including starting a new school – "A student high in emotional intelligence should have some of the elements required for adjustment, such as self acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth". His theories are supported by a number of other studies which associate emotional intelligence with the better handling of failure and frustration, and improved sociability.²⁹⁹

This theory already provides the rationale for pre-school programmes such as Sure Start. Children engaged in Sure Start will learn basic and other essential non-cognitive skills in order to be "ready to learn". This includes being able to sit still and listen and socialise with other children. Introducing a structured SEBS element into the primary curriculum would be extending good practice from Early Years policy.

Unresolved Issues

Some of the initiatives we describe above are already being used in primary and secondary schools around the country. Unfortunately, there has been no mechanism for sharing best practice, and there is a certain amount of duplication of effort occurring in schools across England.

In addition, there are various approaches to easing transitions and transfers which have been overlooked. As we have seen above, recent research shows that the focus on curricular

continuity has in practice led to repetition of content rather than progress, suggesting alternatives might be more effective. Moreover, concentration on the “exit” and “entrance” years has led to a relative neglect of transitions between intermediate years.

Sharing best practice

Developing transfer schemes requires time, resources and the support of staff. Indeed, some can prove very difficult to implement, especially where there are logistical and practical obstacles. This is often complicated by the lack of examples and information about how best to organise transfer schemes. Indeed, even where transfer schemes have been successful, there remains no mechanism for distributing this information nationally. Many schools and local authorities tend, therefore, to develop and design schemes in isolation. This is incredibly inefficient and a missed opportunity for schools to learn from others' experiences.

The resources and time necessary to design and implement transfer schemes can often prove prohibitive. By sharing best practice, schools could be made better aware of the opportunities, pitfalls and outcomes without necessarily needing to spend so much time designing programmes, thereby encouraging more schools to use such schemes.

Transitions – Year 8 matters!

The focus on “exit” and “entrance” years has led to a relative neglect of transitions between intervening years. While schools focus on encouraging continuity across Key Stages, little attention is actually paid to sustaining progress through Key Stages.

Ruddock and Galton have recognised that Year 8 is a critical year and often marks a period where many students “drift away from learning.”³⁰⁰ Indeed, Year 8 is marked by an increase in non-attendance, decreases in motivation and enjoyment and dips in attainment. It often lacks a clear and compelling identity: the novelty of moving to “big school” has, for the majority, worn off and there are no externally assessed exams unlike Year 9 and Year 11. It is often seen by pupils as an unimportant year: it is the last year where pupils can “mess about” without getting into trouble.

300 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

301 Galton, M, Gray, J and Ruddock, J (2003).

‘In Year 7 it's all new, in Year 9 you are doing your options, in Year 10 you are starting your GCSE's and in Year 11 you are there’.

‘Year 7 is where you settle in, Year 8 you are settled which is not that important, but once you get to year 9 I think that is where it starts getting more important’.

‘Year 8 is like our last year of not doing. It is like being a child really isn't it?’

Source: M. Galton, J. Gray, J. Ruddock 2003

These negative attitudes are compounded by the fact that many schools inadvertently send out similar messages. For example, by saying that the exams in Year 11 are important it might be giving the impression that what happens before is not so important, especially when the more experienced teachers tend to be assigned to Year 10 and 11 classes. In addition, there are very few opportunities for year 8 pupils to exercise greater responsibility and autonomy. For example, mentoring/buddying schemes tend to involve older pupils, rather than Year 8 pupils. Yet as Year 8 pupils are those who have most recently experienced and completed Year 7, and also have no exam pressures, giving them the responsibility to look after new Year 7s and helping them settle in may be beneficial for both them and the school.

For secondary school pupils, being a year older does matter and many pupils want their increased social maturity to be marked in some manner. Ruddock found that pupils were consistently asking for greater responsibilities and to be treated “like adults”.³⁰¹ Yet very few schools are addressing this issue. Using Year 8 pupils in mentoring schemes may provide one solution.

Other solutions could include making the curriculum more engaging at Year 8, either through the introduction of project based learning, thematic learning or vocational studies (see chapter six). Alternatively, Year 8 could be given greater opportunities for volunteering, taking educational trips, and so on.

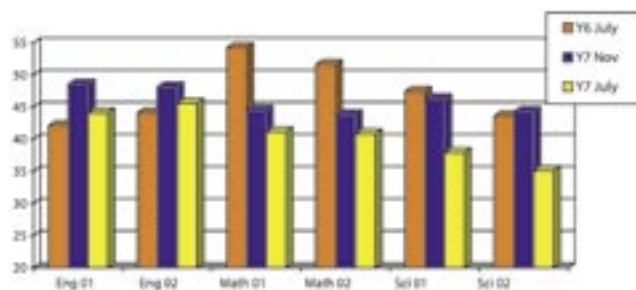
Discontinuity, progression and expectations

We must bear in mind that although transfer to secondary school can be a time of great anxiety for children, it can also be

mixed with great anticipation and excitement. As Lucey and Reay state, "All of these 10-year-old children, in their last year of primary schooling, were acutely aware that they were on the threshold of momentous changes in their lives occasioned and metaphorically represented by the transfer to secondary school."³⁰² It is for this reason that it is important that Year 7 provides not only a smooth transition to secondary schooling, but also proves adequately stimulating so that the expectations of new pupils are met, and the excitement of a new challenge can be channelled into enthusiastic learning.

Galton found that before transfer, most pupils said that one of the subjects they were most looking forward to was Science. Pupils were most excited about the prospect of carrying out experiments and making "bangs and smells", which they had not experienced in primary school. However, Year 7 provides few opportunities for practical and hands on work, as science lessons tend to cover abstract topics in the first years. For example, Galton found that a typical science lesson in Year 7 consisted of "filtering dirty water, which took all of five minutes, after which the apparatus was put away and for the next thirty-five minutes, pupils copied the diagram and a written description of their experiment from the blackboard."³⁰³ It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a significant dip in attitudes to science at the start of secondary school (see below). Given that science is one of the subjects on which many Year 6 pupils' high expectations of secondary school is based on, this is no doubt a contributory factor to the wider disillusionment many pupils experience immediately after transfer.

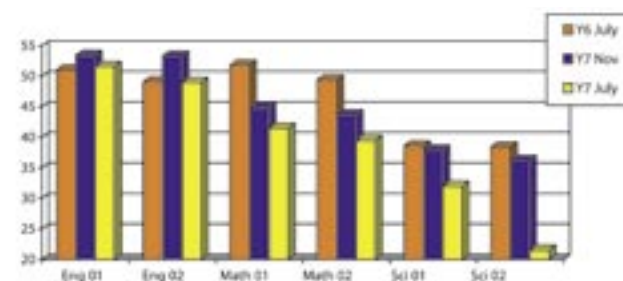
Boys' Attitudes to core subjects



302 Lucey, H., and Reay, D. (2000), "Identities in Transition: anxiety and excitement in the move to secondary school", *Oxford Review of Education*, 26 (2).

303 M. Galton, J. Gray, J. Ruddock 2003

Girls' Attitudes to core subjects



Source: M. Galton, J. Gray, J. Ruddock 2003

The dips in attitude in science are consistently greater than those in English and maths, but as the graphs show, there is cause for concern across the curriculum. This discrepancy has been attributed to the fact that there is more variety in English than in either maths or science. Pupils in Year 7 tend to spend time involved in whole class and group discussions, writing and reading fictional material. In addition, group work often incorporates "dramatic interpretation of fictional characters allowing opportunities for independent and creative thinking".³⁰⁴ In contrast, many Year 7 pupils claimed that they were doing similar things in maths as they had done in Years 5 and 6, even if the sums were more complex. In addition, Galton found that there was less class discussion and less time to complete tasks, thereby making maths less enjoyable. And, as we have mentioned above, pupils spend most of their time taking notes and listening to the teacher in science in Year 7. So, in both maths and science, there is less variety and learning tends to be teacher rather than pupil focussed.

Even though the relationship between attitude and attainment is not a simple one, especially as some of the highest achievers in science are reported to have some of the lowest enjoyment levels, its effects can be seen by evaluating pupils' levels of time-on-task before and after transfer. If a pupil is on-task for 75% of the time observed, then he/she is said to be fully engaged. In the ORACLE replication study, time-on-task was measured in English, maths and science, before and after transfer. The percentage of pupils fully engaged in English fell from

64% to 61%, in maths from 61% to 50% and in science from 60% to 34%. Thus, while engagement levels for science had kept up with maths and English at primary school, the figure dropped significantly after transfer, with “fully two-thirds of all pupils...distracted for significant periods of the lesson”.³⁰⁵

It is vital, therefore, that progression and “curricular discontinuity” should not be sacrificed for the sake of continuity, otherwise high expectations among pupils will be followed by disaffection and disengagement. In his 2003 study, Galton concluded that “while continuity is important to reduce the level of anxiety at transfer, a degree of discontinuity is also essential since it provides an external indicator of pupils’ newly acquired status as secondary pupils.”³⁰⁶ This is certainly an argument for making the curriculum in Year 7 more challenging and engaging – perhaps including the introduction of project based learning, group work or greater practical and hands-on work within the classroom, especially in science.

Our proposals

Many initiatives can and do ease pupils’ transfers and transitions. On reviewing the evidence, the majority of programmes have been developed and organised to tackle specific problems. However, various aspects have been overlooked. For example, the focus on curricular continuity in most schools as a result of the DfES guidelines prioritising this approach has led to a certain amount of repetition, with negative effects on motivation and enjoyment.

In order to ensure continuity and progression across and through the various Key Stages, schools should take a comprehensive and holistic approach, dealing with the administrative, social and academic aspects of transitions and transfers. We do recognise that needs will vary and responses will have to cater to these different needs. Therefore, flexibility of support and resources is essential.

Our proposals are as follows:

- Schools must ensure continuity and progression across and through the Key Stages.

305 Ibid

306 Ibid

- In order to better identify those “at risk” pupils’ personal and assessment data should be better transferred from primary to secondary school.
- To minimise the variation in quality and quantity of information sent from primary to secondary schools, the Local Authority should co-ordinate with secondary schools to determine what information is needed and why. The Local Authority should ensure that schools in the locality have the same information management system to ensure connectivity and interoperability.
- Schools may consider targeted “hand over” meetings, in which personalised transfer strategies for vulnerable children can be devised through joint planning as a means of complementing the transfer of pupils’ personal and assessment data .
- Targeted home visits by secondary staff for vulnerable children, perhaps identified by their primary teachers, may help the Year 7 teachers better understand the needs of their new intake and forge early relationships with parents.
- We also suggest that schools introduce or extend social and pastoral initiatives, which focus on easing pupils’ anxieties as they move to primary or secondary school. These include buddy-ing schemes and Year 6 visits to their secondary school before school starts (see below).
- We would encourage the wider use of nurture groups as a transfer strategy from pre-school to primary school, and the extension of the nurturing principle in the transfer from primary to secondary school.
- We also propose the use of induction days/courses both prior to transfer and on arrival to secondary school. There should be a co-ordinated Local Authority wide pre-induction day (or half-day), where pupils get the opportunity to visit the school they will be attending and a chance to meet fellow pupils. The Local Authority must ensure that every child gets the chance to visit a secondary school, even if some children have not yet been offered a place. The experience of the Norwood Transition Conference suggests that Year 6 visits to any secondary schools can be beneficial in reducing their transition anxiety.

- We strongly recommend that schools introduce post-transfer induction courses which start a day or two before terms starts formerly, allowing the children to familiarise themselves with the school before the rest of the students start the term. These induction courses should include familiarisation exercises, sessions to introduce the children to study skills and thinking strategies, and activities which allow the children to socialise with their peers and teachers.
- There needs to be less focus on continuity through content, and more continuity in terms of environment and pedagogy. This could mean introducing elements of the Year 7 structure in Year 6 and elements of Year 6 into Year 7: for example, introducing modern foreign languages in Year 6 and introducing block scheduling in Year 7.
- We would urge schools to ensure that progression is not sacrificed in favour of continuity. Both are equally important. The Year 7 curriculum should be more engaging and schools may consider increasing the number of opportunities available to students to mark their new status as secondary school pupils with symbolic changes in classroom practice – such as more practical work – in order to prevent disillusionment following the initial excitement of transfer.
- Year 8 should not be seen as a year of consolidation – it should be the year for greater opportunity, responsibility and challenge both inside and out of the classroom. Using Year 8s to help settle new Year 7s is one means of achieving this.
- We recognise that schools will require additional funding and resources to carry out many of these proposals, especially where secondary schools take pupils from a high number of feeders. One solution is to establish a funding stream which deals specifically with transfers and transitions. Given that transfers and transitions are particularly traumatic for children with socially and economically deprived backgrounds, we suggest that eligibility could be based on higher than average levels of FSM, EAL and SEN. Given also that the issue of transfers is complicated by accepting children from a high number of primary schools, we recommend that funds be directed to schools which have an unmanageable number of feeder schools. For logistical reasons, we suggest that above eight feeder schools should be deemed

challenging and eligible for extra resources. Alternatively, funding streams could be incorporated into the EiC programme and earmarked for transfer and transition strategies, or such schemes could be added as a recommended element of the BIP.

- Finally, there needs to be a mechanism for sharing best practice nationally. We suggest that the DfES construct a database, to which all schools have access, which gives details of innovative and current transfer and transition initiatives. It should also produce more thorough guidelines, to include social and administrative approaches and alternative curricular approaches.

Conclusion

Throughout this report, we have endeavoured to present evidence to identify the best strategies in a variety of primary school practices.

We originally selected these areas of practice with one particular objective in mind – to help ensure that disadvantaged children did not lose the huge gift they enjoyed thanks to the government's investment into good quality pre-school programmes. As the evidence indicates that it is during the years immediately following pre-school that vulnerable children fall back behind their peers, we decided to focus mainly on the primary school as the vehicle through which strategies might be implemented to prevent this tragic waste of potential. We first examined the evidence which put forward a variety of explanations as to why some children lose the advantages pre-school gave them. Demotivation, lack of self-esteem, SEBD and an inability to keep up with the class all have a role to play.

The factor which has the most significant impact on a child's development during primary school is, in fact, the child's home learning environment. Without continuing support for disadvantaged families, the benefits of Sure Start and the like may only be transitory for some children. However, as the government's parenting policies are very much in flux, we felt the most fruitful avenue of research which would add value to this debate was to explore the role of primary schools in particular, including the role primary schools can play in improving a child's home learning environment, by encouraging parental enthusiasm for learning.

Taking these factors into consideration, we selected the following areas to explore further:

- Primary literacy strategies, because literacy is a fundamental skill required for children to access all other learning;
- Behavioural strategies, because SEBD can prove a significant obstacle to learning and increase the risk of exclusion;
- Ways to encourage parental engagement, because as we mention above, primary schools can be a valuable tool in helping parents learn how to encourage their child's development at home;
- Class structures, because these are fundamental to how a child learns to learn, think independently and gain social skills;
- Study support, as this helps ensure children are given the additional support they need to keep up academically or socially with their peers;
- Curricula, as this determines how and what children learn and can ensure children remain engaged and learn crucial SEBS;
- Transition and transfer strategies to ease the transition from one year to the next and the transfer from primary to secondary school as these can often prove traumatic for children and can precipitate a levelling off of progress in Years 7 and 8.

In each section, we have reviewed the evidence available in order to identify the approaches which prove to be the most effective. We have also visited a range of schools to see how some of the more interesting strategies which appeared in the evidence actually work in practice. Based on this over-view, we have presented a number of proposals which take the form of both advice for schools, and for government to support schools in this endeavour.

As can be seen from the range of areas above, this report makes no distinction between what is traditionally seen as pastoral care and support, and more accepted strategies to improve learning outcomes. As such, the evidence presented in this report strongly validates the point made by many that the latter cannot be achieved without the former. We would, therefore, reject entirely the critique made by some that the Every Child Matters agenda undermines the focus on academic standards. As the evidence in this report clearly illustrates, behavioural

and emotional support, enrichment provided in after-school activities, and the encouragement of socialisation and parental engagement are all vital pre-requisites of successful learning and will themselves help to drive up standards.

We feel this report will have two useful applications. First, in drawing together domestic and international best practice, and using case studies as a means of illustrating these practices, this report will no doubt make interesting reading for primary school teachers, particularly in disadvantaged areas of the country. In talking to primary school heads, learning mentors and other staff in the field, the strong impression we gained was of a genuine interest in how other schools were innovating to improve the well-being and life chances of often vulnerable children. We hope this report goes some way in helping to spread best practice, and provide teachers with new ideas that they may wish to adopt for themselves.

Second, the strong evidence base upon which we have made our recommendations may provide the government with food for thought. The Chancellor announced, in the last Budget, that per pupil funding would be increased to match that of private schools. Alan Johnson, in his first speech as Secretary of State for Education, also stated there would be £1 billion made available as a medium term investment in “personalised learning”, which he described as mentoring, catch-up classes and out of hours services.

We realise, in fact, that the areas we have chosen to explore in this report, and the proposals we have made as a result, are key components of the government’s “personalised learning” agenda. It is personalised learning - tailoring the curriculum, pedagogy and pastoral support to each child - which we have been (somewhat unconsciously) driving towards as a means of ensuring no child falls behind and “fades out” before secondary school.

It is also particularly interesting that the Gilbert Review - which Alan Johnson called the long-term plan for personalised learning - announced, after we had decided which areas we were going to explore as part of this project, a number of key areas which it would be looking into on behalf of the DfES. These include:

307 http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2006_0033

- Teaching and learning strategies, especially in literacy and numeracy;
- Best use of setting and grouping;
- Improving parental engagement;
- How personalised learning can close the achievement gap and boost social mobility;
- Utilising flexibilities in the National Curriculum;³⁰⁷

We find this particularly encouraging. The government has not only earmarked considerable amounts of funding to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable children in the school system, but it has also provided early indication of the areas it feels may warrant investment. As such, this report may have already provided some initial answers, supported with evidence, as to what this funding should be spent on.

A note on implications

Throughout this paper we have operated within the parameters of the existing educational framework to ensure that our recommendations are logistically and politically viable without major systemic change. For example, we have abided by the regulatory requirements for the “literacy hour” and daily maths lesson and we have accepted that schools must operate within the confines of Achievement and Attainment Tables, Key Stage Assessments and centrally imposed targets.

The evidence highlighted in the report and our proposals do, however, carry implications for existing educational practice.

Assessment

Throughout this report we have stated that the content based curriculum has put those children most susceptible to fade out at a serious disadvantage compared with their more affluent peers. We have called for a greater focus on learning and social, emotional and behavioural skills to improve both the shorter term educational achievement and longer term life chances and labour market prospects of the most disadvantaged children.

Any such rebalancing between skills and content within the curriculum will require reform of the existing assessment framework, which currently measures children's ability to recall and apply pre-learnt subject knowledge. It does not assess wider "soft" skills such as leadership, teamwork, confidence and so on.

In short, whilst SEBS and learning skills can be taught within the existing curricular framework, they cannot be formerly assessed by the Key Stage examinations in their current form. An assessment system capable of testing and measuring children's progress in acquiring such skills may require an element of continual or observed assessment, which in turn requires greater trust in teachers and their professional judgement.

New assessment methods may also necessitate a rethink of current Achievement and Attainment tables. Despite the ongoing debate regarding the value of league tables, it is clear there will always be demand for such a format. Furthermore, parent information, accountability and comparability are keystones of the government's choice agenda. Some way of quantifying or rating learning skills might allow for these measures to be included in Achievement and Attainment tables, alongside traditional subject scores, to give parents an insight into how schools encourage social and cognitive development in a wider sense.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

There are a number of strategies and specific programmes recommended in this report which clearly require advice and training for teachers in order for them to be delivered successfully. Throughout this report we have also emphasised the need for greater flexibility in the classroom as a means of ensuring that the particular needs of the most disadvantaged pupils can be catered to. Such flexibility implies a level of professional autonomy which allows teachers to select the most effective combination of strategies to support their most vulnerable children. Again, this level of autonomy would also require continuing support and training for teachers to help them assess individual children's developmental needs.

Currently, however, there are concerns about the relevance and quantity of Continual Professional Development (CPD)

308 http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=2244340

309 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3881723.stm>

310 During this research project we hosted a seminar at which the issue of CPD dominated the discussion. It was felt teachers were not given access to the wealth of knowledge help in the fields of child development and psychology which would help them understand better how children learn. It was also suggested that teachers should be offered a more flexible range of CPD, and not just one-day residential courses that dominated existing provision.

available to teachers and NQTs. A study commissioned by the DfES found that 75% of primary school teachers were satisfied with their CPD,³⁰⁸ though 17% had used their own money to finance at least some training,³⁰⁹ a result of budgetary constraints which means teachers may not receive the quantity of training they need. Inadequate CPD means teachers may not receive the level of training, support and information they require for improving and refreshing their teaching methods and skills. There are also concerns that the quality of INSETs, training sessions and so on are either inadequate or inappropriate to the particular needs of teachers.³¹⁰

In short, there clearly remains great scope for improving the level and quality of CPD offered to teachers and assistants. This need becomes all the more pressing in the light of the various strategies we propose here. Indeed, it is clear that the success of our proposals are wholly dependent on first class teacher training and relevant and timely CPD, providing adequate training and guidance in the variety of pedagogical and administrative strategies open to teachers to cater for disadvantaged children.

For example, modernising the curriculum in favour of learning skills and emotional and social skills would require similar changes in teacher training and CPD. Teachers would have to be provided with sufficient training to teach and assess softer skills in addition to traditional subject-based learning. Being able to teach cross-curricular, thematic classes also requires new and additional skills that are not currently provided in Initial Teacher Training (ITT). Similarly, if schools decide to introduce lecture style teaching for multiple class groups, which would free up teacher time for smaller or one-to-one sessions, teachers would have to be advised on appropriate strategies for classroom behaviour management.

Apart from the within-class modifications we have proposed, we have also recommended a number of programmes which require dedicated professional training. For example, we have called for an expansion of the Reading Recovery and Success For All style programmes. These require rigorous training and CPD. One of the most outstanding features of the SFA and Reading Recovery programmes, and which has proven key to their success, is the high level, ongoing and intensive train-

ing that teachers receive. While CPD provision for these programmes is relatively expensive, the benefits are clear and overwhelming justify the costs. Similarly, from our interviews with nurture group teachers in Enfield, it was evident that a wholly different skills set was required for a nurture group teacher than for a mainstream class teacher, which required the peer mentoring of an experienced nurture group teacher to show others how to handle the demands of the class.

Costs

There are, of course, cost implications to most of the suggestions we have made in this report – the reforms do represent a major investment into improving the life chances of the most vulnerable in society. The resources required to implement the strategies we have suggested, and providing the teacher training necessary for the schemes to be carried out successfully, may require the creation of dedicated funding streams or the expansion of existing funding streams, such as Excellence in Cities, as this already targets the disadvantaged demographic.

We can make some initial estimates of the costs of some of the specific programmes we recommend. For example, Reading Recovery costs around £1000 per child for the twelve to twenty week programme, not including initial teacher training. Most schools with one RR teacher will teach the four least able readers in Year 1 at any one time, given the demands of the course. This means schools would be able to teach between eight and twelve pupils per year at £1000 per pupil. Whilst this is obviously quite expensive, its long-lasting effects as a preventative programme, removing the need for any remedial classes later on, means it has been called by the IoE “the most cost-effective intervention available.”³¹¹ The cost of nurture groups in Enfield is approximately £50,000 a year per school,³¹² which, given the reductions in SEN placements and exclusions which have occurred since the nurture groups were established, is considered extremely good value by all those involved.

Some of the other recommendations we make have more variable costs. For example, given the multiple benefits of mentors, we have suggested they be used more readily in schools with high proportions of disadvantaged children. These might take the form of Learning Mentors – qualified non-teaching

311 [http://ioewebsver. ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get. asp?cid=1397&1397_1=2178](http://ioewebsver. ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=1397&1397_1=2178)

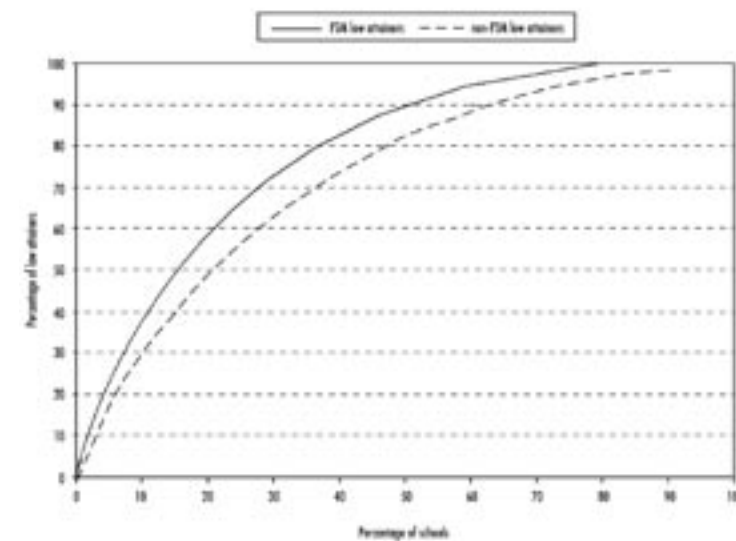
312 Information provided by the Enfield Nurture Group coordinator in interview.

313 <http://www.standards. dfes.gov.uk/learningmentors/ faqs/#40>

314 DfES (2005) Statistics of Education Bulletin 02/05

staff who usually earn between £11,000 to £24,000,³¹³ or they could take the form of parent or older pupil volunteers to help Year 6 children prepare for secondary school. We can therefore make a variety of estimations. For example, according to the DfES, 50% of low attaining KS2 pupils eligible for Free School Meals attend around 14% (or 2800) of primary schools in England.³¹⁴ Assuming each of these schools were to employ a paid learning mentor full time, this would cost £67.2 million a year at most, but may be considerably less (as this figure assumes each mentor will earn the highest salary of £24,000 p/a, and that smaller schools would not share their learning mentors between a group, or employ one part time).

Concentration of FSM and non FSM low attainers in schools at KS2



Source: DfES (2005) Statistics of Education Bulletin 02/05

We have also suggested the creation of Parent Support Workers, whose work is dedicated to engaging with parents and encouraging them to play more of an active role in school life. PSWs are currently employed in some schools in Nottingham for ten hours a week. If we assume that PSWs would be paid at the same rate as Learning Mentors, and should again be employed in the 2800 primary schools which cater to 50% of the low

achievers eligible for Free School Meals, then this might cost £18.81 million per year at most (again, assuming that the PSW workforce would all be paid £24,000 p/a pro rata, which is unlikely to be the case).

There are some recommendations we have made which do not put forward any new programmes as alternatives, but rather suggest what might be the most effective method of delivery. For example, booster classes and extended schools are already established elements of the Every Child Matters agenda. As such, the funding already exists for such strategies and our suggestions should be more or less cost neutral. Similarly, changes in in-class grouping should cost very little. Concerning small-group and one-to-one work, we suggest that the costs and teacher time these strategies consume might be reduced by removing the legal constraints on class size – if a multiple class of 60 or 90 were taught in a lecture-style lesson, for example, this would free up sufficient teaching staff and time-table time to carry out small group classes simultaneously.

We cannot deny that the costs can mount up if every recommendation made in this report were to be funded at full cost. Nevertheless, the benefits of a strategy to sustain pre-school gains will always outweigh the costs in the long term. Ensuring that the government's early years' policies achieve long term improvements in life chances is key to improving social mobility and should always be a funding priority. The government has recently announced £1 billion extra resources in the medium term (£220m in 2006-07 and £565m in 2007-08)³¹⁵ for school personalisation, to be spent on catch-up and "stretch" classes, extended schooling, teacher training, and so on. £12 million has also recently been earmarked to improve the quality of PSHE,³¹⁶ some of which could no doubt be used to develop a stronger SEBS element. By the end of the year the Gilbert Review should also make recommendations in many of the areas we cover in this report – we would recommend that serious consideration be given to investing heavily in this area as a preventative strategy, consolidating early years' interventions, rather than being channelled into later remedial classes and schemes to deal with disruptive children too late in their school careers.

315 HMT (2006) Budget

316 http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2006_0082

317 In fact, the "guided reading" element of the NLS, if organised and resources properly, does group by ability within classes to good effect already.

Summary of proposals

1. **Literacy** is the building block upon which all other subjects depend. Those children most likely to fall behind their peers during the primary years may find poor literacy the main obstacle to their progress.

- We feel the government ought to consider ability-based grouping for the literacy hour, in order to maximise the amount of instruction time delivered at the appropriate ability level.³¹⁷
- We would also suggest, following the Reading Recovery approach, that intensive bursts of one-to-one teaching for pupils who begin to fall behind should be used as and when required, but particularly as soon as possible once problems have been detected to give the best chance of closing the achievement gap. These should replace the existing small group remedial measures of the NLS (Early Literacy Support (ELS), Additional Literacy Support (ALS) and Further Literacy Support (FLS)) which are used during set periods of the year and so may not pick up slowing or falling progress in children until significant problems have set in.
- In order to render this effective, such measures should be combined with more regular assessments of pupil progress in order to detect problems sooner, thus reducing remedial teaching needs.
- We also feel more emphasis should be placed on multi-disciplinary approaches to literacy teaching. The synthetic phonics movement has enjoyed a renaissance recently, which is of course to be welcomed as extensive evidence proves is effectiveness. However, more emphasis on speaking and listening skills, to complement reading and writing, could also be developed.

This is because a focus on speaking and listening is a component of the successful SFA programme; it has been recommended by the Rose Review; and it must also usually be delivered via small group and cooperative learning, which have the additional benefits of improving a child's social and interpersonal skills (see section four below).

- Finally, greater use could be made of parents as co-educators in the literacy strategy. The DfES encourages parents to read to their children, and Sure Start and other early years' programmes also have this as a central element. However, at primary level, this focus seems to fall away, and the NLS seems to provide few formal opportunities for parents to be involved in its delivery. Yet several highly successful literacy programmes use parents in a co-educating role, for example employing them as reading mentors. The 2003 DfES survey mentioned above found that reading at home was the most common method parents employed in helping with their children's learning. Schools could gain the most from such activity by ensuring that the parent-led reading carried out at home complemented and built upon the methods and materials used in school.
- An effective way of encouraging parental involvement, as some schools already do, is to invite parents into the classrooms to help their children with reading during the literacy hour, in order to teach parents how to use a similar or complementary approach in the home. Given the concerns of Ofsted and teacher groups that the NLS is too much of a burden on the curriculum and teacher time, it would not only be beneficial for children but also helpful for schools if the government were to actively involve parents in delivering the literacy strategy, including using parents to help in the classroom.

2. Good behaviour and attendance are crucial to successful learning. Children most likely to lose their early years benefits are those who are absent most often or have SEBD.

- First and foremost, the government should develop a better method of measuring SEBD and classroom disruption in order to more clearly assess the effectiveness of existing strategies seeking to tackle these problems.

318 Stage, S. A., and Quiroz, D. R. (1997), "A meta-analysis of interventions to decrease disruptive classroom behavior in public education settings", *School Psychology Review*, 26: 333- 368.

- Once the most effective methods within the behaviour and attendance framework have been identified, they need to be more effectively shared with schools nationally through BIP guidelines, so that schools can make best use of others' experiences and select the most effective methods of improving SEBS for themselves.
- Third, the seemingly most effective approach identified so-far – using learning mentors – should become a mandatory element of the BIP, so that all schools have a mentor as standard for at risk children. The wider applications of mentoring (i.e. to improve literacy and to ease transition to secondary school) demonstrate their multi-purpose potential for target-groups vulnerable to fade out.
- Fourth, Nurture Groups should at least be a recommended element of the BIP. The low use of PLSUs illustrates that many primary schools do not feel that LSUs are suited to their pupils' needs. Nurture Groups, however, may be more suited to younger children as they recreate the nurturing environment of pre-school and rectify the attachment problems some SEBD children display when very young. A meta-analysis of behaviour interventions carried out in 1997 found that "...students treated in self-contained classrooms were more likely to evidence reductions in disruptive classroom behaviours compared to students treated in regular classroom settings".³¹⁸ Nurture groups may be an effective primary school alternative to LSUs for pupils who need extra help outside of the mainstream classroom.
- Fifth, we suggest the government provide schools with guidelines regarding how to include parents more systematically in their behaviour improvement strategies. Although the importance of parental involvement is emphasised in the primary school pilot guidance, the crucial role of parents in improving children's SEBS is not given as central a role as it could within the government's BIP, only coming to the fore as part of the FSES family/community strategy rather than a common theme running through all the various BIP elements. Learning mentors and key workers for vulnerable pupils are obvious areas where parents could play a key role. LSUs – or rather nurture groups as we propose – are also an opportunity for parental involvement and have proved successful in the Quiet Place programme.

- Finally, we recommend that the additional BIP funding targeted at schools with particular problems of behaviour and attendance also be targeted towards schools with high percentages of particular socio-economic groups. This is because whilst most schools have their own behaviour and attendance strategies, some of the elements of the BIP (such as LSUs, mentors, FSES and so on) require additional resources which are beyond the reach of many schools ineligible for BIP funding. Nevertheless, these strategies may prove particularly helpful for pockets of vulnerable pupils in these otherwise ineligible schools. The fact that Ofsted noted that schools nearby EIC areas were using their own funding to emulate learning mentor strategies (mentioned above) illustrates there is at least some demand for such programmes, even in schools not falling within the BIP/EiC eligibility criteria.

3. Parents can have a huge influence on young children's development – more so than school. Disadvantaged children tend to have lower quality home learning environments, and this lack of stimulation at home can precipitate the loss of pre-school gains. Schools may be able to prevent this by helping parents learn how to engage with their children.

- Fostering a co-educational role with parents should be a priority of all primary schools. The informal contacts and close parent-teacher relationships found in pre-school settings should be used as inspiration, with primary schools attempting to maintain such links with parents arriving in Reception/Y1.
- Schools should be encouraged to implement an open policy for parents, providing several and diverse ways in which parents can become informally involved in the playground or the classroom (as a supervisor, assistant during literacy hour, mentor, or simply as a visitor or observer).
- As part of the extended school programme, schools should also be shown how to provide more structured programmes, such as Keep Up With the Children, to teach parents what and how their children learn in school, and how to replicate this in the home.
- To support both of these strategies, parent support workers should be recruited in targeted schools to act as a dedicated member of staff with the responsibility for opening channels of communication with parents, and encourage greater take-up of

the opportunities on offer at the school. PSWs could be funded in the most needy schools by the EIC programme, in the same way pupils' learning mentors currently are.

4. The type of **grouping strategy used in classrooms can help encourage the social, communication and independent investigative learning skills so important for children to become successful learners. It can also help teachers target their teaching to the right ability levels. Disadvantaged children in particular would benefit from a more flexible pedagogical approach which allows for teaching to match their personal learning styles.**

- Schools should consider introducing a mixture of curriculum enrichment and curriculum extension activities offered before and after school and during lunch break.
- As far as possible, we would urge schools to seek and respond to the opinions of parents and pupils in order to offer enrichment activities which are most in demand. This will help ensure higher participation which in turn may improve attendance in school amongst target groups.
- In order to improve participation in subject-based activities, schools may consider ways to "conceal" the obvious academic aspect of the activity within, for example, sports, ICT or other practical subjects.
- We would strongly recommend that mentors be employed as standard for those pupils falling behind their peers in either social or academic skills, and those at risk of emotional problems or disengagement. However, mentors should be separate from academic teaching staff and encouraged to build long-term relations with their mentees – if necessary, maintaining contact beyond Year 6 to allow some stability through the transition to secondary school.
- Booster classes should be intensive, preferably one-to-one sessions and should be viewed as short-term preventative interventions rather than general remedial education for low achievers. We would suggest that they are provided as early as possible – as soon as a problem is detected, rather than in the run-up to KS exams.

- In literacy, preventative intervention can be achieved by using the SFA's eight-weekly assessment regime to monitor progress in reading and make adjustments accordingly. In other subjects KS1 and internal assessment may provide early indicators, though teacher referral and recommendation should also be used so that pupils at all stages of the Key Stage Curriculum can have access to a boost according to need.
- Where possible, boosters should be in addition to normal classes so that children do not have to be withdrawn from their normal classes.

5. Those children liable to fall behind their peers during primary school will require **additional support** to ensure they can keep up with the mainstream and receive the extra help they need to prevent truancy, exclusion, SEN requirements and so on in later years. Extra support can also motivate and enthuse those children most likely to become disengaged.

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6. A **curriculum** is the lynchpin of what and how children learn. It is important, therefore, that it allows for both the flexibilities that are required to enable the other strategies we mention here (e.g. extra study support and greater parental involvement) to be incorporated into the school day. It is also important that it encourages children to learn and to consolidate the skills they have learnt in pre-school. A curriculum designed to mitigate fade out:

- should be sufficiently flexible to allow schools to make it accessible and engaging for all ability levels. Individual schemes of work and syllabuses within subjects should be less prescriptive to allow for more group working where it may improve social or problem solving skills.
- should be flexible enough to be delivered in cross-curricular themes to allow for project-based working and multi-disciplinary classes, where schools feel it is suitable for their children.
- should be more skills focused. Subject/knowledge elements should be balanced with requirements for the development of skills, including communication, teamwork, planning, problem solving, leadership, initiative, and so on. These should have

equal weight to the more accepted skills, such as ICT and numeracy, as they are becoming increasingly critical to educational success and fundamental to adult life chances. Children most at risk of fade out also particularly lack these skills and thus they may prove a valuable guard against falling behind their peers.

- should encourage children's personal development with social, emotional and behavioural skills as an integral component, promoted in all subjects rather than as an add-on. These skills can improve attainment and enable children with emotional and behavioural problems to access the curriculum, thereby helping make sure they do not fall behind and suffer fade out.
- should strike a balance between continuity and progression. An over-emphasis on the former may lead to boredom and disengagement, whilst an under-emphasis may cause transition anxiety. Both can contribute to fade out. Familiar elements (bridging units where feasible) or building upon Year 6 themes, mixed with symbols of progression, may resolve this. Incorporating secondary curricular elements into Year 6, rather than prolonging too many primary elements in Year 7, may also be effective.
- should allow for more flexible forms of assessment, such as more regular formative assessment, and continual internal or peer-school monitoring.
- schools should ensure continuity and progression across and through the Key Stages.

7. Children's progress can be particularly vulnerable at the time of moving from primary to secondary school. Schools must implement a holistic **transition strategy** which caters to the academic and social needs of Year 6-7 pupils in order to prevent either anxiety and adjustment trauma, or de-motivation and disengagement.

- Schools must ensure continuity and progression across and through the Key Stages.
- In order to better identify those "at risk" pupils' personal and assessment data should be better transferred from primary to secondary school.

- To minimise the variation in quality and quantity of information sent from primary to secondary schools, the Local Authority should co-ordinate with secondary schools to determine what information is needed and why. The Local Authority should ensure that schools in the locality have the same information management system to ensure connectivity and interoperability.
- Schools may consider targeted "hand over" meetings, in which personalised transfer strategies for vulnerable children can be devised through joint planning as a means of complementing the transfer of pupils' personal and assessment data.
- Targeted home visits by secondary staff for vulnerable children, perhaps identified by their primary teachers, may help the Year 7 teachers better understand the needs of their new intake and forge early relationships with parents.
- We also suggest that schools introduce or extend social and pastoral initiatives, which focus on easing pupils' anxieties as they move to primary or secondary school. These include buddying schemes and Year 6 visits to their secondary school before school starts (see below).
- We would encourage the wider use of nurture groups as a transfer strategy from pre-school to primary school, and the extension of the nurturing principle in the transfer from primary to secondary school.
- We also propose the use of induction days/courses both prior to transfer and on arrival to secondary school. There should be a co-ordinated Local Authority wide pre-induction day (or half-day), where pupils get the opportunity to visit the school they will be attending and a chance to meet fellow pupils. The Local Authority must ensure that every child gets the chance to visit a secondary school, even if some children have not yet been offered a place. The experience of the Norwood Transition Conference suggests that Year 6 visits to any secondary schools can be beneficial in reducing their transition anxiety.
- We strongly recommend that schools introduce post-transfer induction courses which start a day or two before terms starts formerly, allowing the children to familiarise themselves with

the school before the rest of the students start the term. These induction courses should include familiarisation exercises, sessions to introduce the children to study skills and thinking strategies, and activities which allow the children to socialise with their peers and teachers.

- There needs to be less focus on continuity through content, and more continuity in terms of environment and pedagogy. This could mean introducing elements of the Year 7 structure in Year 6 and elements of Year 6 into Year 7: for example, introducing modern foreign languages in Year 6 and introducing block scheduling in Year 7.
- We would urge schools to ensure that progression is not sacrificed in favour of continuity. Both are equally important. The Year 7 curriculum should be more engaging and schools may consider increasing the number of opportunities available to students to mark their new status as secondary school pupils with symbolic changes in classroom practice – such as more practical work – in order to prevent disillusionment following the initial excitement of transfer.
- Year 8 should not be seen as a year of consolidation – it should be the year for greater opportunity, responsibility and challenge both inside and out of the classroom. Using Year 8s to help settle new Year 7s is one means of achieving this.
- We recognise that schools will require additional funding and resources to carry out many of these proposals, especially where secondary schools take pupils from a high number of feeders. One solution is to establish a funding stream which deals specifically with transfers and transitions. Given that transfers and transitions are particularly traumatic for children with socially and economically deprived backgrounds, we suggest that eligibility could be based on higher than average levels of FSM, EAL and SEN. Given also that the issue of transfers is complicated by accepting children from a high number of primary schools, we recommend that funds be directed to schools which have an unmanageable number of feeder schools. For logistical reasons, we suggest that above eight feeder schools should be deemed challenging and eligible for extra resources. Alternatively, funding streams could be incorporated into the EiC programme and earmarked for transfer and transition strategies, or such schemes could be added as a recommended element of the BIP.

- Finally, there needs to be a mechanism for sharing best practice nationally. We suggest that the DfES construct a database, to which all schools have access, which gives details of innovative and current transfer and transition initiatives. It should also produce more thorough guidelines, to include social and administrative approaches and alternative curricular approaches.

Indicative timetable for Year 1

This drama lesson emphasises emotional literacy and social skills. Role playing will be used to explore social situations and improve empathy. Parents will be invited to join this group as a TA or learning mentor.

Set by ability if required

Success for All (90 mins)

Activities to encourage attendance

Thematic Learning class: covers areas of history, geography, RE etc. within broad themes such as "London"

An opportunity for pupils to talk with their form teachers about any concerns they have, their learning objectives, etc. This is an open session for parents to attend.

Catch-up classes in core subjects. Pupils allocated by teachers or by 8 weekly monitoring in Literacy

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00-8.55	Before school: breakfast club and enrichment activities				
8.55-9.00	Registration				
9.00-10.00	Maths	Literacy	Maths	Literacy	Maths
10.00-10.30	PSHE		SEAL Drama		Music
10.30-11.00	Break				
11.00-12.00	Literacy	Maths	Literacy	Maths	Literacy
12.00-12.30		Catch-up		Catch-up	
12.30-1.30	Lunch: enrichment activities including sports and ICT sessions				
1.30-2.30	Art/DT	Science	Sport	Science	Humanities
2.30-3.15	Humanities	ICT/DT	Form tutor assembly	Sport	Humanities
3.15-3.30	Assembly			Assembly	
3.30-6.00	Extended school enrichment and study support activities				

ITC and social and emotional skills form part of every lesson

Indicative timetable for Year 6

Incorporating Social and emotional aspects of learning in PSHE

As above, plus those requiring more core subject catch-up or mentoring can taken out during this time.

To give Year 6 pupils a taste of Year 7 lessons

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00-8.55	Before school: breakfast club and enrichment activities				
8.55-9.00	Registration				
9.00-10.00	Maths	Literacy	Maths	Literacy	Maths
10.00-10.30	PSHE/SEAL		SEAL Drama		Music
10.30-11.00	Break				
11.00-12.00	Literacy	Humanities	Literacy	Science	Literacy
12.00-12.30		Maths		Maths	
12.30-1.30	Lunch: enrichment activities including sports and ICT sessions				
1.30-2.30	Science	Sport	Science	Humanities	Sport
2.30-3.15		Art/Design	Form tutor assembly (catch-up class)	Modern Foreign language	ICT/DT
3.15-3.30	Assembly				Assembly
3.30-6.00	Extended school enrichment and study support activities				

ITC and social and emotional skills form part of every lesson

Case Studies

Brettenham Primary School

Edmonton, Enfield
Nurture Groups

Sir William Burrough Primary School

Limehouse, London
Thematic curriculum/International Primary Curriculum

Norwood School

Norwood, London
Peer Mediation, Transition Day Conference and Year 8 Reading Mentors

Cooper's Lane Primary School

Grove Park, Lewisham, London
Parental Involvement: Share Programme/ Dad's matter/ "Building Bridges"

Kobi Nazrul Primary School

Tower Hamlets, London
Success For All literacy strategy

Serlby Park Learning Community

Bircotes, Nottinghamshire
3-18 community school

Mottram St Andrew Primary School

Macclesfield, Cheshire
Co-operative Learning

Nightingale Primary School

Woolwich, London
Reading Recovery literacy programme

Brompton-Westbrook Primary School

Gillingham, Kent
RSA "Opening Minds" Curricular Project

Glossary

ALS	Additional Literacy Support
AMBER	Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions
BBBSA	Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
BEST	Behaviour and Education Support Team
BIP	Behaviour Improvement Programme
CAT	Cognitive Aptitude Test
CBDS	Common Basic Data Set
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EiC	Excellence in Cities
ELS	Early Literacy Support
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
FAST	Families Are Students and Teachers
FLS	Further Literacy Support
FSES	Full Service Extended School
FSM	Free school meals
GPA	Grade Point Average
HLE	Home Learning Environment
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
IoE	Institute of Education
IPC	International Primary Curriculum
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSU	Learning Support Unit
NAP	Norwood Achievement Partnership
NFER	National Foundation For Educational Research
NLNS	National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
PBL	Project Based Learning
PfS	Playing for Success
PLSU	Primary Learning Support Unit
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
PSW	Parent Support Worker
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

RML	Ruth Miskin's Literacy Strategy
RR	Reading Recovery
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEBD	Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEBS	Social Emotional and Behavioural Skills
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SES	Social Economic Status
SFA	Success For All
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPRinG	Social Pedagogic Research into Group-work
YCDI	'You Can Do IT'
VRH	Volunteer Reading Help

