

Raising the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils

Barriers and School Strategies

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Kirstin Lewis

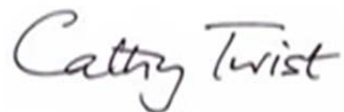
Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this report '*Raising the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils in Schools.*' The research was commissioned by the London Borough of Lambeth and focusses on barriers to learning and strategies to raise achievement in schools. The main findings show that the performance of White Working Class pupils is consistently behind their peers. This underachievement is a challenge for policy makers and schools.

Research in the case study schools shows that effective schools that have been dealing with these issues over a number of years hold the key to the way forward. We know from research that these schools achieve outstanding results for White Working Class pupils and that their levels of attainment can be substantially raised. This good practice needs to be disseminated. Schools want to learn what has been proven to work and the factors that make a difference. This is what this research intends to do.

I am grateful for all the staff in Lambeth's Research and Statistics Unit and its head, Feyisa Demie, for enabling this research to be published and also for sharing the evidence he gave at the *Parliamentary Education Select Committee Inquiry* on the underachievement of White Working Class pupils.

I hope you will find this research report useful.



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Executive Summary

This report reflects an emerging concern in the research literature that the achievement of pupils from a White Working Class background in inner city schools has fallen behind that of some ethnic groups. The report aims to examine the barriers and strategies for raising the achievement of White Working Class pupils.

The main findings of the study confirm that one of the biggest groups of underachievers is the White Working Class. One of the main reasons for pupil underachievement is a perceived lack of aspiration amongst parents for their children's future and a lack of engagement in their schooling, the failure of the National Curriculum to reflect adequately the needs of White British Working Class pupils. It is also perpetuated by factors such as economic deprivation; feelings of marginalisation within the community exacerbated by housing allocation; a lack of community and school engagement; a perception that their identities are not being affirmed in school; low literacy levels and parental low aspiration of their children's education. The study argues that the key to raising achievement is to have the highest expectations of pupils and the community. The research also suggest a series of measures which includes developing strategies to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, and tackling generations of low aspiration and a disinterest in learning that prevents pupils from fulfilling their potential across a range of areas.

However, despite underperformance at national level, in a number of case study schools, the White Working Class pupils buck the trend. There are a number of reasons why White Working Class pupils and other groups are doing well in schools, despite low attainment at entry and challenging socio-economic circumstances in the area served by case study schools. Key features and success factors include:

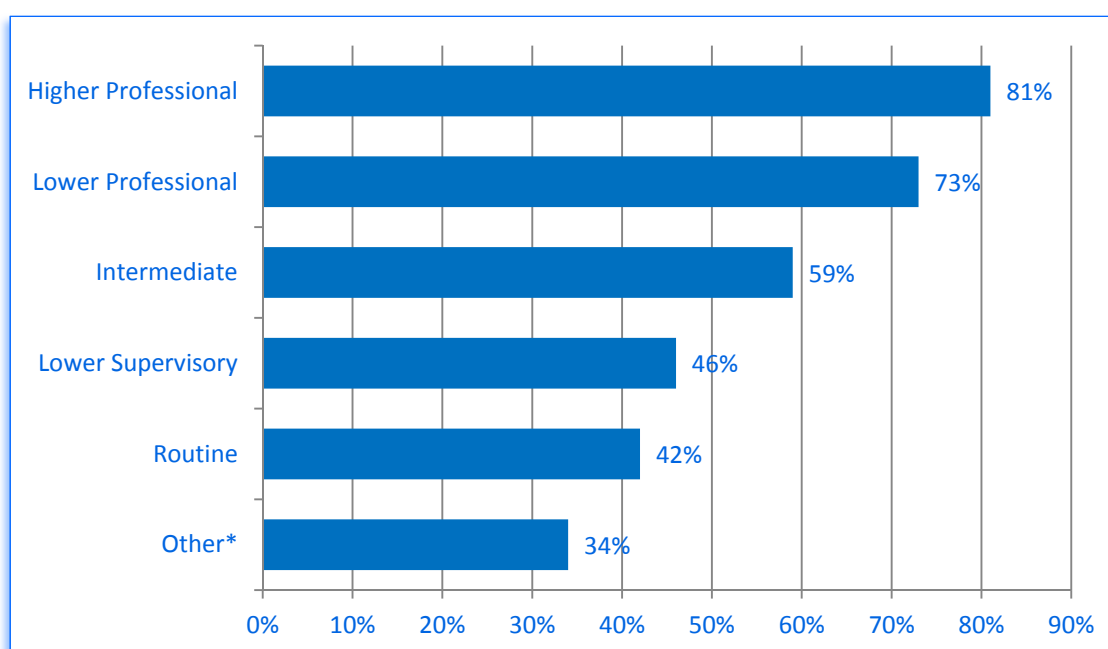
- Strong and inspirational leadership by the headteacher.
- High expectation for all pupils.
- An inclusive curriculum that raises aspiration and meets the needs of the White Working Class.
- Close links with parents and increasing community support.
- Effective use of data and rigorous monitoring systems.
- Good and well-targeted support for White Working Class pupils.
- Effective support for language development.
- Good support for the transition between primary and secondary.
- Celebration of cultural diversity and a strong commitment to equal opportunities.

The study concludes that the main obstacle in raising achievement is the Government's failure to recognise that this group have particular needs that are not being met by the school system. The paper argues that the government needs to take a stronger lead by providing additional ring-fenced funding to assist schools to support targeted local initiatives to raise achievement. This additional resource should be used to provide social, emotional and educational support for pupils and their families to raise their aspirations.

Section 1: Introduction

The achievement of White Working Class children in schools is increasingly becoming a matter of concern (Strand 2014 and 2013; Cassen and Kingdon 2007). Recent research on social class and attainment provides a useful means of understanding about social class and social class inequalities. Social class has been shown to have significant effects on educational outcomes and future life chances even when educational achievement is high (Strand 2014; Demie and Lewis 2010; Runnymede Trust 2009). Working class pupils are less likely to achieve 5+A*-C passes at GCSE than their middle class peers and are less likely to go on to higher education (Babb, 2005). They are also less likely to attend a popular and successful school (Sutton Trust, 2005).

Figure 1. 5+A*-C GCSE Results by Parents' Social Class in England 2006



*Never worked and long term unemployed

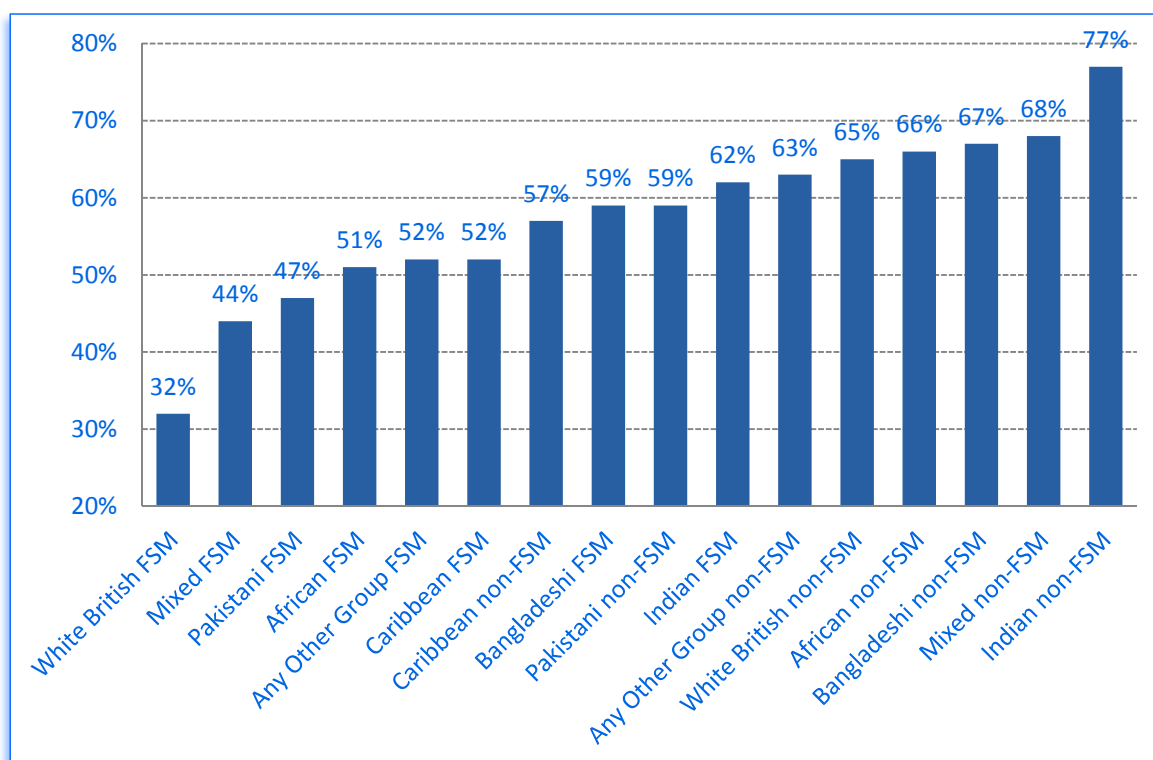
Source: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000560/Addition1.xls>

The above findings are also supported by the National Youth Cohort Study (YCS) of England and Wales, which provides useful data on attainment and social class background using parental occupation. Figure 1 shows a clear picture of how different social class groups shared unequally at GCSE performance. The data reveals social class is strongly associated with achievement and there is a considerable difference in attainment between pupils with professional and working class backgrounds. It confirms previous findings that middle class pupils do significantly better than those pupils with parents with a manual occupation at GCSE. The proportion of pupils with 5+A*-C in the highest social class was at least twice as great as pupils of the manual working class.

A research review commissioned by the DfE has also revealed that *'The attainment of White British pupils is polarised by social class to a greater extent than any other ethnic group. White British pupils from managerial and professional homes are one of the highest attaining groups, while White British pupils from working class homes are the lowest attaining groups.'* (Strand, 2008).

Recent research work has brought the link between deprivation and low performance at school back up the agenda. Social class, poverty and attainment are issues that research has highlighted as a central concern, but it is often neglected at the national and local policy formulation. However, the issue of White Working Class underachievement is complicated by the lack of identification of White Working Class pupils within national data. Broadly, White Working Class pupils are found within the wider definition of White British. As a result of this lack of data there are limitations in the past research into White Working Class underachievement in schools. The absence of national comparative data which identifies patterns of children’s background, places constraints on targeting policy and practice developments at national and local level. However, due to a lack of widely available data on the White Working Class, a number of studies focussed on students ‘who can be reasonably described as White British and who come from economically poorer families who tend to do less well than any other groups’ (Mongon and Chapman, 2008:4; Demie 2013). The free school meals variable is often used as a proxy measure for the extent of social deprivation in pupils’ backgrounds and has been linked to underachievement in a number of studies (Strand 2014, Mongon and Chapman 2008, Demie and Mclean 2007). Recent DfE data confirms the relative low attainment of pupils who are entitled to free meals. Only 32% of White British FSM pupils achieve the threshold of 5 or more GCSEs including English and maths (see Figure 2). Similarly White FSM pupils perform less well than all other pupils at Key Stage 2 (KS2). For example, in 2012, 63.3% of White FSM pupils achieved the expected level at Key Stage 2 compared to 81.7% of all other FSM pupils in England (DfE 2012).

Figure 2. National GCSE 5+A*-C including English and Maths 2013



Source: DfE (2013). GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012 (SFR04/2013), Department for Education.

Overall the review of literature confirms one of the biggest groups of underachievers is the White Working Class and their outcomes at KS4 are considerably below those achieved by all

other ethnic groups. The body of available research also suggests that most previous studies focused on attainment of White Working Class with little research on barriers and strategies for raising achievement in schools. We have not been able to identify published evidence into barriers of learning and what works in raising achievement of White Working Class pupils, but a recent National College for School Leadership (NCSL) report into *'Successful leadership for promoting the achievement of White Working Class pupils.'* (Mongon and Chapman 2008) records encouraging signs of improvement in the ways schools are addressing the underachievement of the White Working Class. Key findings in this study show that these are schools with strong leadership and strong systems and the headteachers did not accept social class as a reason for failure. They had high expectations of their students and a profound respect for the people and areas they were working in. Several also came from low income backgrounds and claimed working class roots. A number of the headteachers in the study had also been in the post for several years and spoke about the importance of building a deep respect for the community they served. Headteachers encourage and value the active involvement of parents and the community in their children's education adopting a number of strategies to overcome some of the barriers to achievement including effective use of staff with a working class background, developing an inclusive ethos and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of working class children and effective targeted support and mentoring. More importantly in the case study schools they drew in more role models and offered more inspirational experiences. There were many local people working at the case study schools both in teaching and non-teaching posts (Mongon and Chapman 2008).

Section 2: Research Questions and Methods

Research questions

The aim of the research was to study the experiences of White Working Class pupils. This research is a Local Authority case study and reflects an emerging concern in the research literature that the achievement of pupils from a White British background in inner city schools might have started to fall behind that of some ethnic groups.

Key questions raised in the research include:

- What are the key barriers to learning?
- What are the strategies for raising achievement?
- What are the implications for policy?

The data and research methods

The methodological approach for this research comprises case studies of selected schools, extensive data analysis and focus group interviews. The empirical investigation is supported by an ethnographical study of the schools and home experiences of White Working Class pupils. Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

Case studies: Using an ethnographic approach, detailed case study research was carried out to study the school experiences of White British pupils including the reasons for underachievement. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils to gather evidence on barriers to learning, how well White British pupils were achieving, pupils' views about the school and its support systems. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education. Fourteen schools with a White British population were selected for the case studies.

Focus groups: Parent, pupil, governor and headteacher focus groups were carried out to ascertain their views and to identify whether their experiences mirrored the views of those participants in the case study interviews.

Terminology:

What do we mean by the term White Working Class?

One of the difficulties with our research has been in defining the term, 'working class'. Everyone we talked to during the study gave us different interpretations and understandings of the terminology. As with many terms describing social class 'working class' is defined and used in many different ways and for differing purposes. This is mainly due to the lack of an approach at national level in classifying the White British group by social class background. In this study we asked headteachers, governors and teachers to tell us what they understand by the term White Working Class (see Demie and Lewis 2010:p55-58). As we have argued elsewhere the discussion during focus groups and case studies regarding the terminology 'White Working Class' did not yield any precise definition to be used for this study. Headteachers, governors and teachers talked more in general about how they see the issue from their own school's perspective and experience. Casual usage of 'working class' differs widely. The consensus from the focus group discussions suggests that it is difficult these days to define the term 'working class'. The variation between different socio-political definitions makes the use of the term as a subject of study contentious especially following the decline of manual labour in post-industrial societies. All argued that 'working class' is a term used in the past by academics to describe those employed in the lower tier jobs as measured by skill, education and compensation, but it is difficult to use the term with precise definition when many parents are unemployed and some have never worked.

However, despite a lack of consensus on the use of the term, researchers and policy makers continue to use the term 'White Working Class' in a number of recent studies. For example, Mongon and Chapman (2008) and Cassen and Kingdon (2007) defined for the sake of their research the group as pupils from a White British ethnic background who qualified for free school meals.

We would argue that the term White Working Class makes sense for an educational purpose as it clearly differentiates pupils by class background. It is useful to focus on underachievement issues in educational debates and it ensures that this focus is not lost or blurred in national policy formulation by providing unambiguous data for policy makers and schools. For this reason, in this study, we used the term 'White Working Class' to refer to White British pupils whose parents depend on the welfare state for their income and White British pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Free school meals data is available in schools to measure child poverty and has been frequently used as a proxy indicator for social class by researchers. We recognise this is not the perfect indicator but it is the best we have until the DfE collects social class data such as parental occupation as part of the School Census.

Educational underachievement

Educational underachievement for the purpose of this paper is defined as low attainment that is below age-related expectations in a particular curriculum subject or skill.

Section 3: Barriers to Learning and Experiences of White Working Class Pupils

Introduction

The aim of this section of the research was to develop an understanding of the school experiences of White Working Class pupils through discussions with parents and pupils and to explore what steps need to be taken to raise standards. Specific objectives were to explore barriers to learning and examine what steps need to be taken to raise achievement.

An ethnographical approach was adopted to explore the objectives above. Researchers undertook case studies in fourteen schools and held semi-structured interviews with a number of staff in order to learn more about the school experiences of White Working Class pupils.

Separate parent and pupil focus groups were run in the schools, in which the researchers introduced themselves, welcomed parents and pupils and explained the purpose of the focus group. Pupils involved were from KS1, 2, 3 and GCSE cohorts and in many cases comprised the School Council.

As part of the research we interviewed 25 headteachers and deputy heads, 21 class teachers, 30 teaching assistants and learning support teachers, 10 governors, 39 White Working Class parents and 61 pupils in 14 case study schools.

As part of the interviews teachers were asked, '**what are the main barriers to achievement in schools?**' The main findings and barriers reported through interview were lack of parental aspiration and engagement in school life, poverty, inadequate housing stock, marginalisation and perceived loss of culture and language difficulties.¹ The main findings are summarised below.

The lack of aspiration amongst White Working Class families

Of major concern to those involved in raising the achievement of White Working Class pupils is the perceived lack of aspiration amongst parents for their children's education and future. Headteachers expressed their concern at the gap between the high aspirations for children's learning held by the school and the lower aspirations of the parents. Many highlighted a lack of education amongst White Working Class parents as a causative factor for low aspiration.

'Many of our parents are young with a legacy of hostility to the school. They do not feel themselves to be stakeholders in education, rather, that sending their children to school is just something they have to do, and 'even stepping over the threshold of the school is a barrier for some parents.' (School A)

A headteacher in School A expressed her concern for the generational lack of aspiration apparent in the White Working Class families at her school:

¹ For details of the other report see: Demie, F. and Lewis, K. (2010). **Raising achievement of White Working Class pupils: Barriers to learning**, Research and Statistics Unit, London Borough of Lambeth, January.

'Many are young single mothers who had a negative experience of school and became pregnant soon after leaving school, as did their mothers, they follow the pattern. Many are on benefits. There is a vicious cycle of poverty which keeps them on benefits. Many have never worked; they are the 3rd generation of non-workers in their family. They do not want to work.' (School A)

'They are settling for scraping by each week. I see mothers outside the school gate with their own mothers having the attitude, I'm ok, I'll just do what my mum does.' (School G)

'We have a group of families which fits this profile. They have the old school attitude to education. They see education as just being the business of the school. They have low aspirations, a family history of little school success, a lack of employment and unemployability within the family. There is a fast pace of change in Lambeth but these families don't change. There is a feeling of hopelessness with some families.' (School B)

Parents' attitudes to school impact significantly on how their own children are learning. One teacher in School A commented:

'The children themselves often present as quite passive in the classroom. Education does not have a high priority at home and this has an impact on what children feel about their work at school. It is not on the cards to go to University. If you are generally ok you don't need to worry about this.' (School A)

Similarly a teaching assistant in a Year 1 class expressed concern that one child had told her 'I don't need to get a job' when they were discussing what they all wanted to do in the future.

Amongst school staff there was an opinion that the high value that other community groups place on education in Lambeth, the high aspirations that they have for their children would seem lacking in many White Working Class families. A teacher at School H commented that the White Working Class parents in the school did not '*possess the immigrant mentality. For example, we do not see the positives and high aspiration of the immigrant community in some White families.*'

A member of the leadership team in School J, who is of Portuguese heritage, contrasted the dramatic improvements in the achievement of Portuguese pupils in the school with those of White British heritage. Many of the Portuguese families originally from Madeira farming communities had moved into the Stockwell area over a decade ago. It took time for them to adjust to the language and the education system but the strategies the school has used have been highly successful in raising standards of attainment. Reflecting on how this group differed from the White British she stated:

'The Portuguese have been successful because they have a work ethic. Here we are talking about a country where education is free and there is a Welfare State, so people take it for granted to some extent. They do not value it because it is free whereas the Welfare State did not exist in Portugal until seven years ago. In order to eat you had to migrate to other parts of Europe.'

A senior learning mentor (School G) held a unique perspective on this theme. She epitomised the local community in that she was mixed race and had experienced the differing values

placed on education by her White mother and Black Caribbean father. She has also lived in the area and has over twenty years experience in the school, as a parent, a volunteer and as an employee:

'My mum is White British and she was not bothered about school but my dad was. She would let me have days off school but would say 'don't tell your dad.' My dad is from Barbados and he had high aspirations for me. My mum never expected me to go to University whereas my dad did. In Barbados education had to be paid for and there was a very high value to it.'

The learning mentor considers that these conflicting expectations failed to motivate her to succeed at school. Nevertheless her own desire to further her career came when she was employed at the school and a colleague recognised her potential. She believes that school holds the key to motivating children to improve the quality of their lives, by identifying and harnessing the potential within each child. However she appreciates that many:

'White Working Class families see it (school) as something that gets their children out during the day. It's something that they have got to do. They will do it with a push. They don't see it as an open door, an opportunity; they don't have the confidence to push the door open. There's a feeling of, I'm fine, so why do I need to do anything else. Therefore families I work with have poor attendance. It's only because I am on the phone saying 'where is Johnny? Or if Johnny's ill...I will come and collect Billy and bring him to school, I see that as the mentor's role.'

Poor attendance was a recurrent theme throughout discussions in schools. A school administrative officer from School E feels that parents need to take on the responsibility of getting their children to school and on time in the mornings and cited examples of White children who are not attending regularly:

'X pupil doesn't come to school often and it's a real difficulty for him. He doesn't really have friends and no sooner does he come to school some days then he's back in the head's office. A girl in another year group, her mother is keeping her home for company, they don't get up in the morning, and she has about 64% attendance. Her mother isn't putting her educational needs first.'

Another barrier to aspiration is the general lack of knowledge and understanding of the world that many White Working Class children in the borough have. It was reported that many pupils do not even go to the local park and know little of a life beyond their home and school. Many appear polarised in their outlook on life:

'The parents don't go anywhere. They stay in their flats watching TV. They do not travel; they don't go into other parts of London. Some go to Spain or Butlins. Many don't even go to the local park.' (School E)

'This might be a cost issue or it might be that they are perfectly happy here. I'm fine in my world. Why do I need to go any further? There is a self-imposed glass ceiling. My mum and dad didn't go to college, they did alright. You need one member of the family with a spark and they move out.' (School E)

A parent governor expressed her concern about older children in the area where she lived. She told us about the gangs, many of whom are White boys that hang around the area:

'They have no aspiration or ambition and no parental support. One of the boys told the others he wanted to be a policeman- next thing he knew his car had been damaged.' (School H)

'It is a general thing here that children do not get out of the area but don't see it; there is little understanding of a larger world. Children, whose families came here from another country or have lived in two or three countries, have a wider world to relate to, whilst White pupils don't have this, they do not have a mental map of the world.' (School D)

One mother in the parent focus group talked of a programme she had seen on the TV about children on a council estate in Battersea:

'These children never expected to leave the estate; they had never even seen the Thames. School could be the only way to help these children. It gives them a chance, shows them another life.'

The issue of 'a small world' is a serious one as not only is there a sharp contrast between the aspirations of White British parents for their children's future lives, and those of other ethnic groups in the school, but an assistant head from School D warned against the assumption that might be easily made that children have had a broad range of experiences, simply because they live in London. Teachers might assume that because children have grown up here and that they 'look the same as you,' that they have had similar experiences; 'even going to the park or the seaside.' The curriculum can also assume the same. Although we assume that children of a different heritage may be unfamiliar with some experiences of growing up here, we don't always do that for our White children. She has reflected on this issue as an Australian living in this country as an adult, 'although I look the same as British people, my experiences of growing up have been different as I grew up in Australia.'

Lastly the lack of future thinking and aspiration presented challenges to schools in raising standards. This thinking often manifested itself in parental attitudes to their children's welfare e.g. their behaviour and diet. One headteacher (School E) reflected:

'With the materialistic culture of Thatcher's time it exploded and everyone wants their bit. There is no concept of saving up for things, saving for a 'rainy day'; everything is about instant gratification. Children seem to have the best in material things; two boys, their mother showers them with whatever she has, yet their behaviour and attitude towards learning is appalling. We just want someone to see past tomorrow.' (School E)

'There is a culture of instant gratification. Reality TV doesn't help. I know that two boys I used to teach, and worked really hard with are now local drug dealers. One single mother with 7 children said to me recently, 'you can't tell me what to do, I earn more than you in a month.' (School C)

'There is a celebrity culture- you don't have to do anything for your money- the hard work bit in between is missing.' (School B)

There is an issue with parents not engaging with the school over supporting a line with behaviour. Some parents are accepting of their children's inappropriate behaviour, praising them and seeing it as sweet, 'bless him, little terror.'

On the issue of children's diet the headteacher (School E) raised her concerns:

'Every morning we see our White children eating a sausage roll from Gregg's bakery in the playground. Parents seem unconcerned about the impact of this food on the future health of their children. They won't send them to breakfast club- they don't like the food. This food has empty calories, it leads to fluctuations in blood sugar levels and the children don't concentrate in class.'
(School E)

Some school staff reported an obstruction by parents to the school supporting children's achievement. For example:

'One White British mother always talks about her child getting tired so she won't send her to extra lessons, e.g. 1:1, booster.' (School J)

A lack of engagement with children's schooling

A teacher talked about her experiences at a previous school outside of London where White Working Class children were in the majority:

'In this school parents did not want their children to do better than them. They wanted to keep them close, they didn't want them to move away but live with them or in the same street. But it's not like that here, the parents want their children to do well, they just don't want to play a part in this. Whilst many parents want the best for their children they don't realise that they can take some responsibility for this, not just the 'will you do it attitude.'
(School E)

It was felt generally that with many parents:

'There is a culture of it's up to the school to educate the child. There is little concept that the parent is the child's first teacher.'

A school administration officer also reflected:

'I don't think parents like being told what to do. Other groups might be a bit more subdued. They don't like to be told that their children are failing.'

'I used to work in a school in Bermondsey. There you had to fight to keep parents out of the school. Here, it takes lots and lots of nagging to get them in.' (School E)

'One parent fights us every step of the way. Her attitude is that she's got by without an education so what's the problem for her children? She is all too willing to lend a sympathetic ear to her children's complaints about school.'
(School E)

A teacher at the same school stated:

'I find some of my White parents are very defensive- they never come to anything at the school. At the end of the first term I had an informal parents' evening 'If you want to come and ask me anything about your child's

education.....I had 2 out of 18 parents come to see me. Many of these parents are prepared to be nurtured by the school, to be dependent on the school, but they don't want to be told what to do. They don't feel it's their role to get involved in the school. We do whatever we can do to break down barriers in this school. We provide lots of positive opportunities for them to come into school but they don't.'

One headteacher contrasted their lack of engagement with the 'system' with that of West African and West Indian parents:

'In my time here I have rarely known a White parent come in to ask about secondary transition. Other groups know the system, this group is more passive and they generally seem to have less ambition or fight to move on.'

Similarly the school finds it hard to engage this group in family learning activities, especially those that focus on healthy eating, or behaviour management suggesting that this might be because, *'they see this as us blaming them and become defensive but also with adult learning activities, it might be that they lack the confidence to have a go.'* (School A)

Although many schools felt that certain family learning programmes were ideal for this group of parents there is a general lack of take up in these methods of support or the extended day activities:

'The children are out on the streets in their uniforms after school. The mothers don't do anything with their children, they don't go anywhere as a family. There is no family structure. The discipline has been taken away from them. They let the children control them- they have no parenting skills. The mums are so much younger and the children are just copying their parents. The women used to be the strong ones- they would push their children out to work.' (School E).

'It's about knowing that you are the adult, they need you and want you to say no; they will constantly push the boundaries.'

Because of general difficulties with behaviour management in some White Working Class families, schools work hard to encourage parents to attend parenting courses e.g. with Fegans, a Christian charity that offers support to children and families, but they reported that parents are very reluctant to do anything unless it is run from school, not wanting to *'step out of their comfort zones.'*

Similarly the local authority has organised family support workers for families at schools but one headteacher reported:

'They don't answer the phone to the family support worker, they don't go to appointments made for them with e.g. Housing. 'It gets to the point where there is nothing more you can do. One parent lost her flat, she ignored the letters, just buried her head in the sand, it was easier not to think about it. She won't engage with the family support worker. The child is going back into care. There is support out there but they have to ask for it.' (School E)

A family services manager at a school with a long tradition of delivering services to parents

expressed his concern at the lack of engagement from White Working Class families at the school:

'We have started a new homework club for Years 3, 4 and 5. No White pupils in the school come along to this.' (School G)

The learning mentor had referred many White Working Class children to the breakfast club. Attendance, however, was often erratic and staff reported that often children would want to watch TV at home instead. Similarly, none of these families use the after school club facilities. The school's extended school co-ordinator told us that in the summer holidays some White families were offered free places at the football sessions, however these families only came a couple of times then gave up, whereas when places were offered to African families they came everyday. One White parent when offered a place for his daughter at an after school activity said, *'If I've got to pay, then no.'*

One member of staff reflected that:

'The after school extra curricular activities do not always reach disadvantaged families. They do not always see the letters, they don't ask for them, they do not want to come out again and pick up a child if they've already been out at 3.30pm.' (School D)

In another school, staff were positive about the take up of family learning activities e.g. laptop library amongst White parents but reported that they were inclined to drop out of the bit where they are asked to work with their children in the afternoon claiming:

'I don't want to work with my child, they are in school, this is time for me. There is a desperate lack of aspiration for their children and engagement in their learning.' (School G)

Teachers give further examples of the lack of parental engagement, even in the Nursery, where traditionally relationships with parents are formed. The Nursery teacher who has three White British children in her class comments:

'One White British mum is going to College herself and she finds it difficult to help her son with literacy. She attempts it, but other parents may not. We treat our parents with respect and hopefully they'd feel able to come in, but many White British parents do not. They have difficulty 'opening up'; it is not as if all parents feel comfortable to tell you everything. Some parents are very involved and some are going through tremendous difficulties at home and it affects the child. We do see some of the dads of White British children, two in particular, on a regular basis in the Nursery. Some children do not have fathers in their lives at present.'

A Year 4 teacher has only two White British pupils in his class:

'One has a lot of social issues, underachieving, he is in the minority. His attendance is poor. His mother is dependent on him. His father is in prison- he has a lot on his plate. We try to assure his mother that the best place for him is at school, but it is getting through to his mother that is the difficulty.'

Marginalisation and a perceived loss of culture amongst White Working Class families

Demie et al (2008) state that since 1998 there has been a 10% decline in the White British population in Lambeth and they no longer represent the largest group. This is maybe reflected in the words of a member of staff at School A when she suggests:

'Twenty years ago half the school population was White British- now most of them have disappeared. Many have moved out to Kent or Essex or Croydon. Twenty years ago there was also a culture of someone bringing in some money. Those that are left in the area have no social mobility and no way of getting out. Many of them were born and brought up in the immediate area. Other groups change and move on and out. This group is stuck.' (School A)

Another staff comment struck a similar chord:

'They themselves (mothers) feel marginalised; they huddle together in the playground. They are the White minority in a majority Black school. They tend to only engage with the school when there is a problem. It could be because they see the school as 'authority', despite the school providing many opportunities to involve parents in social and curricular evenings. The school therefore plays a key role in social cohesion.' (School G)

Many staff in the case study schools reflected upon the impact of this marginalisation upon some children:

'I think it is very difficult for the White children to identify culturally with the other, more dominant, cultures in the school. They aspire to Eminem or street culture and I would say that a lot of their role models are Black. They speak with South London patois. The White girls hang out with other White girls, when they are in dance club it is noticeable that they are not as grown up as the Black girls, emotionally or physically. They do not dance as well, neither do the boys.' (School C)

A teacher (School G) who described herself as 'part of a minority' recognised the unusual situation that White pupils now find themselves in as an ethnic minority in the school:

'There can be an emotional barrier and a lack of self-esteem; it can be true of any minority. If you feel undervalued within the whole school community, it can have a profound effect from an early age. Children can feel confused about where they fit into the world. In our school we are very good at diversity, but maybe there is an assumption that because you are British and White, you are already included in things. But do we celebrate being British? It is very subtle and from an early age you can be affected by it and it can affect how you perform and how you engage in school. We are aware of the White British being a minority in the school. Last week we had a staff meeting looking at attendance and achievement, but the issue of social class is a difficult one.'

A Year 4 teacher in the same school echoed these sentiments:

'We are very explicit in celebrating other cultures, but there is always that difficulty in identifying what is British culture? How many of our pupils would

understand what Maypole Dancing is about? We had a Memorial Day celebration yesterday, but we stressed all the people who died. We celebrate Christmas and Easter but even that is done in a diverse way. I think White families are expected to just fit into the curriculum, it is seen as the norm for them and we focus on the children new to the country/ EAL children. We can't assume that the White children get taken anywhere.'

A learning mentor in School J reflected that:

'There are stigmas to being White British where you cannot do anything without being criticised for being politically incorrect. You are expected not to wear even an England football shirt. White British people take a lot of flack but most people are trying to make things work for everyone. Every White British parent I have come across is willing to accept others, but they just want things to work fairly.'

Not only does the issue of a declining White population in schools lead to a perception of marginalisation within the community but many schools reported that a barrier to achievement for some White Working Class children was the achievement of the White middle class children in Lambeth schools.

Balancing the different agendas of the White middle class parents with those of the working class has long been a challenge for headteachers to manage. In one headteacher's view:

'The middle class can be alienating and they don't seem to be able to understand how this impacts on others: an example of this was at a raffle organised by the PTFA a few years ago. One working class parent bought 20-30 tickets and she won two prizes. The middle class parent suggested that this parent put one of the prizes back! Mayhem broke out! I had to smooth it over and explain to the middle class parent why this parent might have wanted to keep both prizes!' (School L)

Similarly another headteacher expressed concern at the stigma placed upon many White Working Class families:

'Are we are looking at what might have been classed as the undeserving poor, the critical mass who are seen to be feckless, lazy, won't get on with it (symptoms- poverty, unemployment and a vicious cycle of early pregnancy). They are seen to lack aspiration with an attitude of dependency, why should I work if the state will pay for me. That's not for me- I'm not going to sacrifice so much.' (School E)

A parent governor in Waterloo expressed his concern about the huge take up of local community facilities by the White middle class, but not the White Working Class families, the target audience:

'This area has a thriving local neighbourhood centre, which is the designated Children's Centre for the area which also has strong links with the school. Yet few of the poorer White families use it.'

Children's Centres aim to improve outcomes for children under 5 years old. They are service hubs where children and their families receive seamless and integrated early education and childcare, support for parents e.g. advice on parenting, health services and helping parents back into work. Yet this governor states:

'The purpose of the Children's Centre is to enable parents of young children to get back into work but what you get is your Children's Centre full of middle class parents who are working.'

On the subject of marginalisation a headteacher (School C) reflected on the bonds that tie other community groups together that do not exist in the White Working Class group:

'In the Caribbean community there is an ethos of hard work, with Church and music providing a strong focal point for families. Whereas the White British probably have nothing but the pub...there is no pride in the White community, no strong sense of a cultural identity.'

'Whilst other community groups have the Church as a family focus many White families do not attend. Not only is this something that can be done as a family but the church places expectations on you-of helping and supporting each other. Similarly the Muslim families cook together, help each other, a focal point is the mosque.'

Overall a recurrent theme of the parent focus group discussion was the isolation that many White Working Class parents felt within a 'diverse' community declaring themselves as the new 'ethnic group.' One young mother claimed that she was the only White person living in her housing block where she felt there was a lack of community spirit. A number of parents in the focus group expressed a desire to leave the area. Some parents talked about perceived unfair allocation of housing which resulted in marginalisation of the White Working Class in the area.

The effects of poverty on White Working Class children's achievement

Poverty was seen to play a major role in the underachievement of White Working Class pupils in the case study schools. Low incomes, benefits and the pressure of not having any money were seen to play their part, affecting the stability of family life. It was reported that for recreation parents turn to cheap alcohol. This can often have a destabilising effect upon regular bedtime and family meals. Schools reported low self-esteem, mental health issues, safeguarding issues, learning difficulties, exclusion, prison, a lack of parenting skills in the family and families having little chance to extricate themselves from the environment with a general 'feeling of hopelessness'. Many families do not meet the threshold of Social Services need so do not get this support.

A lack of suitable housing appeared to be the first concern of many White parents in the borough. A parent governor commented:

'If you don't have a safe place you can call home then everything else is difficult.'

School staff stated that housing related issues had a depressing effect on children's achievement at the school.

It would also appear that many parents are in the benefit trap because if they worked they would not be able to afford the rent that the council pays for them. Also much of the new housing that's been built in some areas is for key workers not for the local community. This was reported to divide communities because young people are being forced out, thus the White Working Class population decreases.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests a perception amongst some White Working Class parents that they are positioned as the losers in the struggle for scarce housing resources, whilst

minority ethnic groups are the winners. This is however questioned by one parent interviewed who stated that:

'As a White Working Class parent, I have never felt excluded. I feel I am treated equally. I am eligible for any housing needs and financial help as everyone in my situation who are on a low income.' (Parent)

Housing allocation may be easy to represent as a site of unfairness, particularly when it can be identified with new migrants. The dynamics of this are entirely local. Due to a scarcity in the housing sector only people who are technically homeless, and/or have multiple social problems, disabilities, or dependent children, can aspire to be housed by local authorities in the short to medium term.

A parent governor told us that housing is the first concern of many of the White parents in his school. He commented that:

'If you don't have a safe place you can call home then everything else is difficult. There are 1.7 million families waiting for a suitable home in this country. It really worries me that the BNP play on this issue. We need to take a holistic approach to this, housing affects achievement.'

Two teaching assistants from the same area shed light on this issue by sharing their personal experiences. One had lived in the area all her life and worked at the school for 28 years, the other had worked at the school for 10 years. Both stated housing related issues as having a depressing effect on children's achievement at the school:

'Their housing is temporary; there is little space and they are cramped, there is too much noise, there is nowhere for them to play, there is often little security. Even when they live in private accommodation which the Council pays for they live with the threat of eviction because a private tenant might come along who can pay more to the landlord.'

'Boys are energetic, they need space. I know of a single mum with two boys in a small two bedroom flat. She is struggling.'

'Many parents are in the benefit trap because if they worked they wouldn't be able to afford the rent. The council are paying a vast amount of money a year for my daughter to live in a private flat because they couldn't give her a council flat. This happens a lot. Much of the new housing that's been built here is for key workers not for the local community. This is dividing our community- the young people are being forced out.' (School E)

A learning mentor in another school commented:

'One family has 6 or 7 children. They live in a 2-3 bedroom flat and are finding it impossible to move house. Dad is illiterate and mum too has poor literacy skills. They find it difficult to cope. The children tend to self-parent. There has been a lot of involvement from Social Services.' (School D)

A teaching assistant suggested that:

'This is not just an issue for children in council accommodation but children in private one bedroom flats. They are sleeping with mum because they have bought small to get onto the property ladder.' (School D)

Low literacy levels and language deprivation

Two secondary schools reflected on how the low prior attainment of some pupils starting school in Year 7 is the greatest barrier to achievement and is a causative factor in behaviour problems and low achievement throughout their school life:

'The problem is that whereas their Black Caribbean peers start with high achievement and some underachieve, White Working Class students start low and end up lower. Here we are up against problems of non-attendance. This group often keeps below the radar and politically remains below the radar.' (School B)

'I'd say it's the largest route of behaviour problems in the school. The literacy levels of some parents are an issue. White Working Class students are at a disadvantage here because they do not receive EAL support and unless they have SEN their specific needs do not fall into a category. They almost need primary teaching; we can't give that here.'

The consequences of an inability to express one's self either verbally or in writing can lead to low self-esteem and often aggression:

'The two groups that are over represented in terms of exclusions, both internal and external, are White British and Black Caribbean boys. They have low levels of literacy, low CAT scores, their reading ages are low and their national curriculum levels are low. These students have chaotic home lives too.' (School H)

A teaching assistant talked of a young man known to her who:

'Started to camouflage his lack of progress with bad behaviour. He slipped through the net. He was 16 when he left school to do a college course in motor mechanics. The first year was practical and he got on well but the second year was theory and he dropped out because his literacy skills are not good. With support he got an interview for a part time job but he told me he wasn't going to sit in a room full of dunces. He was talking about himself of course. We have a boy like that in school now. He has no confidence, low self-esteem, I think Mum does his homework for him. She won't be able to do that when he goes to secondary school.'

The issue with language would appear to start in the Foundation Stage as one teacher in a primary school stated:

'Many of the White children, as do others, come into school well below average, they haven't got the skills, they can't recognise their own name.'

'In the nursery if peers haven't got good English language skills then they don't get the language models unless an adult is there during their play. This is especially an issue for boys as they are less likely to want to come and work at an adult directed activity, they would rather get on and do what they want to do!' (School K)

Similarly a headteacher talked of some young children, more frequently the White Working Class, coming to school only being able to grunt because they had been 'stuck in front of a TV all day.'

Primary colleagues reflected that many White Working Class pupils are:

'At Stage 3 level of fluency in English and need some support. They do not progress in the way that many EAL pupils do. They do not have the academic language or the language enrichment with which to progress. Many write in a colloquial way. They therefore don't have the language to achieve at secondary school.'

'They do not have the language models. They are exposed to the media, text culture. They do not have maybe the mindset of EAL learners. EAL pupils take on new vocabulary all the time, they are used to it, learning English is a continuum, they acquire new vocabulary, academic language.' (School D)

'The English that many White students speak at home is often different from what they speak, or are expected to speak at school. They do not have an enriched vocabulary or academic language but we have to be careful that we do not denigrate the language they speak at home, the way their parents might speak.' (School H)

Members of staff felt that the school grants needed to be re-thought as there is currently no money to support the language deficit within the White Working Class community. Although schools are working creatively to support those who are most in need of language support some EAL co-ordinators felt that their hands 'are tied, I am only really supposed to be supporting the EAL children.'

EMA co-ordinators acknowledged that many EAL pupils are articulate by the time they reach Year 6 due to the level of support they have had.

Furthermore, many schools reflected on the fact that pupils with EAL needs arriving new to a school receive a thorough induction process into the school. At one school they have an hour's interview with the EMA co-ordinator, this is not necessarily the same for White British pupils. Although this level of induction exists in the Foundation Stage this is a disadvantage for pupils who arrive at other times during the year.

Lack of targeted support

Parents expressed concern that their children did not always get the support they deserved. Parents themselves lamented a lack of White culture reflected in school life which perpetuated for many the marginalisation they felt within their communities. They were frustrated at what they saw as an unfair weighting of resources towards immigrant children or those learning English. One parent commented:

'There should be support outside the classroom for children coming into school not speaking English. It disrupts our children.'

Another parent commented that she felt there was a lack of resources for White Working Class children at school. She stated:

'One of the major problems for us is that we are not recognised. There is no extra help for our children. There is a Portuguese club after school, but not one

for English children; if there was we would be called racist. We are not racist we just want a balance.’ The Portuguese club is externally funded.

School EMA co-ordinators recognised that their ‘hands were tied’ and that as much as some White Working Class pupils needed specific language support to progress and access the curriculum, they were not in a position to give this support, unless as part of whole school strategies. One EMAG co-ordinator stated:

‘Many of our EAL pupils are highly articulate by the time they reach Year 6 as they have had a lot of support. I was with some children the other day in a classroom- it was the EAL children who had the necessary comparative language- bigger, biggest. The White children did not have this vocabulary.’
(School 1)

There was a general feeling amongst staff, governors and parents that little support was targeted at White Working Class pupils:

‘White Working Class people feel no one is listening or speaking for them. They have been ignored by politicians of all parties as part of broader strategy to woo middle class voters and occupy the political centre’. As a result there are few national strategies or little targeted support to tackle generations of low aspiration and to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.’ (Governors and Headteachers focus group)

Governors believe the current system of additional funding means some schools serving White Working Class estates do not receive adequate financial support. The question of social class and poverty has remained in the background. It is a hidden barrier but the negative impact of poverty, disadvantage and inequality upon achievement cannot be underestimated. One governor commented:

‘Disadvantage also undermines the resilience of communities and depresses aspiration in a destructive cycle.’ (Governor)

Curriculum barriers

It was felt by schools and parents alike that the curriculum does not reflect the culture and lives of White Working Class children and that this might well have led to a marginalisation of this group of pupils. In fact, *‘the curriculum that has been on offer has not been meeting the needs of White British pupils. There has been much emphasis in recent years on elements of Black history and a celebration of cultural days such as Portuguese Day. There has been nothing for the British culture. This might have led to a sense of them losing their identity.’* (Headteacher) Similarly the secondary curriculum did not always meet the needs of the White Working Class cohort.

‘We have to look at a more vocational type of education in our secondary schools for our young people, as we did years ago, when if you didn’t go to College you could do an apprenticeship somewhere or work in an office or factory. The worrying thing is no-one seems to care about them and there is nothing going for them at all.’ (Headteacher)

Primary headteachers reported also low levels of literacy generally amongst this group of pupils. On entry to the Foundation Stage children have poor language development and limited ‘knowledge and understanding of the world.’ This was described as ‘language deprivation’ or a limited ‘language for learning.’ Also in KS1 and KS2 pupils tend to have little experience of life

beyond their immediate locality, rarely even visiting a park. In contrast to other ethnic groups (many having come to this country from abroad or have family living elsewhere) who have a broader perspective on the world.

Some headteachers felt that the pressure on schools to establish a curriculum which is relevant to a diverse range of pupils has possibly marginalised White pupils, who cannot see themselves or their lives reflected in the curriculum.

Reflecting on curriculum one headteacher stated:

'We are going to do a topic on Britishness but it's hard to think of a title that isn't arrogance, we don't want to create a problem. I am interested in identity- what is it which binds us together? I want it to be an opportunity for the whole school to work together. We've covered other groups and countries, places that we have a high representation from. It seems to be easier to celebrate the good things about other cultures- the dance, the food, the stories and to ask parents to come in and share their food, their traditions with us. We've worked through the cultures and have left this one to last. I'm not sure whether it's because we lack a strong identity? I wonder if because we don't have a strong sense of national identity whether that's why people hold on to theirs when they come here and we take in theirs e.g. our national dishes have become pizza and curry. I think we might focus on football, children's rights and responsibilities as citizens, places near to us and why they are important e.g. Big Ben, the River Thames, The Wheel.'

Reflecting on identity within this group of families she continued:

'I feel we have a lack of strong cultural identity. African children have their links to home, even if they haven't been there their parents are visiting. They have the link with the church or the mosque, which involves the whole family. The Caribbean families have cultural links too. Brixton is a centre, with the market and the hair salons, they have ties and are always rubbing up along a significant group. Jamaica is a prominent place in many children's lives, everybody has some connection with it. With the South American children and the European, either the language binds people or some elements of their culture are shared. The Polish families seem interconnected as do the Portuguese, they all seem to go through one address at some point, so they are interconnected somehow. But, the White families, nothing binds them, some are cousins I suppose but they are not seeking anybody out, I can't think of anything that would bind them together.'

The overall findings from the case studies and the focus groups discussion suggest a concern about the lack of aspiration amongst this group of families and little engagement with their children's school experience. Many members of staff attributed this to the negative experience that many of these parents, still young themselves, would have had at school and a general feeling that they have 'done ok' and therefore place little importance on education. Many families feel marginalised in a diverse community and this issue is exacerbated by their perception of a lack of recognition of their culture and lives within school life. Depressed by the effects of poverty, cramped accommodation, mental health and child protection issues there is a sense of hopelessness for many families who no longer possess the resilience to cope with inner city life.

Section 4: Strategies to Raise the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils

This section aims to study school strategies to raise achievement in schools. In recent years the need for detailed case studies of successful schools in raising achievement of White Working Class pupils has become apparent as a means of increasing our understanding of the ways in which schools can enhance pupils' academic achievement. As part of the interviews headteachers and teachers were asked, '**what are school strategies to raise achievement?**' The key challenge is to find out successful school strategies that are effective in raising the achievement of White Working Class pupils. A number of key strategies were used in the case study schools to support White Working Class pupils. The main strategies reported through the interview were strong leadership and vision, use of data, inclusive curriculum, parental engagement, support for primary to secondary transition and targeted support through effective use of Teaching Assistants (TA) and learning mentor and family support workers.² These are summarised below.

Strong leadership and high expectations for White Working Class pupils

The one essential feature that is shared by the most successful primary and secondary schools is strong leadership. The quality of management and leadership at all levels within the schools is generally good and in some cases outstanding. Headteachers are described as 'inspirational' and 'outstanding' and their leadership is at the heart of the school's ethos, shared by staff, pupils and parents. Their leadership has been the driving force behind change, new expectations and inspirational success. These headteachers:

- Provide a culture of achievement with a positive can do attitude. Central to their work are high expectations and the provision of intensive support so that pupils meet them. They strongly believe their key priority is leading teaching and learning and they allocate a lot of time to being in the classroom with teachers and pupils.
- Provide multiracial schools where the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and circumstances are celebrated. Whatever their background, schools ensure that they succeed.
- Regard liaison with parents as vital in the school's drive to raise achievement. They have developed genuine partnerships with parents and the community they serve.
- Monitor pupils' progress by ethnicity and social background. Headteachers monitor details of learning, pupils' work, marking, record keeping, teacher assessment, quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by individual pupils and collectively by the whole class. Pupil tracking is rigorous. The data enables senior staff to have the confidence to challenge assumptions about and attitudes to pupils' performance. Overall there are excellent systems for monitoring the work of White British pupils with low income backgrounds. Schools identify those who need additional help or extra challenge and then provide them with appropriate support. More importantly, in these schools they realise the potential of every pupil. They know the data and they identify the percentages as individual children. They use data effectively for school self-evaluation and tracking pupil performance

² For details of the other report see:

Demie, F. and Lewis, K. (2010). **Raising achievement of White Working Class pupils: School Strategies**, Research and Statistics Unit, London Borough of Lambeth, January.

A number of these headteachers discussed their own working class backgrounds; they were brought up on council estates and have a pride in their family roots. They expressed a firm commitment to raising achievement in disadvantaged areas and communities. Headteachers employ staff who have a good understanding of pupils from White Working Class backgrounds, either because they are local or because they have previous experience teaching in White Working Class communities. Staff play a key role in teaching and supporting these pupils. One headteacher who had strong pride in his working class roots said:

'I come from a White Working Class background myself, my parents worked as a mechanic and in a shoe factory, and my grandad down the pit. My family valued education and learning. Education was my chance to do something they didn't do. I've clawed my way to where I am now. My lesson is that perseverance pays off.' (Headteacher)

Another headteacher talks about her own working class roots. She was brought up on a council estate. *'We had pride in our family and a make do and mend attitude towards life.'* She is in tune with many of the issues that face the diverse community that her school serves and the experiences of the White Working Class community within this. She states that:

'The diversity in our workforce is helpful here. We have a number of staff who have a good understanding of a working class background in the White community, through first hand experience and because they have taught in these contexts.'

The deputy headteacher agreed:

'Maybe in this school the White families might not feel marginalised as they have family members on the staff and representatives from their community amongst the school workforce. Some of the children know staff here. C's nan works here. D knows all the families and socialises with them. The White children might feel quite empowered by this, not marginalised, these particular children mix well with all cultures.'

Two senior staff at the school had previously taught in mainly White schools on the outskirts of London. One was able to articulate the issues involved but also reflect on how the White community at the case study school differed from those in her previous school:

'In this (her previous) school White Working Class parents did not want their children to do better than them. They wanted to keep them close, they didn't want them to move away but live with them or on the same street. But it's not like that here, the parents want their children to do well, they just don't want to play a part in this.'

The headteacher reflected that although the White Working Class children might lack role models in general in other schools, at this school the teaching and non-teaching staff provide role models for White Working Class pupils and communities. For example, the office administrator is a good role model. *'She is able to talk to them (parents) like they are friends and they trust her.'*

The diversity of the workforce has helped with engaging the parents. The headteacher states:

'I am in the playground every morning and afternoon. There is rarely trouble between parents. I know all their names and say to the teachers that they need to know all the parents' names.'

She talks of the constant effort involved in working with particular parents:

'We had a family of boys who were not achieving, who had no aspiration to do well at school. We kept on and on working with Mum; the messages are starting to get through and the boys are starting to make some progress.'

A class teacher stated, *'We do whatever we can to break down the barriers. We find so many positive ways of bringing the parents into school.'*

Overall the case study schools instil confidence in White Working Class pupils and parents. The headteachers provide the role model needed with a deep commitment to the issues of White Working Class communities in the area they serve. Teachers demand much more from their pupils and give them support at a high level. There were also many local people working at the case study schools that provide role models and support. Throughout the schools the White Working Class we have interviewed have very positive attitudes towards learning. As a result in a number of case study schools, the White Working Class pupils buck the trend. For example in one case study school, despite challenging circumstances and low attainment at entry, 100% of White Working Class pupils with a low income background attained level 4 and above at KS2. In another primary school, 94% achieved level 4 and above. In the two case study secondary schools GCSE results have shown significant improvement and the percentage of pupils achieving 5+A*-C is 86% and 77% respectively. In all case study schools the achievement of White Working Class is improving and the value added of the schools was also in the top 5% nationally (Demie and Lewis 2010). Similar findings were also reported from a recent study from the University of Manchester which highlighted that where achievement for White Working Class boys was best, headteachers shared that background or had a strong commitment to raising achievement in disadvantaged communities (Mongon and Chapman 2008).

Use of data

In the case study schools the *'use of data for school improvement'* is a strength. Data is used effectively to promote effective self-evaluation and high standards of learning and teaching by clearly indicating areas of development; identifying underperforming groups; monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives and strategies; challenging the aspiration of staff, pupils and parents; supporting the allocation of staffing and resources and informing target setting and professional discussions with key partners such as LA, OfSTED, governors, parents and staff.

The use of data involves all interested parties: staff, governors and parents. One of the core elements of school success in raising achievement is a robust focus on tracking and monitoring individual pupil progress and achievement in the widest sense of the term. The schools have well developed pupil tracking systems and have detailed Foundation Stage, Key Stage data, GCSE and non-statutory optional assessment data at all year groups followed by background data such as ethnic background, language spoken, level of fluency in English, SEN stage, date of admission, attendance rate, eligibility for free school meals, mobility rate, years in school, attendance rate, types of support, and postcode data.

Senior managers play a key role in supporting and challenging teachers to raise the performance of every pupil. One senior manager explained:

'Data is critical in raising achievement. ... we use it to prompt action to make sure that each child is doing well.'

Data is used to look at whole school, whole class and group issues and to drill down to individual learning issues e.g. attendance of a particular child and the impact that this might have on their learning. The school data tracking systems can identify 'threshold' students and so trigger interventions. Using red, amber and green to indicate actual against expected levels of progress, attainment is clear and easy to grasp, which is useful for discussion with teachers, senior managers and parents. Children who are not on track with their learning are highlighted and interventions e.g. booster classes, pupil groupings, additional support including one to one.

Rigorous monitoring enables schools to plan interventions where needed to support children's language, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and poor progress. In one primary school in order to facilitate the effective use of data, the school holds a Learning Assessment Forum Week (LAFW). Each class teacher is released for a day three times in a year to work in the morning with the headteacher to analyse their class data and the Inclusion Manager and SENCO in the afternoon to discuss targeted support, to *'discuss the groupings, whether particular children would benefit from extra reading support or to start the statementing process for a particular child. It's about balancing out the resources we have.* At present there are target groups of children, 6 in reading, 6 in writing and 6 in maths. *'The idea is that teachers must turn these children from red, at the beginning of the year, to green (national age related expectation colour on the tracking chart). The idea is for the class teacher and TA to take ownership for the learning of those children. I want them to be empowered to make the difference. I want them to say... this is the resource I need to make the difference to this child. I want this to be self-perpetuating rather than all from me, I want the phase leaders to take over this role and report back to me.'* (Headteacher)

Overall there are excellent systems for monitoring the work of White British with low income backgrounds, identifying those who need additional help or extra challenge and then providing them with appropriate additional support. More importantly, in these schools they realise the potential of every pupil. They know the data and they identified the percentages as actual children. Real children and real progress matters to them and they translate numbers into action. They use data effectively for school self-evaluation and tracking pupil performance.

Use of a relevant inclusive curriculum

Schools use the curriculum to give White Working Class children different experiences that widen horizons, raise aspiration and give them access to opportunities that they may take up later in life. Examples include visits to the opera, horse riding lessons, lessons in Mandarin, visits to corporate businesses and sightseeing trips in London:

'We never let money be a barrier to achievement. We use the curriculum to kill class barriers. We find positive ways of transcending the class barrier, of widening their horizons. We also provide a range of first hand experience for children to learn from. They must know that London is their wider community, those buildings belong to them.' (Headteacher)

Staff do not make assumptions about the life experiences that children have had, whether they were born here or not. Recognising that many families do not venture very far from their estates, many schools adopt an experiential approach to the curriculum to give children a practical experience of what they will be learning about and a chance to be immersed in the vocabulary before they begin to write, thus giving all children equal access to the curriculum:

'We make sure that they have different experiences in different ways, visits, school trips and children bringing in things from home. There is an emphasis on slowing down and broadening out the curriculum, quality not quantity.' (Headteacher)

Recognising the need to include 'White Working Class' within school life, schools are reflecting on what this means and how this should be done. For some, this means a move towards a more community based curriculum which incorporates history within the local and wider community and in some a creative curriculum in which children explore their own heritage. In some schools there is a conscious effort to include White British culture in the life of the school. This included a Year 5 'evacuation' visit to the World War Two (WW2) heritage site Lincolnsfields Centre, Bushey, for a 1940's war time experience of life as a child evacuee. The same school also celebrated the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2012 with a 'street party' in the playground with decorations and food outside.'

Secondary schools have thought carefully about the flexibility of their timetables and curriculum in order to ensure that some students '*who are struggling at school get something out of their schooling.*' In one secondary school there is a supported curriculum for students that are achieving below National Curriculum levels when they enter in Year 7. There is also curriculum support enabling children to work on independent learning skills around the five Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) themes. For example, empathy-: how to articulate your frustration or how to approach different situations. Similarly the Increased Flexibility Project ensures that some students, many of whom are White Working Class, who by Years 10/11 want a more practical and vocational experience can go to college once a week to learn subjects such as Car mechanics or Child care.

'These might be students who sometimes struggle at school but yet are the first to change a wheel on the college course! They are always on time for college, they like it, they get treated like adults, it's a more relaxed environment. It's a bit of a carrot and stick- going to college keeps them on track at school and many of them go onto college full time at a later date. They catch up with their missed lessons in Curriculum Support time.'

Strategies for engaging with White Working Class parents

The majority of schools in this research reported that the White Working Class families were the hardest to engage within the life of the school and their children's learning. School staff expressed frustration at the mismatch between the high aspirations of the school and low aspirations of the parents for their children's learning, and have therefore worked hard on strategies to engage White parents with a view to raising achievement. School staff were aware that they had to draw parents in for positive reasons as a counter balance for the negative experiences that many had at school themselves. In one primary school:

'Children and adults work together. We will target all those families on free school meals. The rationale is to break the cycle of low aspiration, for adults to learn new skills, to be motivated to go on learning. Then this will have a positive impact on their children.'

'There is a good level of parental engagement because we carry them...we are the driving force, we are the first port of call for them when things go wrong. We are a source of support for all our families. Sometimes we have carried families for years, parents rely heavily on our school, it's because we are the centre of the community and when our Children's Centre is built this will make it even more the case.' (Assistant Headteacher)

Another member of staff talked about the relationships the school builds with parents being crucial to their engagement in the life of the school:

'Attendance is an issue for our White Working Class families. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) makes a difference. An example is a parent who was cross with a teacher about homework; her daughter's attendance was in the 70's- she was able but underachieving. With the work of the EWO she became 100%!' (Assistant Headteacher)

'It's always about the relationship that you make with the family. We have a White British family who have Social Services involvement; there are drug issues, parents at odds with each other. The success of the children is totally about the relationship we have with the family now; even if it starts in Nursery and takes until Year 4. We are in it for the long haul, we invest in families- chatting, positive phone calls, saying 'thank you for the part you are playing in x's progress.' (Assistant Headteacher)

On arrival at the school it is possible to see the strong staff presence in the playground to greet families at the beginning of the school day. The headteacher and deputy and three assistant heads as well as the learning mentors are around to pre-empt issues and listen to parents. This was noted by parents who were interviewed who felt that staff were visible and approachable. Staff have been reflective about how to build up trust amongst their parental community. White Working Class parents were not engaged at first but through a range of initiatives and a questionnaire they have become fully integrated into the life of the school. They are not complacent and where they have been successful they are keen for it to continue.

The headteacher is confident that the Children's Centre will offer many benefits to the local community. Much needed speech and language therapy will be available via more dedicated time from the speech and language therapist, along with a range of other services. *'There are still services out there that do not have the resources to do their work, e.g. the family support worker, who services a cluster of schools. Schools have to pick up the work that other professionals are unable to do.'*

This school also use specific strategies to get parents into school:

'We had a 'Bring your dad to school day in the nursery' and were really impressed at the turnout, 25 dads; they were not all middle class. There were a lot of Black fathers. This is good but we are keen to hold on to this and to continue this up the school. The Children's Centre will be a good way to engage with parents straight away.'

One way this has continued is the way in which staff encourages parents to attend Year 6 booster classes. Parents attend and learn the methods used to support their children's learning. It also has the added benefit of children seeing their parents learning too, as in the words of an excited Year 6 pupil, *'You got it wrong dad, I'll show you!'*

The Family Reading Project is an excellent example of parental engagement at the school. It has been running for 2 years and is targeted at Reception and Year 1 children and their parents. The rationale behind the project is to encourage parents to join their children, be a part of their learning, promote the importance of reading and show the impact reading can have on individual children and most importantly to see reading as fun. The school designed the project in consultation with parents. It is run by TAs which is felt by the school to have a big impact on parental participation as the TAs live in the community and know the parents. The project runs weekly after school with a mixture of activities to suit all needs and interests. It consists of

some phonics input, a big book session and an activity related to the story - a game etc. The focus is on early reading skills and learning to read and sharing stories together:

'There has really been a positive impact on some children. One boy who was new to the school really benefited from the reading. He came along with mum and his behaviour has really changed, he is really focused now, his behaviour had been a real barrier to his learning. We have targeted the 'vulnerable families' and have some dads that come too.' (Assistant headteacher)

In another Catholic primary school parents are engaged in a variety of activities in the school and the local parishes. They help prepare pupils for Holy Communion in the parish and they run prayer groups and are involved in children's liturgy as well as supporting parish youth groups. In addition the school holds regular workshops for parents in English, maths and science, sharing what their children are being taught and explaining how they can help at home. There are Family Reading Classes run by an Ethnic Minorities Achievement (EMA) Co-coordinator for any parent who would like support, not just for those with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The headteacher and PSHE co-ordinator lead SEAL assemblies at the beginning and end of each topic and parents are informed of what the children are being taught in each subject in a termly curriculum letter, *'this breaks down the cycle that the parent and child may have got into and it gets them involved in doing things with their children'*. School administrative staff address welfare concerns of families and will guide parents towards support from charities where there is social need. The school's administrative officer commented *'we constantly look for whether we can solve a problem for the family within the school in the first instance.'*

As a result of the excellent communication with parents, relationships are very good and parents understand their role and are supportive of the school. There are only isolated incidents of parents not wanting their children to attend booster classes, Saturday morning classes and not allowing them to take part in school journeys.

Another primary school runs a parent forum including a reading programme to engage parents:

'We don't believe it is hard to reach parents in this school. How we engage with parents underpins pupil achievement. The way that we value people is part of our ethos, our hidden curriculum. I have to model these messages as a school leader-respecting each other, judging individuals as individuals. I have made a deliberate and conscious effort to form a relationship with these parents; I use humour, and relate to people as people. I am not frightened to talk about issues, none of my staff hide behind people; it's important to get everything out on the table. I am out there in the playground in the morning and evening. A testament to our parental engagement is the fact that parental attendance has gone up to 93% from 19% in the last 6 years. We do make it a pleasurable experience for parents; we provide refreshments, music, and a crèche. We are flexible, if people don't come the class TA will contact the parents to arrange another time, if that doesn't work, the office will ring, as a last resort I will write a letter. We do all we can to get the parents in.' (Headteacher)

The school invites parents of children in the Foundation Stage and KS1 to read with their children every Friday morning. *'There is a good turnout with dads and grandads. We again provide them with Danish pastries, tea and coffee as a 'thank you' for doing this.'* The Reception class teacher highlights, *'the White British boys I have are very keen to show off their reading to a parent.'*

The school runs a parents forum which sets the standards agenda for the community. The forum enables parents and carers to drill down to specific practice. The agenda for the latest parents forum focused on spelling, how to help your child with spelling through games and theory. *'We provide a free crèche and have good attendance of parents from all backgrounds and genders through constant reminders. We are always explicit that children's achievement is at the heart of this.'* (Headteacher)

Another secondary school ran Numeracy and Literacy workshops for targeted groups in school to make games that they take home to play with their parents. For example, they learn maths skills/ concepts. In this school an assistant head also ran other Family Learning projects for White Working Class parents which are not necessarily curriculum based.

The emphasis is on, *'how can we attract parents/carers into school for positive reasons as so many of them had a negative experience when they were at school.'*

Through a rigorous push on open days for prospective parents and pupils, the school markets itself as 'open and approachable', selling the attitude that *'it is an honour for us for you to send your child here.'*

Each prospective parent receives a postcard thanking them for visiting our school during 'Open Season' with a quantity of positive feedback comments from prospective parents from the day.

There is also a permanent role for the head of Year 7 to liaise with primary schools- this year there are 25 feeder primary schools:

'The intake didn't used to be comprehensive in terms of ability and social background. The perception of the school has changed in the area. The uniform impacts on the way the students behave; they don't push the boundaries in the same way. The Norwood Achievement Partnership played a part in getting parents in the area back into work.'

'The school's specialist status has had an impact. The whole school is involved; there is drama across the curriculum. This adds an extra dimension to children's education and attracts a different type of parent. Norwood is attracting parents of children who had a focus on arts in their primary education and want to continue this. They have to travel across the borough but they don't mind.' (Headteacher)

The school has a monthly 'Parent Voice' which includes 14 parents. They have an audience with staff and meet a range of people involved in the school, as well as observing lessons during the school day. If the school wants to introduce anything they will involve the 'Parent Voice'. There is an emphasis on transparency.

The staff at the school believes that it must do everything possible to engage parents. The home school liaison officer takes the initiative to engage and the school is seeking every avenue for parents to come and see positive things at Norwood. Every form tutor makes 5 'positive phone calls' a week so that the emphasis is on parents hearing positive things about their children. This is paramount for parents who might not have had positive experiences at school themselves.

'This has the effect of parents thinking. I will encourage my daughter to go to school now. There appears to be a different perspective on what school is like now.' (Headteacher)

Also there are letters home, lapel badges, 'student of the week' and all provide motivation to students to achieve their best. There is also an ethos amongst the staff that if a parent rings you up you ring them back. All books are marked, homework is set and marked.

Staff feels there is now less parental dissatisfaction with the school. Parents want their children to go to the school. Every effort is made to get parents into school, to engage with their child's learning. At the last parents' evening there was 80% attendance as a result of constant reminders e.g. tutors ringing home or sending text messages. The school decided to give out students' reports to their parents at last year's Year 11 parents' evening. Students needed their reports for college interviews so they encouraged their parents to attend.

Parental engagement is also sought through the curriculum. An example is the Year 7 Summer Booklet that the Art department sends home, which suggests activities that parents and their children can do together e.g. crafts and visiting museums.

Targeted support for White Working Class children

Targeted support from Teaching Assistants (TAs): A higher level TA at one primary school supports a group of ten Year 3 and 4 children with basic numeracy skills.

'We concentrated on basic counting 1-20 and 20-30 and writing of these numbers. Every week we added 10 more, now we are at 200. Also, the maths vocabulary. They didn't get their number bonds to 10 so we made a rap about it, this really helped. I have 2 girls and 8 boys in my group. One Year 6 White British boy who had erratic behaviour wanted to be a peer mediator. We told him that if he wanted to be then he had to turn himself around. He is now looking at a level 4 with the help of this group.' (Headteacher)

In the same school also the deputy head looks at children's books regularly to monitor how teachers are planning for a range of abilities and tailoring for different needs. She asks:

'Are we extending those that need challenging?' She also interviews the children.

'There are regular pupil progress meetings with the SENCO, class teacher, head and senior managers, we focus in on individuals causing concern; if they are not achieving, why, what can we do? It's about bringing children into our consciousness, having a professional conversation, is there something going on at home?'

'At the end of the year the SENCO does a provision map looking at targeted support across the school. There is an ethos of not withdrawing from class unless essential. The focus is always on quality first teaching.'

'Many of our White British children are on School Action. Many have targeted reading support from TAs, we know that sometimes their negative attitude comes from home, it might just be that they need 10 minutes a day from a TA to give them push in the right direction.'

'We have a system of decentralised leadership. Within our phases we do a peer scrutiny of books and planning; we use this opportunity to share good practice as do we for peer observation- an opportunity to go and watch each other and learn from each other's practice. At a phase meeting there might be 13 teachers, everyone has got something to bring to the table.'

'People knew what was expected from them when they started here, we have high expectations, and there are high expectations from us as professionals. This is an organisation full of highly skilled teachers, we all have something to offer; we all know that we can learn from each other. There is a harmony here, we all feel valued and supported, and we have the confidence to have our practice moved on by our peers. People are not frightened of being judged. We pick each other's classroom apart, constantly refining our practice. The TAs are part of this, without them we would struggle, they know that they are valued, they are the key ingredient.' (Deputy Head)

In response to the needs of the community the school now employs a full time speech and language therapist. *'We know that it is a prerequisite for high quality literacy. Every child in the Nursery and Reception and new arrivals throughout the school are screened by the speech and language therapist, they are then screened again in Year 3.'*

In another secondary school there is a range of targeted and global support for students including reading mentor project. All Year 8s receive group work intervention around social skills, anger management, conflict resolution and restorative justice and mediation. There are other forms of targeted support for students at the same school. The Year 8 reading mentor project is designed to raise the literacy levels of pupils with low reading ages. About 24 students are split into smaller groups who visit primary schools and share a story and literacy game with Year 1 classes. Not only does this raise literacy levels but also student confidence and a sense of responsibility. A Year 9 Effective Learning Project is aimed at students whose attainment levels have dropped to get advice with learning strategies and exam guidance.

As part of the Year 10 Coaching for Success project, external coaches come into the school to meet with an allocated group of students in Year 10 to raise their attainment levels.

More general support for students was explained by a teacher at the school:

'We have a strong relationship with students in the art department. Support is tailored to needs. We have an open door policy so that students can come and do homework here; some have the focus on being a carer at home so their homework can suffer. We provide them with paper and post their homework online. We give them a checklist as they move towards GCSE.'

The school also provide targeted support around social skills, anger management, conflict resolution and restorative justice and mediation. This is carried out at Centre 44. This is a special unit within the school where students are able to go when they have a problem during the school day. It is managed by the inclusion manager and run in conjunction with two teaching assistants. Students that come to the centre learn about reparation, conflict management and mediation, do role play and circle time as appropriate as well as being able to have 1:1 sessions with an adult.

Targeted support using 'Boys to Men Project': One teacher has recently been to Baltimore to explore how the Americans raise the achievement of boys. As a result he has *'become more focused on what we are delivering, what difference we can make in children's lives.'*

He has set up a 'Boys to Men Club' at school which works with boys selected by their teachers who would *'benefit from a male role model.'* The 17 boys learn about the social aspects about growing up, read together, do activities which build self-esteem and learn about how to take care of themselves.

Boys we spoke to spoke enthusiastically about the Boys to Men project:

'They (the three male adults involved) help us with our reading, we go on trips to the Library; if we don't understand our homework they help us.'

Targeted support from learning mentors: The main aim of the learning mentor is to break down barriers to pupils' learning. Examples of barriers might be; lack of self-esteem or confidence and poor erratic or intermittent attendance. The work of the learning mentors was imperative to family engagement and raising achievement. Mentors knew their communities well and demonstrated a *'common sense, empathetic'* approach which has worked with engaging some of the White Working Class families in the community, to the extent that some families will now refer themselves to the mentors for support.

One learning mentor in primary school summarised the secret of his success:

'The greatest skill we have is empathy and following our own instincts. We reflect on our own practice and modify it according to the situation. We are always out there in the playground- accessible to parents. We talk to them at a lower level, not about the curriculum. We ask about their lives, how they are. We are non-judgemental about what is going on in their lives. The children know us; the parents often use us as their intermediaries when they need to talk to school managers.'

Another mentor, who is part of the local community, builds strong relationships with the parents through empathy, *'I'm a parent too.'* Parents see her *'out and about on the street'* not as a figure of authority and this helps her to work with them more easily. Regarding parental engagement this mentor was aware that:

'We have to build a good relationship with parents, the school has become the meeting place for everything. We have their children from 16 months to 11 years, they go away for 5 years and then come back again, some as parents.' She goes on to say, *'I have given our children alarm clocks and shown them how to set them up. I have told parents if they can get their children out of bed and dressed, we will feed them at Breakfast Club. They wouldn't pay for it. I do think it is the parents' responsibility but in the same breath I see it as safeguarding the children, what would they do at home?'*

The learning mentor has also set up a coffee morning for parents. This includes eight White mothers, at which she suggested that they read a book together. They read a chapter each week and read a bit at home too. One parent commented, *'I've never read a book in my life before. I don't like books. I didn't think I'd like to read a book but I can't put it down now, I never knew I'd like it.'* This offered some parents an *'alternative from going to bingo but it was good for their children to see them reading and many began to read with their children at home.'*

This reading club led on to other literacy sessions, an example is the session the learning mentor led around how to fill in a form for a job:

'We just did one altogether. Some mums went onto work in the school kitchens; I gave them a reference, this has changed their attitude towards school, they are really on board now lots of our parents who were on these courses are now working in the school. One parent has five children in the school and she is now actually working here.' (Learning Mentor)

Another learning mentor has set up a Peer Mediation Service (Solving Conflict in Peace). The mentor trains students in skills such as patience, diplomacy and empathy to support their peers. The students complete twelve weeks of training followed by an interview which equips them to resolve conflict during the school day:

'Students request mediation themselves. During mediation students sign an agreement. My mediators are role models for the school. They have to display positive behaviour with their uniform, their attendance. Mediation becomes a tool to monitor them. They lead fundraising e.g. Children in Need. Currently I have 34 White British mediators.'

In one school the learning mentor is a qualified teacher who also works as the EMA co-ordinator. Her wide range of skills enables her to support pupils holistically with a firm vision of where they need to get to academically, for example, *'what they need for a level 4.'* With her EMA experience she also has a firm understanding of how EAL children linguistically develop. She monitors the work output of all the children she supports. With all the children that she supports the learning mentor uses solution focused brief therapy, focusing on what the child wants to achieve through learning mentor support rather than the problem itself. The learning mentor encourages the child to think about their preferred future and then to start working together to achieve this. Together, they make an action plan which all parties, including the parents sign.

One school has employed a Family Support Worker who has made a vast difference to the school and community. Her role is *'advocacy for children and families. Children know me because I talk to the classes, they come and find me and tell me if they are unhappy. It is not about parents, children or teachers; it's about the whole school community. Because of my experience I know which agencies to refer children and families to where necessary. I will carry on reviewing the situation with that agency, linking all these services up, family/agency/school.'*

The Family Support Worker uses a wide network of people to support children and families e.g. an art therapist comes to the school twice a week to work with children who find it difficult to express their feelings in writing, or verbally. Another resource, The Children's Country Holiday Fund, have developed their role from simply providing a country holiday once per year for children from inner city areas, to weekend breaks and whole class visits away together:

'It develops life skills and socialisation, working in groups. The reality is that not all children have any of this before they enter school. They do not because they come from all sorts of backgrounds. The Children's Country Holiday Fund is branching out further and following up children who have transferred to secondary schools now. All of this gives parents a sense that their children's education is wider than just coming to school. It enables parents and children to see the bigger picture and how they can be part of it with their children.'

Support for primary to secondary transition arrangements

Some primary headteachers talked about the impact of transition on White Working Class pupils who they had worked hard to nurture at primary school. Many primary schools provide a nurturing environment and excellent behaviour management strategies which provide much needed security for pupils. It was felt that the size and organisation of most secondary schools inhibits the formation of supportive relationships and some children fall victim to this as the primary headteacher describes:

'Primary Schools do a great job but it is when pupils leave the problems start. When they get to secondary school pupils want to know that there is someone there who will listen to them, but in most cases there is not.'

However a new headteacher at the case study secondary school became proactive in developing relationships with Lambeth primary schools and appointed a dedicated Transition Coordinator in Year 7 who co-ordinates the transition of Year 6 pupils to Year 7. She visits each of the feeder primary schools, often with another member of staff:

'Last year I took the Citizenship Co-ordinator to a primary school- she started the process of making masks with the children on the theme of Citizenship and survival. The children were left to finish their masks with their teacher so that it was like an ongoing project. We also take a range of Year 7 children back to their primary school- sometimes those that might have lost their way a little and may need pulling back in.'

While the road show lesson is taking place the Transition Co-ordinator discusses each child coming to school with the class teacher using a proforma. She is able to glean information such as *'family background, strengths and weaknesses, students who shouldn't be put with other students etc.'* This information gets discussed back at school between the SENCO, the Citizenship Co-ordinator, Inclusion Manager and the teacher in charge of the Every Child Matters agenda. Each child gets discussed and a provision map of support is made, examples being; social support, anger management, family liaison worker; behaviour support; learning mentor, *'we don't set them up to fail.'*

To further reassure pupils there is an Induction Day at the school and a parents' evening before September where parents have the opportunity to meet the form tutor in a more formal way. Many children due to start at school in September also attend a summer school for a week at the beginning of the summer holidays.

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study confirms that one of the biggest groups of underachievers is the White Working Class. One of the main reasons for pupil underachievement, identified from the case study schools and focus groups is a perceived lack of aspiration amongst parents for their children's future and a lack of engagement in their schooling, and the failure of the National Curriculum to reflect adequately the needs of White British working class pupils. It is also perpetuated by factors such as economic deprivation; feelings of marginalisation within the community exacerbated by housing allocation; a lack of community and school engagement; a perception that their identities are not being affirmed in school; low literacy levels and parental low aspiration of their children's education. The study argues that the key to raising achievement is to have the highest expectations of pupils and the community. The research also suggests other series of measures which includes developing strategies to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, tackling generations of low aspiration and a disinterest in learning that prevents pupils from fulfilling their potential across a range of areas.

However, despite underperformance at local and national level, in a number of case study schools, the White Working Class pupils buck the trends. For example in one primary school, despite challenging circumstances and low attainment at entry, 100% achieved level 4 and above. There are a number of reasons why White Working Class pupils and other groups are doing well in the school despite low attainment at entry and challenging socio-economic circumstances in the area served by case study schools. Key features and success factors include:

- Strong and inspirational leadership by the headteacher.
- High expectation for all pupils and teachers.
- An inclusive curriculum that raises aspiration and meets the needs of White Working Class pupils and parents.
- Close links with parents and increasing community support, which earn the schools the trust and respect of parents.
- Effective use of data and rigorous monitoring systems which track individual pupils' performance.
- Good and well-targeted support for White Working Class pupils through extensive use teaching assistants and learning mentors.
- Effective support for language development amongst White Working Class pupils.
- Good support for the transition between primary and secondary.
- Celebration of cultural diversity and a strong commitment to equal opportunities.

These findings are also supported by the pupil voice and attitudinal survey. Generally pupils attending the case study schools spoke with enthusiasm about their experiences in school and gave good evidence about what successful schools do to raise pupil achievement. White British pupils were positive about the school and over 91% strongly agreed/agreed with the statements that the case study schools are successful schools and in the main they enjoy learning at school.

The children were clearly very happy with their experience. They felt valued and treated equally. They rated the care, guidance and support that the school provided as good during the focus group discussion. *'You get individual support with the teachers and teaching assistants and this helps you to do well at school.'* The children's confidence in their school is justified by their exceptional results, achieved in spite of very low starting points.

Policy implications

The low attainment and poor progress of White Working Class pupils is a key concern. Despite much academic debate and concern the needs of White Working Class pupils have not been addressed and have been overlooked by local and national policy makers. The main obstacle to raising achievement is the failure of central government to recognise that this group have particular needs that are not being met by the school system. Through discussions a picture of a community that is isolated, that does not have the resilience to cope with inner city life anymore emerges.

The question of social class and poverty has remained in the background, a hidden barrier which is not discussed. National policy makers often seem to overlook the particular difficulties faced by White Working Class children. The government seldom talks about class in general and White Working Class in particular, preferring terms such as 'hardworking families' and 'social inclusion' as part of a strategy to attract middle class voters. This has alienated and affected the White Working Class. It is important this issue is addressed through additional funding. At present entitlement to free meals is used to direct resources to schools. Many children in receipt of these meals are White from disadvantaged backgrounds. Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility is a significant factor in funding to schools and there are also a number of programmes aimed particularly at schools in areas of generally high economic disadvantage. However it needs to be recognised that funding through entitlement to free schools meals is not enough to tackle the huge challenge facing White Working Class pupils. There is now a need for additional funding to support targeted initiatives to raise aspiration and achievement of White Working Class pupils. What is needed from policy makers is to commit new additional funding to support this group.

Recommendations

We now have evidence to show that the performance of White Working Class pupils consistently lags behind that of their peers. This should not be allowed to continue. Our research in the case study schools shows that effective schools that have been dealing with these issues over a number of years, hold the key to the way forward. Schools will want to learn what has been proven to work and the factors that make a difference. Their good practice and strategies needs to be disseminated.

The recommendations for schools with ethnically diverse populations, Local Authorities (LAs) and Department for Education emerging for this study are:

The Department for Education (DfE)

The government needs to recognise that the underachievement of White British Working Class pupils is not only a problem facing educational services but a daunting and profoundly serious challenge. This research also suggests a series of measures which include developing strategies to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, a legacy of low aspiration and a disinterest in learning that prevents pupils from fulfilling their potential across a range of areas. Key to raising achievement is to have the highest expectations of pupils and the community. To tackle the underachievement of White Working Class pupils in Britain:

1. There should be a statutory, DfE led national annual collection of social class data from schools through the School Census including data on parental occupation.

2. The DfE should introduce targeted funding to support schools and LAs to address underachievement of working class pupils.
3. Identify examples of effective practice in addressing White Working Class underachievement at local and national level.
4. Support schools to develop a multicultural curriculum that treats White British identity in the same way as ethnic minorities. This curriculum should give confidence for White British pupils to proudly assert their identity as an ethnic group.

Local Authority (LA)

1. Raise awareness of teaching and school management staff of the issues of White Working Class underachievement through the effective use of data and organising training programmes. This will aim to improve teachers' understanding of White Working Class children as learners, how and why some underachieve and what teachers can do to target these issues.
2. Continue to promote community cohesion and celebrate diversity so that all pupils understand and appreciate others from different ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds in UK.

Schools

1. Performance data is used to raise the awareness of any underachievement to monitor and guide pupils' progress.
2. Schools should be encouraged to audit their curriculum to reflect the diversity of the school community and the needs of all pupils. In the light of this audit, all schools should map provision across years and subjects and ensure that coverage is coherent and address the needs of the White Working Class.
3. A flexible approach to implementing intervention strategies, including those by specialist language teachers, learning mentors and other staff is in place.
4. A strong partnership is developed with a wide range of agencies to provide social, emotional, educational and practical support for White Working Class pupils and their families in order to raise their aspirations.
5. Use creative and flexible strategies to engage parents to make them feel valued and to enable them to support their children's education.
6. Schools should promote community cohesion so that all pupils understand and appreciate others from different backgrounds with a sense of shared vision, fulfilling their potential and feeling part of the community. Specifically through the school curriculum, pupils should explore the representation of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in the UK.

The Research Community

Policy makers and schools need more evidence 'on what works'. However, there is little research into good practice in schools. After four decades of negative findings about the state of White Working Class pupils' achievement it is time to shift the focus and readdress the balance to research that focuses on the growing number of success stories. It is time to look

more closely at why in a number of British schools White Working Class pupils do well against the odds. An increase in research of this type, which challenges preconceived notions of White Working Class pupils underachievement will encourage schools and policy makers to strive for greater success.

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