

Raising Achievement

Good Practice in Secondary Schools with Outstanding Leadership

St Martin-In-The-Fields High School

Stockwell Park High School

La Retraite RC School

Dunraven School

'The School Council meets with the Headteacher, and head of tutor groups and there are pupil questionnaires. At Target Setting Days the tutor meets with tutees/parents, from the pastoral point of view too. We want parents to input on this too.'

Year 10 pupils have a leadership focus group- ideas of how the school can promote the Business and Enterprise specialism and how the school can amend the behavioural programme. There are also pupil committees, for example a Community Cohesion Committee.

'We want pupil voice to be credible to the children. Pupils do feel that they have an input into policies etc.'

Conclusion

The school is an outstanding inclusive school. The school promotes community cohesion and ensures pupils understand and appreciate others from different backgrounds with a sense of shared vision, fulfilling their potential and feeling part of the community. Through the school curriculum, pupils explore the representation of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in the UK and in Lambeth.

GCSE results have shown significant improvement over the last few years and it is one of the fastest improving schools in Lambeth. The arrival of the current Headteacher in 2000 signalled the start of an impressive journey of improvement, which has seen the school's achievement at GCSE rise from 11% in 2000 to 73% in 2009.

Main factors contributing to the success of the school include:

- The rigorous and inspirational leadership of the Headteacher.
- The role of the Governors in school improvement.
- Self evaluation, the Headteacher suggests that *'we are constantly reviewing ourselves, reflecting on why we are here, our vision, our ethos. Our spiritual connections are strong- the belief in the agenda goes beyond the contract, there is a moral obligation to get this right.'*
- The status of the school as a Business and Enterprise school has led to many opportunities for children to become leaders within the school.
- The focus on learning through Learning to Learn, the supported curriculum in Year 7, and a range of academies which extend children's learning.
- Inclusive strategies to ensure that every child succeeds e.g. the Civil Responsibility programme.
- The focus on school improvement through the school's status as a Training school, in-house CPD for teachers, TAs and the sharing of good practice nationally.
- Effective EAL support

St. Martin-In-The-Fields High School for Girls

Background

St. Martin's is a fully comprehensive voluntary aided high school with a strong Christian ethos. There were 894 pupils on roll in 2010. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 20%, higher than the national average. The school population is ethnically diverse and the main ethnic groups are Black Caribbean, African, Other Black, Mixed race and White British (see table 1).

The school is part of the Technology, Raising Achievement Partnership Programme (RAPP) and has Sports College status and remains committed to serving the local multi-ethnic community by offering a high quality of education. The motto of the school, 'Caritate et disciplina' forms part of the school logo, meaning '**With Love and Learning**'. The matching of the two is central to the ethos of St. Martin's school, since the most effective learning takes place in a loving, supportive environment. This is recognised by Ofsted which states that:

"Learners benefit from a rich experience of worship and diversity. The strong ethos of care and respect is based on Christian values and a commitment to inclusiveness." (OFSTED 2007)

The school has awards in SportsMark, as an Ambassador school for Gifted and Talented Youth, Lead Practitioner in Equality and Inclusion, Cultural Diversity Quality Standard - Diamond Award (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust), Financial Management Standard in Schools (DfES) and Healthy Schools Status (Lambeth Education Authority).

The school was featured in a series of previous Lambeth research projects into good practice of raising achievement of Black Caribbean pupils⁴, Black African Pupils⁵ and Ofsted research into Black Caribbean achievement⁶. It has also been recently involved in Lambeth research into school links- *The Triangle Project*⁷. The reports highlighted some of the basis of success that makes a difference for all pupils. It featured particularly St. Martin's strength of ethos, leadership, development in the innovative curriculum, monitoring of pupils progress, link with parents and celebration of cultural heritage. The overall findings of Lambeth and Ofsted's previous research shows that St. Martins serves some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country, but has worked with those communities to raise their hopes and aspirations along with the achievements of their young people.

The evidence used for this report included: interviews with senior managers and students; scrutiny of relevant published, current and, where applicable, previous inspection reports and surveys involving the school and performance data, including RAISEonline⁸. The school was asked to

⁴ McKenley, J., Power, C., Ishani, L. and Demie, F. (2003). *Raising the Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils in British Schools: Good Practice in Lambeth Schools*. Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth Education.

⁵ Demie, F., Mclean, C., Lewis, K (2006). *The Achievement of African Heritage Pupils: Good Practice in Lambeth Schools*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA.

⁶ Ofsted (2002). *Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Secondary Schools*, Ofsted

⁷ EMAG (2009). *The Triange Project: Cross curricular resources in Commemoration of the Bicentenary of The Abolition of the Slave Trade*, Lambeth Ethnic Minority Achievement, Lambeth LA..

⁸ Details of KS3 and GCSE performance and value-added from:

identify the features they considered central to their success in becoming and remaining outstanding. Researchers visited the school, having prepared a day's programme of meetings with key members of the school community. Staff explained and displayed, in effect, the 'secrets' of their school's success.

During the day spent at the school for the case study, the following members of staff were interviewed:

- Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- 2 Assistant Headteachers
- Class Teachers
- Gifted and Talented Co-coordinator
- School Chaplain
- Pupils across the school.

The following report considers the evidence collected from these interactions and draws conclusions from these and more informal observations, conversations and discussions made during the day.

Achievement and Standards

St. Martin's is "an outstanding school" (Ofsted 2007), providing an orderly and purposeful environment within which pupils thrive. The tone is set by the school's outstanding headteacher and leadership team. Staff are trusted and valued, expectations of all pupils' social and academic achievements are high and the school is deeply embedded in the life of the area it serves. Pupils are rightly proud of their school, of what they achieve there and of how it prepares them for life afterwards.

Table 1: School Performance Data

GCSE 5+A*-C

GCSE 5+A*-C	St Martin's	Lambeth	England
2006	73%	55%	58%
2007	69%	56%	62%
2008	76%	62%	65%
2009	85%	73%	70%

GCSE including English and Maths

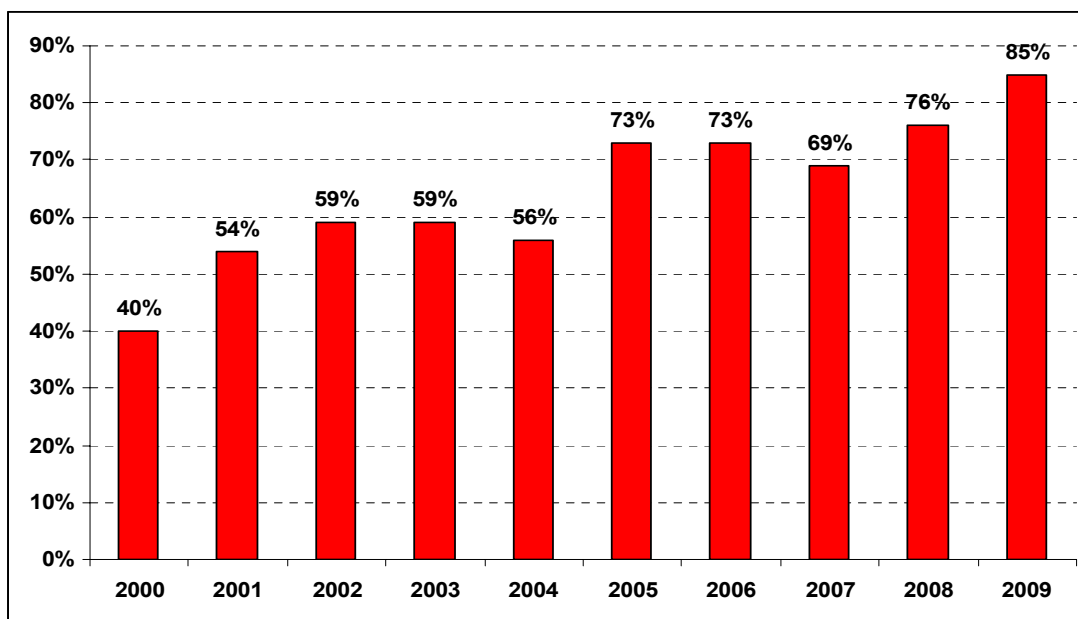
St Martin's	Lambeth	England	School CVA
57%	41%	45.8%	1023.1
47%	42%	46.8%	1025.9
57%	47%	47.6%	1033.4
68%	53%	50.7%	1014.9

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- St Martins- in- the- Fields School, *School Profile: Making Figures speak for Themselves*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009; p.1-18.
 - St Martins- in- the- Fields School, *GCSE contextual Analysis of Pupil Performance*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009; p.1-4.
 - St Martins- in- the- Fields School, *KS3 contextual Analysis of Pupil Performance*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009; p.1-4.
 - St Martins- in- the- Fields School, *GCSE contextual Analysis of Pupil Performance*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009; p.1-4.
 - St Martins- in- the- Fields School, *KS2 to GCSE Value-added Analysis of Pupil Progress*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009; p.1-4.
 - Ofsted (2007). St Martins- in- the- Fields School Ofsted inspection Report, Ofsted.
 - Ofsted (2009). St Martins- in- the- Fields school RAISEonline report, Ofsted.

Pupils' academic attainment is around the average when they start. However, their progress is outstanding overall, gathering pace the longer they spend at the school and enabling them to outstrip their peers nationally. GCSE results have shown significant improvements over the last few years and it is one of the fastest improving schools in Lambeth. Figure 1 shows that 85% achieved 5+A*-C grades in 2009. This is a great improvement, more than doubling attainment levels since 2000, up 45 percentage points. Furthermore, attainment is now 15 percentage points above the national average.

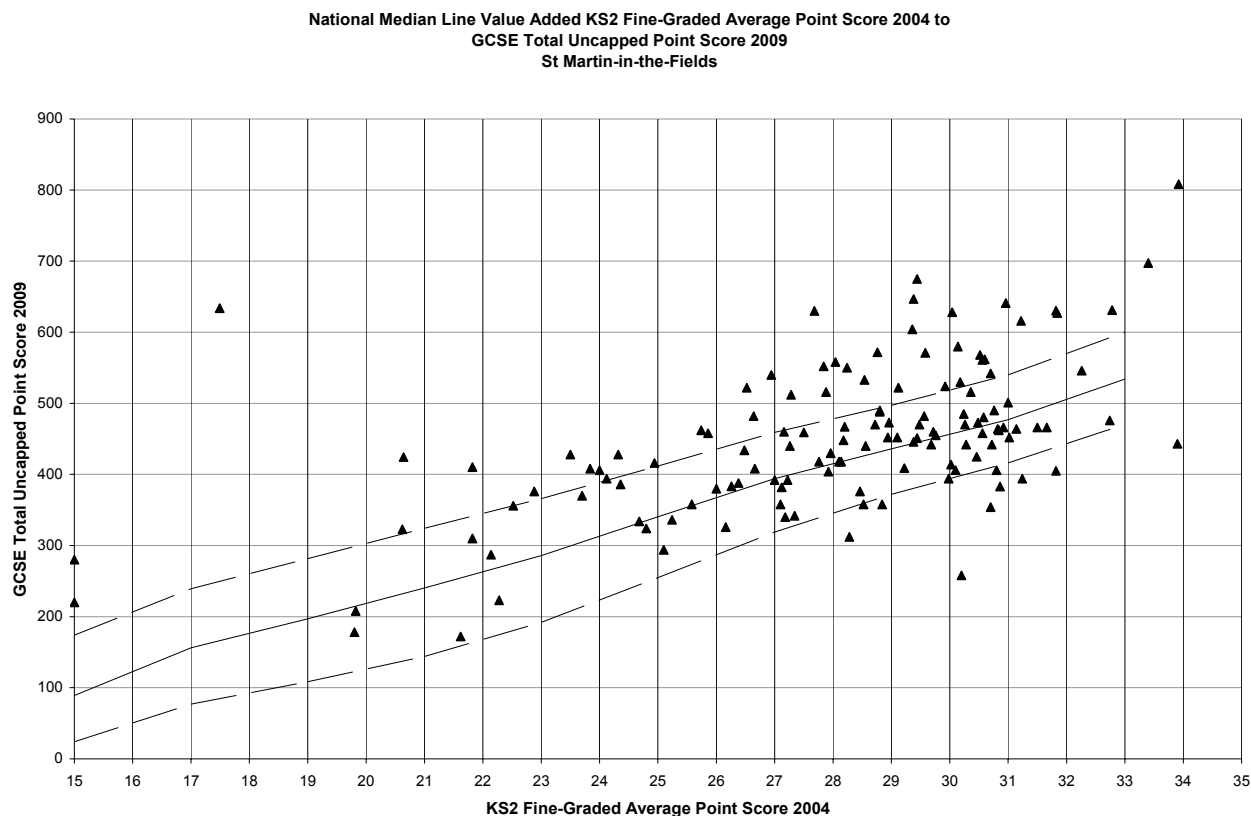
Overall standards reached by the end of Year 11 are well above average and a higher than average proportion of pupils leave with 5 GCSE grades A*-C, including Mathematics and English.

Figure 1 GCSE Performance in St Martin-in-the-Fields, 2000-2009



The value-added by the school is also very impressive. KS2 to GCSE value-added data in the graphs in Figure 2 below which compare the relative progress made by students in St. Martin's school with the progress made nationally by all pupils in England, show that students have made very good progress in terms of value-added. About 36% of the students in the school are in the upper quartile (compared to 25% nationally), indicating that their progress is greater than would be expected given the average rate of progress. The interquartile range performance is 57% compared to 50% nationally suggesting the students progressed as expected. Only 7% are in the lower quartile (relatively making the least progress), compared to 25% expected nationally. Similar evidence was also recorded between KS3 and GCSE for the school, suggesting excellent progress in all curriculum areas for all groups. This is a school where all pupils make impressive progress between KS2 and GCSE.

Figure 2: St. Martins KS2 to GCSE National Median Line Value Added



Leadership and Management

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership of the school. She is supported by a very effective and able senior leadership team who share her vision. Senior leaders are strongly focused on raising standards. They are ambitious for their students and have implemented rigorous systems to improve achievement further. This is also confirmed by Ofsted which states:

“Leadership and management are outstanding. Very high expectations are communicated very effectively by the excellent Headteacher and her strong senior leadership team” (Ofsted 2007).

The headteacher's vision for the school is shared at all levels. Leaders have excellent understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility and take appropriate action in light of their priorities.

There is an exceptional sense of teamwork across the school. This is reflected in the consistent way managers at all levels works towards the school’s aims to promote the school motto of “love and learning”. The school is proud of its efforts to maintain its inclusive ethos. This is seen in the very good progress made by all groups of students. In the words of the headteacher and Ofsted:

“This school is an inclusive school. We have a Christian ethos. All children are a God given gift. I have been given stewardship of their life while they are in school. We ensure their success. It is a team effort. I could have not done it on my own and it involves commitment of all staff to the school ethos of high aspirations to achieve. I have a staff that

*100% believe and are committed to the school's raising achievement agenda”
(Headteacher)*

“I want staff to make a contribution and we help and train them to ensure they understand and are committed to the ethos of the school. Any staff who do not buy in to our ethos will not last long in this school.”(Headteacher)

“The governing body is active and very supportive of the school. They are well-informed about students' progress, enabling them to effectively hold the school to account” (Ofsted 2007).

Use of data

One key strategy for raising achievement in the school is effective use of data. The use of data in the school is a particular strength, and data is central for raising achievement. The Deputy Headteacher responsible for the use of data sees this as an essential part of the school improvement process and has used data as one of the key levers for change. Data has helped the school to pose and answer questions about current standards, trends over time, progress made by individual pupils, to track pupil progress and to set high expectations.

The school has well developed management information systems (MIS) - SIMS so that all staff have quick and easy access to basic pupil data and timetables. This has guaranteed a consistent flow of information across all areas of the school. The system allows for individual pupils to be tracked, registered, reported on and monitored at all times.

Using the MIS system the school produces good KS2, KS3, and GCSE data in a format that is easily accessible to the SMT and classroom teachers. The school also uses FFT and RAISEonline data for school self-evaluation, tracking individual pupil performance and target setting. The Headteacher, the SMT and teachers have an accurate assessment of the school and individual pupil progress. Teachers and the SMT are well trained and confident in the use of the systems.

Data is used for a number of purposes and is widely circulated to senior managers, heads of year, heads of departments and classroom teachers. There is strong evidence that individual teachers within the classroom use data for: lesson planning; to inform accurate targets for individual pupils, gender and ethnic groups; identifying weaknesses in topics or aspects in the class as a whole; arranging groupings for teaching and learning; tracking progress of pupils; setting high expectations with pupils and identifying implications for planning for different groups.

The use of data in the school owes its success to the Deputy Head who has led in the use of data in the school for the last eight years. She was successfully able to empower all teachers and heads of departments to own the data that is needed for improving teaching and learning. The Deputy Headteacher argued that *“Data has the strongest impact and power when individual teachers use it to improve teaching and learning. The biggest change is when the staff own the data. It is important teachers and all staff understand and use the data effectively.”*

In this school teachers are empowered to use data for their teaching and learning and to identify underachieving groups to target interventions. The school makes available support and effective training on the use of data to develop their skills. They also make sure that data is available in a simple format for their use.

The school strongly believes that it is essential that parents understand how the targets are set. Data is effectively used to support parents. In the words of the deputy Headteacher *“ Parents*

are always fully informed of how their daughters are progressing towards them- hopefully exceeding them. It is essential that they talk to their daughters about their achievement and attainments along with staffs. We need to work together with parents to ensure they meet the targets”.

Care, guidance, support and well-being

A key factor underpinning the pupils' academic progress is their outstanding personal development and sense of well-being. The school cares extremely well for its pupils, takes rigorous steps to safeguard them and successfully develops them as a community. It is proactive in guiding them toward harmonious relationships. As a result pupils feel very safe, thoroughly enjoy school and attend well. Their excellent social development and behaviour are particularly strong features of the school. They value and contribute to the work done to encourage good behaviour and are confident that rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively. The pupils show strong tolerance and understanding of the rich range of cultural backgrounds from which they come and of the global community as a whole. They capitalise on opportunities such as the citizenship, personal and social education programme and assemblies to reflect thoughtfully on spiritual and moral issues. This has also been recognised also in previous Ofsted inspections which state that:

“Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding because care, guidance and support are outstanding and excellent opportunities within the curriculum develop their sense of citizenship and moral values. During one assembly, students were asked to reflect on the global issue of modern-day slavery as part of their wider work with schools in Jamaica and Ghana commemorating the abolition of slavery. Students' social development is excellent and their well-being is enhanced by the safe environment of the school. The Christian value of charity is evident in students' fundraising and they have good opportunities to contribute to their school and the wider community, as members of the choirs and as ambassadors for the school”

The researchers agree. Based on the interviews and close evaluation of available evidence the personal development and well being of students at St. Martin's is outstanding. Students interviewed confirmed that they are proud of their school and feel safe within it. They displayed real regard for their safety and each other's well being and showed a sensitive awareness of customs, cultures, and faiths other than their own.

The school has very good systems in place to help any vulnerable children. Staff have a clear approach to identify who are vulnerable children and they see each girl as an individual. A vulnerable pupil in the words of the Assistant Headteacher is *‘one with a statement of special educational needs, English as an additional language, one on the Child Protection Register, pregnant, disabled, one with a serious medical condition, a known gang membership or one involved in criminal activity, low self esteem and any form of mental illness. It also includes one whose family is experiencing breakdown, made homeless, involved in drug or alcohol abuse and one who is not attending and who feels they do not want to be part of the school community or any pupil who is not happy, healthy or safe, not enjoying or achieving in school.’*

For these vulnerable pupils the Assistant Headteacher highlighted that the school will:

- provide support with transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3
- provide a pupil mentor
- help in forming friendships
- track academic progress of all vulnerable children
- help ensure entitlement to free school meals

- give access to advice on healthy eating, diet and exercise
 - encourage access to homework clubs and use of the library
 - encourage participation in extra-curricular activities, house events and assemblies
 - carefully monitor attendance and work with Home School Liaison Officer
 - support in choosing GCSE options
 - arrange individual interviews with Careers Officer
 - provide learning mentor support in Year 11
 - provide support in moving from Key Stage 4 to the next stage
 - make regular communication and meetings with parents/guardians
 - do whatever is necessary to access outside agencies or in school support as appropriate
 - use appropriate behaviour intervention strategies, education psychology reports, internal exclusion, parental meetings as needed.
- (Assistant Headteacher)

The school has strong systems and they go the extra mile to support pupils and to ensure their needs are met. *“We carefully use data to identify underachieving students or struggling children or vulnerable students. Use of data enabled us to focus and to ensure their needs are addressed. We are a proactive team. We act quickly. Good records are kept for all year groups and in addition to this data; there is also a day sheet to record teacher comments. Teachers in our school are good at keeping records and entering useful information that help us to ask questions and take actions as required. This record book and teachers’ comment are also passed to the year director to take action and ensure vulnerable pupils are well supported in class.”* (Assistant Headteacher).

Once the vulnerable pupil’s needs are identified and assessed, the school, led by the Assistant Headteacher, then designs individual programmes of support. Case studies of students described below are typical of the outstanding work done by the school with vulnerable children.

Case Studies:

Case Study A: Child whose mother died and as a result is experiencing a range of emotional and social difficulties including self-harm

Reasons for interventions and targeted support

Child A’s mother died while she was in year 10. As a result she was experiencing a range of emotional and social difficulties. The school referred to Social Care because of cases of self-harm. She is very withdrawn and emotionally needy. These factors have affected her progress academically. She is underachieving in almost all subjects. Her mock examination results reflect underachievement in six of the eight subjects which she sat.

Interventions and strategies implemented to support

On the basis of the above evidence the school organised targeted support to ensure that she achieves her GCSEs. This included referral to CAHMS for counselling, mentoring by learning mentor, referral to school counsellor, referral to social care via Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

Achievement

The school intervention and support strategies have helped greatly and she is predicted to obtain seven GCSEs with grades ranging from A*-C.

Case Study B: Support for pregnant student

Reasons for interventions and targeted support

Pupil fell pregnant in October 2009 when she was in Year 11. She has a history of poor attendance (74%) and punctuality.

Interventions and strategies implemented to support

- Referral to CAHMS for counselling
- Mentored by learning mentor
- Referred to school counsellor
- Referred to Social Services via Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Achievement

The support and interventions have helped and as a result she is now predicted to obtain seven GCSEs with grades ranging from A*-C.

Case Study C: Child with statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Reasons for interventions and targeted support

The student is on SEN register with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Interventions

One to one support from SEN Department, Individual Educational Plan (IEP) in place.

Achievement

The mock GCSE results and teacher assessment confirm she is predicted to obtain A*-C grades in seven subjects, including English, Maths and Science.

The interventions and targeted support is based on data evidence and we use data effectively to monitor and to identify groups that are underachieving so no one is left behind.

"We take each student as an individual and draw targeted support to meet their needs. We want to maximise what we get out of our vulnerable pupils. We put every effort to support them so they achieve." (Assistant Headteacher)

Case Study D: Child on the child Protection Register

Reasons for interventions and targeted support

"Child D was a subject of child protection and we identified issues when she started in year 7. She was struggling with her learning and this has affected her education. Immediately she was referred to Social Care. They decided to make her subject to a protection plan. Following the LA assessment and School Action she was also put into foster care." (Assistant Headteacher)

Interventions and strategies implemented to support

"We put in place a number of initiatives including referrals, counselling and TA support, mentoring and 1:1 support, and classroom assistance so that her needs were met and she is on target in her learning. Her targets were reviewed from time to time and interventions were put into place. We have regularly met her social worker and reviewed her Individual Educational Plan. We also reviewed her personal plan with parents who are aware of her progress. We informed her progress to form tutors and we have also provided general reports about her to all staff and foster carers. She had extensive 1:1 tutoring paid for by Social Care. We put in place a revision programme and exam techniques e.g. how to answer questions. Overall staff have made a lot of effort and provided targeted support. Key in the support is sharing information and working together. Everyone from her teacher, foster carer, social worker, LA, TA and SMT worked together to ensure her needs are met". (Assistant Headteacher of Inclusion)

Achievement

"With the targeted support and intervention plan over time she has made friends and started focussing on her learning. Her GCSE achievement was impressive and she successfully achieved her targets and she now studies in Bromley College." (Assistant Headteacher of Inclusion)

Overall the care, guidance and support for vulnerable children who are experiencing personal difficulties is outstanding. The school aims for the stars and for girls to achieve their potential. The school has very effective and integrated support systems to ensure vulnerable students get the academic and pastoral support they need. As a result students with learning difficulties make exceptional progress and no-one is left behind at St. Martin's. This is further supported by students interviewed who rate the care, guidance and support the school provides as outstanding. More importantly they also involved parents and share the planned support/interventions and the success story. Parents are aware of the intervention strategies and they value highly such communications.

Partnerships with parents and celebration of cultural heritage

Parental engagement

The school encouraged and valued the active involvement of parents in their children's education and communication is a major strength. They tried to find imaginative ways to break down barriers and make parents welcome, being responsive to parents' needs. Information was shared with parents on achievement and development as well as discipline issues and there was a high level of communication. The school staff see themselves as being part of a community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and know what the school does to provide an environment for learning. They were appreciative of the school's efforts to guide their children and give them grounding, both academically and socially. They felt that each child was valued in her own terms and although children might perceive differences in standards between them the school encouraged them to do the best for themselves:

"One parent wrote, 'I am extremely grateful for all the encouragement, care and support my daughter gets.' Care, guidance and support are outstanding" (Ofsted 2007).

The pupils interviewed also praised the school on parental engagement and communications and argued that:

'The school goes the extra mile to communicate and work with our parents'

'Parents are invited to get feedback about our performance and to celebrate our achievement during award ceremonies'

'The school uses text to send information to parents'

'They send parents information through leaflets and letters every time'

'They have prayer meetings for parents and these are well attended and valued'

'Our parents are very confident to talk to our teachers and staff'

'The school is seen by our parents like a family'

'Our school sees itself as part of the community'

Celebration of cultural heritage and links with community

One of the key success factors is the school's Christian ethos which has greatly contributed to links with the community served by the school. *"The school is like a family for parents and children. We are part of the community and the school has a leadership very committed to community cohesion and inclusion"*. (School Chaplain)

There are a number of very innovative activities that strengthen community links at St Martin's:

Gospel Choir: The school organises a Gospel choir every year where parents and communities play a key role in the singing. Parents and Governors join in the celebration of achievement.

Details of activities celebrating events such as Christian Aid, Triangle Project and poppy days are

shown on school posters and displays. One pupil commented in previous research *“The pictures on the walls mean a lot to me. I am in one of the choirs and I see my face”*. (McKenley et al 2003)

The school has a strong link with St Martin-in-the Fields in Trafalgar Square and the whole school go once every year to sing there. This is a tradition the school has kept going since it was established and *‘it is a beautiful finish to the end of the year by singing at St. Martins’*. (School Chaplain)

Display: The displays in the school celebrate pupils’ achievement and acknowledges the diversity of its pupil population. One staff member commented *“displays are the reflection of our community. They are part of the community dialogue. They reflect what is going on in the school. They are part of the ethos of high expectations”*.

The celebration of diversity is also embedded into school life through e.g. assemblies, the teaching of modern foreign languages and the curriculum.

One pupil stated:

“Everyone should be proud of their heritage; as a community we have embraced the different languages that we have. Everyone feels they can succeed.”

The school uses Black History month as an opportunity to explore different countries and celebrate diversity. *‘Every class studies a different country to give them a wealth of knowledge about the culture, the food, the language and the people’*.

Triangle project: This is the linking of the school with Anchovy High School, St James, Jamaica and St Andrews Complex, Sekondi, Ghana. The project was developed to mark the bi-centenary of the abolition of slavery in 2007. It was named the *“Triangle project”* in recognition of the historical triangle of trade which existed between Britain, Ghana and Jamaica. The aims of the project were:

- *To consider the impact of the slave trade and its abolition*
- *To consider and respond to global issues of human rights and social justice*
- *To focus on the impact of forced migration on the local and global economy*
- *To increase knowledge of identity and the contribution made by people of the Caribbean origin*
- *To create new KS3 cross curricular related to the transatlantic slave trade*
- *To forge links with schools in Ghana and Jamaica”⁹*

“The project has a Christian ethos of ‘love’ of other communities and shares the resource we are blessed to have here. Many of the children’s parents have a close link with the community and value the school link with Ghana and Jamaica. This project not only helped to enrich the school curriculum here but also helped to improve cultural understanding and exchange between Britain and the two countries. Parents are very supportive of the school link.” (School Chaplain)

The project produced a teaching resource entitled *“The Triangle Project: Cross Curricular resources”* which is widely used in the link schools. This publication is used to share the school and staff experience of visiting the schools in Ghana and Jamaica.

⁹ For details of the project see *“The Triangle Project: St Martin - in -the- Fields, Lambeth Ethnic Minority Achievement Team, 2009, p. V.*

The project continues to have a lasting impression on the school community. The link with schools in Ghana and Jamaica remains strong. One of the legacies of the “*Triangle Project*” was not only developing cross curricular material for classroom use but also the creation of GHAJAM, a charity dedicated to fund raising initiatives designed to support the partner schools and to sustain the links. To date, several fundraising initiatives were undertaken by the school including a street dance, staff barbecue, penny collection and the sale of ice lollies in support of GHAJAM. At present the charity is focusing on supporting the link schools with specialist equipment for science, sporting equipment, computer equipment and good quality used or new clothing.

“Staff, parents and students were all very busy last term fundraising for this project. In January 2009, staff and students spent a Saturday in Tesco Brixton packing bags for GHAJAM. They raised over £1,300. Since then numerous fund raising events have taken place including a Winter Ball”¹⁰. Overall as commented by the school Chaplain:

‘The school works closely with the local community to organise charity events to support people in need in Africa and the Caribbean through the Triangle programme’

The school staff have now visited St. Andrew's three times, and Anchovy High twice. The student netball team have also just come back from a tournament in Jamaica. The school was also delighted to welcome members of staff from both schools for a visit last term. The project continues to go from strength to strength.

Britishness Project: The school is an inclusive school. As part of the inclusion strategy it has now introduced a Britishness project, to ensure students understand what Britishness means and how to be involved and how to play a key role in British society. It wants everyone to feel part of British society from whatever background or heritage. *“We celebrate heritage of all groups in our school and the contribution all made to British society”*. The students had a period of independent studies on Britishness. Pupils were given time and opportunities to do research into Britishness and reflect. They were guided by teachers. This was very successful and a good experiment that worked well. Pupils came with innovative ideas and used the project findings to run workshops and assemblies.

Anne Frank Project: The school is involved in the Anne Frank Project which draws on the power of her life to challenge prejudice and to help foster an understanding among all pupils of positive citizenship, human rights, democracy and respect for others. The school was supported by the Anne Frank Trust to run workshops to see exhibitions on Anne Frank. All KS3 pupils went to the exhibitions and the Anne Frank Trust also ran successful workshops that were valued by pupils and teachers. They used the findings in the assemblies to share with all pupils. The pupils had a wonderful time participating in the informative workshops and exhibitions. They were able to reflect on what they had learned and become active ambassadors of the school and informed citizens.

The Student Voice:

In this section we asked a pupil focus group 'what is special about your school? What do you like best about this school?'

¹⁰ For details of the celebration of cultural heritage and links with community see the school website <http://www.stmartins.lambeth.sch.uk/>

As can be seen in the comments below the students felt that their school is outstanding, they get a good education and teaching is of a high standard. They gave a number of reasons why they like the school:

'The school is high achieving and the progress we make from where we started is very impressive'

'Good support is available for students in our school. They go all the way to support you'

'Teachers give extra help. We have a lot of help and revision support'

'We are encouraged to aim high and we are supported to achieve it'

'We celebrate our achievement at the Achievement Award Ceremony and Assembly'

'Our school is ambitious and helps us to achieve our dreams. We all want to achieve both academically and in social life'

'This school prepares you for life in addition to academic success'

'The school is good in accepting new ideas'

'Our school allows us to be active and be a good leader'

'This school is a great school'

'There are a lot of curriculum activities that motivate you in this school'

'They take us from our comfort zone'

'I think it is the best school in Lambeth'

'They give us opportunities to broaden our experience and travel to other educational places and institutions to learn'

'We are all like families'

'They help us to achieve beyond expectations'

'Our school ethos is based on Christian values. Our motto is 'with love and learning'

'School is a multicultural school. It is the school that values every culture, heritage and religion.'

'The school is good in breaking cultural differences and outstanding in community cohesion. They bring everyone together'

'They are strict and firm'

'The teachers are very good'

'We all enjoy learning here'

'Teachers are very good at teaching and making lessons fun'

'St. Martin's is an excellent place to learn'

As a concluding remark the researcher posed a question by reading back all the comments the pupils made about the school and asked further if this was the view of everyone, or was there anything they wanted to change? They could not wait to answer with a firm response; *"Yes this is our view and we have no doubt that our school is outstanding. This is what we will say and continue to say if we are again interviewed by anyone including Ofsted"*. The students are proud of their staff, appear happy and enthusiastic and feel secure at St. Martin's. This evidence confirms that the school is a happy and harmonious place.

The pupils were asked "How do you see your school achievement at the end of KS4?"

'High achievement and going to a top university is our aspiration. We are going to raise the bar in our GCSE achievement and we are confident to achieve A and better than previous performance in our school. This will make our parents and our school proud.'*

'Our parents value education highly and they will be proud to see we succeed and go to top universities.'

What subjects would you like to do when you go to University?

'We are high aspiring girls. We want to go to top universities in the Russell Group. I want to go to Cambridge, Imperial, Oxford, Bristol and Kings to do Law, Chemical Engineering, Medicine, History.'

Conclusions

1. St. Martin's is an outstanding school, providing an orderly and purposeful environment within which pupils thrive. It encourages students to 'reach to be a star'
2. The great success of the school has not come overnight. The Headteacher has provided sustained and inspiring leadership over 18 years. She has created a team of senior and middle leaders who are very effective at ensuring consistency. Relative underperformance in any subject is identified and tackled successfully.
3. The school is a champion of inclusion and staff are resilient in their determination to work with parents to ensure that every child has the best possible opportunities to succeed
4. Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. Students value education and want to succeed. They thoroughly enjoy school and all it has to offer and this is reflected in their good attendance rates. Attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.
5. The curriculum reflects the diverse backgrounds of students and their families. It is tuned sensitively on the basis of their changing needs with innovative projects such as the Triangle Project, the Britishness project and the Anne Frank project that helps to enrich the school curriculum. Parents contribute meaningfully to this through their high attendance at, and strong involvement in, the many religious and cultural celebrations. These events continue to grow.
6. The School is very successful in informing parents about ways in which they can help their children. Consequently, all students interviewed said that their parents were interested and fully involved in their learning at home.
7. Robust analysis and use of performance data helps the school to appropriately target resources to specific group's outcomes. Effective use of data is a strength of the school.

La Retraite RC Girls' school

Background

La Retraite is a multi-ethnic Roman Catholic comprehensive school, with 912 girls on roll. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Students come from a wide range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds and varied catchment areas. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals and those who have statements of special educational needs are above average. The main ethnic groups are Black African; Black Caribbean, Other White, White British, Other Ethnic Group, Mixed Race (see Table 1). A much higher proportion of pupils (63%) do not have English as their first language and the percentage of pupils with statements of SEN is much higher than national average. The school gained specialist status for science and mathematics in 2004. The Ofsted Inspection report in 2007 confirms that "*it is an outstanding school*".

Central to the school's success in raising achievement over the years are: the high expectations that staff have of themselves and their pupils; strong leadership led by an excellent Headteacher; a very capable senior leadership team that keeps a very close check on the school performance; high quality teaching and learning in the classroom; effective use of data for self-evaluation and tracking pupils' progress; parental engagement; the community involvement in the lives and development of the school and the high value parents place on their children's education. The evidence used to inform judgements includes interviews with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, 2 Assistant Headteachers, Head of Maths and Head of English, 3 Teachers, Learning Mentors and Teaching Assistants, student focus groups and scrutiny of relevant documentations.¹¹ The school was visited for one day to gather evidence of good practice in raising achievement and in previous years were also visited for 4 days to study what works in

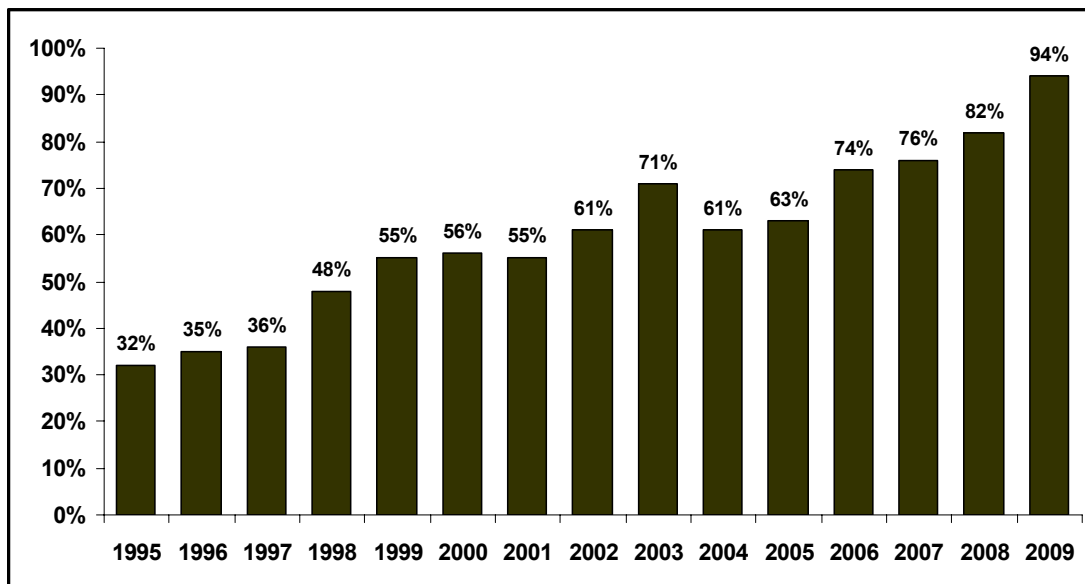
¹¹ The following documents were also used as additional evidence:

- La Retraite Girls School: *Making Figure Speak for Themselves*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009, p. 1-18.
- La Retraite Girls School: *GCSE Contextual Analysis of Pupil Performance*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009, p. 1-4.
- La Retraite Girls School: *KS3 Contextual Analysis of Pupil Performance*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009, p. 1-4.
- La Retraite Girls School: *KS2 to GCSE Value-added Analysis Pupil Progress*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009, p. 1-4.
- La Retraite Girls School: *FFT Self-evaluation Report*, Lambeth Research and Statistics Unit, December 2009, p. 1-4.
- La Retraite Girls School: *Raise online Self-evaluation Full report*, Ofsted, December 2009.
- La Retraite Girls School: *Ofsted School Inspection Report*, December 2007.
- Demie, F.; McLean C, Lewis, K. (2006). *Raising Achievement of African Heritage pupils: Good Practice in Lambeth schools*, Research and Statistics Unit, London Borough of Lambeth, March.
- McKenley, J., Power, C., Ishan, L., Demie, F (2003). *Raising Achievement of Black Caribbean pupils: Good Practice in Lambeth schools*, Research and Statistics Unit, London Borough of Lambeth, March.

raising achievement of Black Caribbean and Black African students in the school. Details of the findings are discussed below.

Achievement and Standards

Figure 1: La Retraite GCSE Attainment 5+A*-C (2001-2009)



Achievement is outstanding. When students start in Year 7, the standard of their work is slightly below national figures. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above the national average. GCSE results are on a rising trend, and in 2009, 94% of students achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C, with a rising proportion of higher grades. Achievement of A* to C is well above the national average in most subjects. Students' progress, including that of students with learning difficulties is outstanding both in lessons and over time.

The use of data to identify and improve performance is rigorous and supported well by detailed target-setting at all levels and for various aspects of students' performance. The school has used this well to identify those few subjects where performance is not so good and has implemented a range of improvement measures.

Table 1. School performance data

GCSE 5+A*-C

GCSE 5+A*-C	La Retraite	Lambeth	England
2006	74%	55%	58%
2007	76%	56%	62%
2008	82%	62%	65%
2009	94%	73%	70%

GCSE including English and Maths

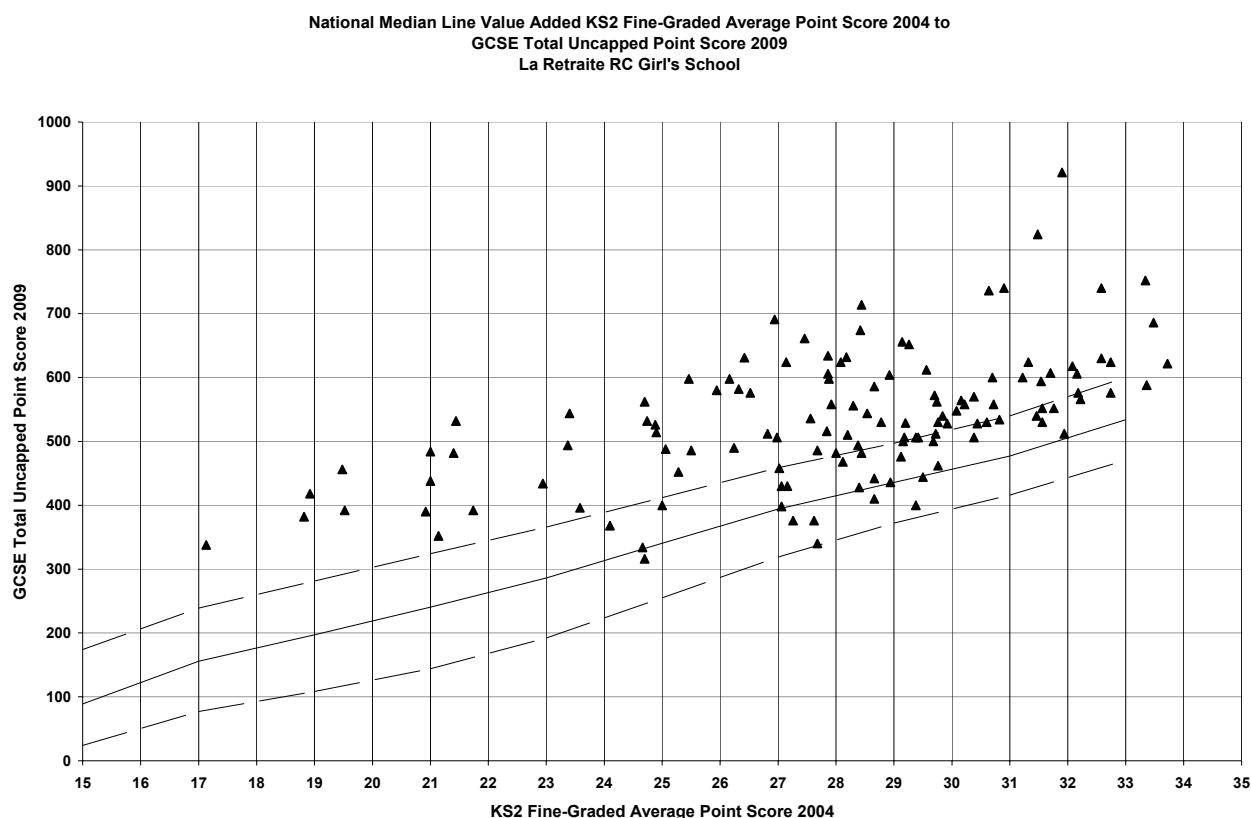
La Retraite	Lambeth	England	School CVA
65%	41%	45.8%	1010.2
57%	42%	46.8%	996.6
68%	47%	47.6%	1013.0
78%	53%	50.7%	1030.1

The contextual value added data of the school as can be seen from Table 1 as impressive as the raw data above and confirms all students have made good progress from KS2 to GCSE. In

addition the median line in figure 1 also shows that students in school have made a good progress in terms of value added and that the school performance in the top level in the upper quartile.

Overall the school has an excellent record of improving performance of all groups and individual students. Students in the school progress much higher than similar pupils nationally. Close monitoring and intervention at all key stages ensures all students receive the support they need to provide the opportunity to attain the best results they can.

Figure 1: La Retraite KS2 to GCSE national median line value added



Teaching and Learning

In this school the quality of teaching is seen as crucial to raising achievement of pupils. The emphasis on quality teaching and student achievement is accorded by evidence from teachers' interviews. We interviewed the Heads of English and Mathematics who work closely together at La Retraite to get more insights about school achievement and teaching and learning in the two Departments. They feel that they are well resourced and this has had a positive impact on results in their departments.

'We feel our Headteacher is listening to us when we say we need for example a bigger budget. The head has supported us in core subjects- made them the heart of the curriculum.'

'The fact of having an extra teacher in the Maths department means we can have seven sets across a year-group – much smaller classes..We also put the best teachers in the most appropriate classes to maximise achievement.'

'We let the girls know that it's OK to make mistakes in Maths- it's part of learning. We come to school to learn.'

There is a policy of early entry in Year 10 in Maths. If girls do well in Maths, gaining an A or A* in Year 10, they can go on to do GCSE Statistics. This allows them to increase the number of GCSEs which they achieve and to prepare better for A level Maths. For those students who won't get a C in Maths *'we identify areas of weakness and give them close mentoring. They also have to come to Maths club every Thursday, this is compulsory It is by focussing on the needs of individuals that the department achieves so well overall..*

The Maths Department also uses a wide range of 'additional extras' to add value. All students receive a Maths DVD to watch for revision. In the Spring term a representative from EdExcel comes into school to work with some groups who are on a borderline between C and D or between B and A. This is to give hints on exam techniques and *'what they need to do to get the results.'* In Year 11, the mock GCSE papers are scrutinised and topics highlighted that individual girls need to focus on.

The Heads of Maths and English also argued that they use data extensively for lesson planning and targeting support:

'We track pupils over the term, fill in the excel spreadsheet and identify key groups. Also I, with my deputy in the department, do a book scrutiny and give individual feedback to teachers. They look for constructive feedback. We do informal observations as a coaching tool.'

'Again in English we have 6 smaller sets across the year group in all years. This means that there are only 18/19 girls in the bottom set. We re-structured the department with the help of the head teacher recently and this really helped with supporting students. We are very well resourced. We place a lot of emphasis on differentiation – even within ability sets.

At the end of Year 10, the English teachers look to see who is behind in their course work and review who might be in danger of getting below a C grade. Then they put in the additional support, giving a great deal of extra time, where necessary.

'We teach them to the highest possible expectation. We want them to keep their options open until the last minute. It's about our motto - 'For the greater glory of God'; we want the students to believe that they can do anything.'

'It's about team work- sharing good practice. People want to help the students. It's part of the Catholic ethos. Sharing the belief that we are all part of a whole and understanding that each child is an individual loved by God for her talents. We want these girls to achieve the very best that they can.'

'We have the support of the parents. They want their kids to do well. They appreciate that we are spending the extra time with them.'

Leadership and Management

A key factor in the school's success is its outstanding leadership and management. The ethos of the school is centred on achievement and the quality of students' learning experiences. There are high expectations for all students and the staff will not accept social deprivation or English as an additional language as excuses for underachievement. The approach is one of consistently challenging its students to do well. There is a strong Behaviour Policy, led by a Deputy Head, which supports learning and consistency in behaviour management.

The headteacher has successfully established a strong ethos of leadership throughout the school. Extremely good development plans and departmental reviews by the Senior Leadership Team

support this well. Senior and middle leaders set clear direction, with a particularly strong focus on continuous improvement. The whole school shares the common aims of raising standards and improving achievement. Promoting equality of opportunity and combating discrimination are central to the school's ethos and enable all students to succeed in this very caring environment.

Leaders' expectations of what can be achieved are very high. As a result, whole-school targets for students' progress are translated well into ambitious yet realistic targets for individual pupils. The use of data has been substantially reviewed over the last year and is now outstanding. The presentation of data is exceptionally helpful and is used by all staff to ensure that accurate analysis and monitoring of progress towards targets is happening at all levels.

The school's planning is very well focused and built on an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Rigorous self-evaluation is very well informed by regular monitoring of the school's work.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. They work closely with the Senior Leadership Team and contribute significantly to school improvement.

At the last OFSTED inspection, attendance was at 91% and was noted as an area for improvement. In 2009, it was up to 94.6% and in 2010, it is likely to be above 95%. The whole school has made an effort at every level to improve attendance. Tutors, Year Learning Co-ordinators, the SLT and governors have all been involved either in taking action or in monitoring. *'It's been in the forefront of conversations'. (Headteacher)* Considerable resources have been diverted into improving attendance and this has worked.

The Head Teacher has a clear idea of how everyone in the school has worked together on many different fronts. She notes how all departments have worked together to achieve further success.

'Every department has also worked hard in their particular area. There have been extra classes, we've looked at the data to see where development is needed. It's about being fairly analytical. Looking at exam results. Looking at groups such as gifted and talented students looking to see where the development is needed. Sometimes, you might say that the talented children are doing well in their 'specialist' area, but that generally gifted or 'bright' pupils are underachieving across the whole range. Then you focus on those particular children and find out how you can support, and, sometimes, challenge them.'

The Head Teacher also speaks about how the senior team works to identify under-achievement and then to counter it:

'Three years ago, the CVA was 997 – a bit under the average. We could see that children could have achieved more. Only 46% were getting A - C in Double or Triple Science and we were convinced that, as a Science specialist school, we could do better.'*

'Also, we felt that we could offer something better to students with a less academic, more practical bent, so we changed the curriculum. Our curriculum became more personalised. Our curriculum planning focuses on the individual so that every child can find a successful route through school.'

'We are regularly analytical about the data. We have a brilliant Leadership Team. We introduced a sort of Venn diagram concept in predicting who would get a A-C in English and Maths, and who was heading for just one of those subjects. That way, we could focus the intervention more carefully and precisely. Now, our Year 11 team know at any point in the year where the pupils are – how many of them still need to improve to achieve their targets.'

The Year Learning Co-ordinators identify the pupils who aren't moving forward fast enough. Their role is as much about learning as pastoral care. They look at data and, using the traffic light system, they identify who is on red/ orange, and what interventions are necessary to get them to green.'

'Departments might be red/ orange too. We hold our departments accountable. In September they come to see me with the line managers with their examination analysis, and then, mid year, we have a departmental review. We give them an Ofsted grade. Geography was failing for several years- achieving around 36% of A - C. To improve things, we moved the line management to the Deputy Head and between him and the Head of Department, they identified that one paper was losing all the marks. They needed to prioritise. A plan was made for the paper and it worked - this year they achieved 76%. Good improvement compared to 36% in previous year.'*

'We are trying to strengthen middle leaders. I know that they would say that they had been supported in terms of resources/ money- laptops etc. Certainly, they know they are accountable for their departmental results and work hard to effect positive change. Some heads of department have effected fantastic improvement over a short period.'

'In our classrooms there is a feeling that we want to get our work done and achieve. There is a brilliant work ethic among many of our pupils – particularly those from some ethnic minorities. Most girls want to go to University and do a profession.' (Head teacher)

Parental engagement

The school is very good at engaging with parents. There are Curriculum Evenings for all year-groups annually. These are with parents, not children. There are also parent teacher consultation meetings, and academic tutoring days.

'We talk to parents about feeding their children properly, regular sleeping habits, tips to support them with homework. We explore the target system with mid term monitoring. We talk to them, like we do the girls, about aspirations, the job market.'

The school uses a wide range of means of communication to provide parents with the information they need. They regularly survey parents to find out preferred means of communication and constantly looking to improve this.

'The Friday News (weekly newsletter) breaks down walls between home and school. We tell parents about school and local events. We consult with parents about, for example, the Behaviour Policy. We put things on the website for parents. We also survey parents regularly and have 95% feedback sometimes- there's a very strong sense of parental involvement. The Catholic school ethos helps too, it's a special kind of cohesion where our faith binds us together.'

'We invite parents in a lot. For instance, when they are new to the school, we have a Year 7 Mass for parents to bring them in to our community.'

The school is very successful in informing parents about the ways in which they can help their children. Consequently, all students interviewed said their parents were interested and fully involved in their learning at home.

The curriculum reflects the diverse backgrounds of students and their families. Parents contribute meaningfully to this through their attendance at, and a strong involvement in, the many religious and cultural celebrations. This positive parental involvement is clearly noted from a parent's comment during an Ofsted Inspection:

“Choosing La Retraite is one of the best decisions we have made as parents. We have never regretted it for a moment’. This comment reflects the high level of parental support that exists for this popular and oversubscribed school. Harmonious relationships, excellent behaviour and a strong desire to learn are features that make this an outstanding school where girls feel very happy and safe. They enjoy school because they know they are taught well and are supported to do their best.” (Ofsted 2007)

Use of Data

At the core of ‘every good school improvement strategy’ is the effective use of data in self-evaluation and planning for improved outcomes for pupils. Previous research in the school and the LA shows the difference that can be made at pupil, school and system level through the effective use of data, e.g. in setting high expectations, identifying underachievement and intervention, informing decisions on resource allocation and in monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking performance.(Demie et al 2006; Demie 2003)¹²

The School has used a range of national and local pupil data including LA data, FFT, Raiseonline and school data to enable them to evaluate pupil progress and attainment. Effective use of data enables the school to improve teaching and learning and to facilitate tracking pupil progress, challenging expectations of staff, pupils, parents; identification of pupils’ achievements and setting of targets, identifying underachieving pupils for further support, informing teaching and learning and strategic planning

From September 2009 the school looked carefully at the strengths and weaknesses in the way its data was used in previous years and has now developed a new approach based on a traffic light system to monitor pupils’ progress. There is now a watching brief on predicted grades for Year 11 pupils and interventions considered for individual children. A traffic light system is used to monitor pupils progress, across the school. The Deputy Head speaks about the way in which the school not only collects data but uses it to intervene in a meaningful way:

‘The use of targeted support works across the departments. We keep a very close eye on who is likely to pass English but not Maths or vice versa. We intervene with these pupils with booster sessions. We try to raise awareness of their situation with teachers, students and parents so that the students are focussed and supported during the run-up to GCSEs. I meet with the students regularly. We think it’s about having a teacher they trust and achieving the right mentality.’

‘We were aware last year that some students had skills or talents that were not accredited. They spoke a language fluently, for instance. Now, we make sure that they have the opportunity to do a GCSE in their home language if they are able. This also helps to make them aware of their own abilities and gives them confidence.’

¹² Demie, F.; McLean C, Lewis, K. (2006). Raising Achievement of African Heritage pupils: Good Practice in Lambeth schools, Research and Statistics Unit, London Borough of Lambeth, March.

Demie, F. (2003). Using value-added data for school self-evaluation: A Case Study of Practice in Inner City Schools, School Leadership and Management, Vol. 23, No.4, pp. 445-467.

'There has been personalised support, from the pastoral staff as well as from the academic staff. Year Learning Co-ordinators look as closely at the data as subject teachers and speak to the students about what they need to do as individuals to maximise their outcomes. We are working at developing the predictive skills of teachers so that we have increasingly robust data to work with.'

'The Sixth Form has been important in raising aspiration, important in bringing up achievement. As a result we have been able to attract better quality teachers.. Success breeds success; when students lower down the school hear about the Year 11 girls doing well, they want to emulate this themselves. There is a new optimism for education.'

'We find that the important thing is having the confidence to use the data. This is important for staff at all levels. We know that there is only so much data you can convey to people. We try to keep it simple so that everyone can understand just what they have to do to succeed. We say it's not so much about the actual data but about how you use it for improvement. It's a person to person job. Its about motivating the children to do their best. You have to get the relationship and trust right - that's what matters.'

The Deputy Headteacher is in no doubt that the more focussed use of data has raised teachers' expectations and introduced more challenges into the teaching. In the school, teachers use the data to inform teaching strategies to determine specific interventions with individual children, such as extra support in Maths or intensive EAL support.

Teachers interviewed also acknowledged the effectiveness of data and commented that:

'Data has been a fuel that has kept the 'engine for improvement' burning.'

'It has forced teachers to look at particular areas of attainment and decide what to do to help the children get to the next level.'

'The data provided by school helps you to target groups of children for specific types of help.' This is further supported by another Assistant Headteacher who commented that data provided to teachers has been extremely useful

- 'to highlight specific weaknesses for individual pupils, identify,
- weaknesses in topics for the class as a whole,
- inform accurate curricular targets for individual pupils,
- and tailor teaching to the needs of targeted groups.'

The effective use of data by the school to provide well targeted support is also well recognised in an Ofsted report that states:

"The school is very successful in identifying and tackling barriers to learning for students from different cultural backgrounds and providing well targeted guidance and support. The high quality of the school's self evaluation and review results from rigorous monitoring and analysis of performance at all levels. This helps the school to identify and prioritise areas for improvement such as developing the skills and roles of middle leaders and improving assessment for learning." (Ofsted 2007)

"The school mid-term monitoring system plays an important role in securing positive value added for each student as there is targeted intervention for students requiring specific support." (Ofsted 2007)

To conclude, evidence from this and previous research into the use of data in the school (see Demie et al 2006) confirms that the effective use of a wide variety of data has promoted teaching and learning by clearly indicating areas for development, identifying under-performing groups, the better use of staff and resources and for closely monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives and strategies. The interrogation of data is a key feature of pupil progress meetings (academic reviews) in the school. It supports schools in making judgments about the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of targeted interventions, as well as in planning further action to overcome barriers to attainment and progress.

Inclusion

Inclusion in the school is of a high priority. There is a strong belief in the school that 'to have a better life you need to get your academic qualifications' but teachers in the school take a holistic approach to supporting every girl to achieve this.

'As a school we've worked on rigorous monitoring of academic work but we have also developed the therapeutic support of each girl where necessary.'

The role of Head of Inclusion (Assistant Headteacher) covers many areas. Attendance and punctuality was highlighted by Ofsted as an area for development and the school has worked hard to raise attendance from 91% in 2007 to 94.6% in 2009.

'We keep a constant eye on attendance and discuss the latest figures at SLT meetings. We've made a breakthrough with persistent absence. We've kept it in the forefront of conversations with teachers and parents. The communication has been persistent and the personal contact with particular girls and their parents/ carers, essential.'

The Assistant Headteacher emphasises the importance of the students being known as individuals:

'I know all the girls, because I'm involved with the induction and interviews with all the Year 7 girls. This sets the scene, the girls all know me.'

Another area of focus has been early intervention where a student has identified need:

*'There are a large number of girls on School Action Plus. We are using a larger number of agencies than we have in the past to support girls. The **On it** team, **Compass** and **Young Carers** all of these teams support our girls. Some of them have very difficult lives and we know about their situation and aim to give them maximum support.'*

'We work closely with CAMHS (Children and Adult Mental Health Service).'

'We have a counsellor who is in for one and a half days a week and now a police liaison officer who is based in school. We also have a Chaplain who offers support. Certain girls latch onto her that haven't anyone else'

There has been 'in school support' with the development of the early morning reading club (8- 8.25 a.m.) for girls in Years 7 and 8 with lower reading ages run by the SEN department. The SEN Department is open all the time for girls to go up and obtain the additional support they need with homework/coursework. There are also homework and coursework clubs at lunchtimes for targeted children to attend which is run by LSAs.

The school has also opened 'The Retreat', an inclusion unit where students, possibly facing exclusion, are sent both to benefit themselves, because they get one-to-one attention and tutoring, and also to benefit the rest of the class. They can take their classwork there, receive support and some counselling and prepare for their reintegration back into the classroom.

The school tries to be creative in the way it deals with issues:

'We have systems in school - we use friendship groups a lot. A student went missing for two weeks and we were able to successfully reintegrate her by using the support of her friendship group. If it's a health issue for a girl, again we use her friendship group.'

There are five Year Learning Co-ordinators in the school, one for each year group. The Head of Inclusion can support the co-ordinators with social care needs which enables them to 'concentrate more on the academic needs. They can pinpoint issues that are barriers to achievement while I take on a role which involves personal and pastoral support.'

'We had three LAC girls in Year 11 last year. They all had so many additional needs, two had safeguarding issues, major emotional needs, and needed so much extra support- a large package of support. They all had attendance issues and needed the support of the learning mentors. Each girl had a Shaftesbury Tutor- before their GCSEs, once a week. It's harder after they reach 16 - harder to liaise with the Leaving Care Team. In one case, her foster carer had a really good relationship with the school and has stayed on to support her and liaise with us.'

She'll make it, she'll get her dream. She is very focused, she'll get there.'

The school organised a 'managed move' for one vulnerable girl to Westminster. The Learning Mentor went to the school interview with her.

'We still check on her, her results, her attendance. She'll definitely get all her BTECs.'

The school runs a 'parallel curriculum' for some students in Years 8 and 9. This is targeted at girls with self esteem issues- 'those that are shy, reticent, don't speak up in class, don't have any belief in themselves.' The girls work in small groups for a six week period, a mixture of group and 1 to 1 or 1 to 2 sessions, on SEAL support.

'This has had an impact on their self confidence, their health and well being, their attendance. J takes them into the group with a cup of herbal tea!'

Use of Learning Mentors

The main role of the learning mentor is to break down barriers to learning.

'I am working with 40 girls. Some need quite a lot of support, others are just ticking over. Girls get referred by their Year Learning Co-ordinators or my line manager or they can self refer. The reason might be school based or home issues, friendship issues, eating disorders. I will support them with their studies even if they were referred for personal reasons.' (Learning Mentor)

They might have support once a week but this is dependent on the issue.

'Once they get to Year 11 they know me quite well. There is a girl in the sixth form who has done well academically but needed support with her behaviour since Year 7. I helped her to get involved in different activities outside of school which has helped to focus her. Her family are supportive. It can be a long process especially if it's a deeper rooted problem. The most important thing is building relationships of trust and confidentiality if needs be.'

The Head of Inclusion says of this Learning Mentor, *'the girls are so trusting of her.'*

'The Learning Mentor and the member of staff in 'The Retreat'; are so keen to extend their knowledge. They are so supportive of each other. Everything they do is so calm and gentle, with ease - taking girls out of class, reintegrating them.'

'K supports a girl until 5 p.m. to help her with any outstanding work- she has found her BTEC work overwhelming. K helps her to organise herself. E has a group of 3 girls, they are shy and have problems socialising. One of them has had pressure with her parents wanting her to be a doctor- she doesn't want that. She sits and has lunch with them sometimes.'

'The current Year 11s- with a few it's a case of helping them to get into routine, sleep patterns, diet, easing down on the social life. Others have personal difficulties which impact on their work. Year 11 is a very difficult year for them- very stressful. I say to them 'OK, this is crunch time.' Some girls are really ready for college, for the outside world, it's about reining them in.'

It's hard to get a place in college and some girls don't get the support from home. There are homework clubs here though, they can get the support, there is no excuse not to get their homework done.

The Learning Mentor supports with attendance too. *'Among the Year 11s, there is some shaky attendance. Some need encouragement and support with their attendance. I check in with the girls, give them strategies for getting into school on time, give them a call on their mobile if necessary.'*

The work of the Learning Support Assistant

One Learning Support Assistant gives support to girls in Years 9, 10 and 11. For many of the girls support means, 'breaking down the instructions, helping girls to use the equipment.

'I vary the support for each girl I work with. One is autistic, one has dyslexia. I build a relationship with them.'

One important factor here is that the Learning Support Assistant is an ex-student on her gap year. Her role has been so successful that the Headteacher intends to recruit her replacement from the current Year 13 for next year.

'I am an ex-student on my gap year. I have done well - I am going to Bristol University next year to study medicine. I can be an example to the other girls, I know how hard it is, GCSEs are hard, A levels are hard.

I left my previous school at 16 and went to college for the sixth form but didn't have a good start so came to La Re traite and never looked back!. I also was a young carer looking after my dad who had an accident in the gym so I know how hard it is for some of the girls here. I got my grades because of the teachers and the ethos of the school. They were very supportive of me, they encouraged me with my university application. I had to do well to make my parents proud.'

'She is such a positive role model for the girls.' (Learning Mentor)

The student voice: Evidence from student focus group

Pupils spoke positively of their school. One student said *'When I first came here, I hated the fact that my mum had chosen it, but within a week I adored it.'*

Each of the nine pupils talked positively of the support and encouragement that their teachers gave them:

'They concentrate on our needs, so that we can get our work done and make sure we get our grades.'

'They are fair with their punishments. Behaviour is at a decent level.'

'When I started in Year 7 the teachers eased me through'

Pupils are positive about the positive behaviour system in the school:

'The teachers boost my self esteem, they give me merits, it's good because we are always competitive.'

'We get rewards - pizza, Chinese food if we are form of the week.'

'People who have tried really hard get 'student of the week'

One sixth form student talked of the tireless work of one teacher, who had supported her with her UCAS entrance:

'She helped me so much, - I did 15 to 20 drafts! She was pregnant too but she was willing to help me as far as I needed it.'

The pupils felt that their lessons were 'fun' and that in the sixth form:

'the pressure of the work is broken up because they make it fun; they break up the level between GCSE and A level.'

The school has developed a scheme for incorporating students in the life of the school, through 'Action Groups'. Examples of these are Chaplaincy, Environment and Fundraising where the students raised money for Mother Teresa's work in Calcutta and the Earthquake Fund in Haiti.

The family atmosphere of the school is reinforced by the mentoring which goes on between older and younger children, *'there is a presidential team and prefects in each of the form classes up until year 9 help each other out.'*

Conclusions

La Retraite is an outstanding school in which each and every pupil really does matter. The study identified a number of key factors for success:

1. The school's strong ethos and Christian values based on the expectation that all pupils would strive to achieve their best.
2. The exceptional care, guidance and support provided by the school are real strengths.
3. Strong leadership and strong systems. The excellent head teacher, working with a committed and talented senior leadership team, has created a thriving, purposeful school with achievement and care at its heart. Expectations are high and, as a result, girls flourish and achievement is outstanding.
4. Intensive support of pupils through extensive use of learning mentors, TAs, SENCO and EAL teachers and assistants.
5. Close links with parents.
6. Use of data is strength of the school. Rigorous pupil level tracking is established as one of the core elements of raising achievement in the school. The intelligent use of this tracking data enables schools to identify underperforming pupils and to then target intervention support appropriate to promote accelerated progress towards age-related expectations.

Section 4: Summary- Common features of school strategies to raise achievement

This study looks at schools that serve Britain's disadvantaged areas and examines the success factors behind their outstanding achievement and improvement over the years. Two overarching research questions guided this research: Why do some schools succeed against the odds? What are the factors contributing to this success?

The key criteria for the selection of schools was a very high proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals; an 'outstanding' grade in the most recent inspections; a high standard and sustained improvement of attainment over the period.

A complementary methodological approach was used to explore performance and the views of teachers, parents and their children about schooling. First, detailed GCSE pupil level data related to sex, ethnicity, free school meals, mobility rate and levels of fluency in English was collected covering the last 10 years and matched to their attainment data for contextual and value added analysis. Secondly, case studies were carried out to observe lessons and to hold discussions with headteachers, staff, governors and pupils to evaluate and gather evidence on how well all pupils are achieving and the factors contributing to this. The main method of data collection was open ended semi-structured interviews with senior management, teachers, administrative staff and support staff as well as pupils. Interviews were conducted by two researchers. Finally, pupil and parent focus groups were undertaken to ascertain the views of pupils and parents regarding their experiences and on what works in school. This was followed by 1500 pupil attitudinal survey using a questionnaire to ascertain pupils' views and opinions on school and learning and aspirations for the future. The common features of school strategies to raise the achievement of all pupils are summarised below:

School leadership and ethos: Ofsted inspections confirms leadership and management at each of the four schools as 'outstanding'. Leaders are described as 'inspirational' and 'visionary' each with a strong moral drive for pupils to succeed whatever their background. One headteacher states,

'What a great and noble thing it is to be around children and change society.'

Clarity of roles and responsibilities in leadership teams are evident at every level in each school. One school attributes its dramatic improvement over the last decade to the promotion of a dynamic and decentralised approach to leadership which has given staff genuine authority but supported them in developing the best possible way of going forward. A Deputy Principal characterises the leadership team as: *'cohesive...it is not negatively competitive, it is cohesive.'*

Leaders in each school set high expectations for their staff teams with a relentless focus on improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning, effective use of data and higher achievement by students.

'It is about staff taking responsibility for outcomes... everyone is clear about their roles and everyone is supported!'

There is an exceptional sense of teamwork across each school which is reflected in the consistent and committed way managers at all levels work toward the schools' aims to raise achievement. Schools are proud of their efforts to maintain an inclusive ethos. This is seen in the very good progress made by all groups of students.

'We are constantly reviewing ourselves, reflecting on why we are here, our vision, our ethos. Our spiritual connections are strong- the belief in the agenda goes beyond the contract, there is a moral obligation to get this right. Despite the regular reviews and restructures, the fundamentals don't change. Such fundamentals are summarised by one headteacher,

'There is an energy flowing through the school. It's almost an eastern philosophy- what you believe you translate into reality.'

'Heads and senior managers need to remain excited about the agenda.'

Governance in the four schools is strong and they share the school's aspirations for the students. Governors are involved in the life of each school through *'regular meetings and fact finding visits'* and it's strategic direction, well informed about development plans and increasingly effective in the balance between support and challenge. One headteacher states that;

'they have been righteous in the way that they have changed things. They have a vested interest in the school and the direction within which it goes. Throughout the rough times they have had the ability to be optimistic, the governors have taken very difficult decisions.'

A strong culture of self-evaluation pervades all areas of the schools. At senior level it is particularly incisive. It is underpinned by a drive to get the possible outcomes for each child.

'We teach them to the highest possible expectation. We want them to keep their options open until the last minute.'

'We have the support of the parents. They want the kids to do well. They appreciate that we are spending the extra time with them.'

Student Voice: The agenda has shifted to pupil leadership and involvement. At one school there is a powerful example of distributed leadership to student level. A Year 8 pupil, the Principal of the Junior Leadership Team, describes the team's function as follows:

"We are a group of students. We shadow the roles of the SLT and we each have a counterpart. My counterpart is the Principal".

The process of appointment to the role of Junior Principal provided those who applied for the post with early experience of the job application process! The JLT has its own small budget. Modes of communication, e.g. emails, agendas and minutes and team meetings are run in parallel with the SLT. Regular presentations are made to staff and governors on the JLT's recommendations, following consultation with students and the School's Council.

At another school the school specialism is Business and Enterprise which gives pupils opportunity to enhance their leadership across the school too. *'We have a strategic system to challenge children's leadership qualities'*. School managers had a clear rationale for their choice of school specialism. The head states;

'Many of our children come from family backgrounds where the ethos is 'if you don't do it for yourself then no one else is going to do it for you' therefore the business and enterprise specialism is very important.

Why shouldn't these children be business leaders, I believe it is morally wrong for children not to believe in themselves- why shouldn't these children not have their dreams, without the ego of the headteacher getting in the way.'

The Black Rose has developed a business selling badges, the wearing of which signals one's opposition to knife and gun crime in Lambeth. The pupils have developed the leadership side of this and the older children train up the younger children. There are many other opportunities for children to develop with sports leadership, army cadets, sea cadets, Boys to Men, London Young Chamber of Commerce, Girl Guides'.

The views of pupils, parents and students are sought regularly, are much valued and used to inform worthwhile changes in the schools. Head teachers are keen for children to have a greater say in the way the schools are run and a greater involvement in their learning, to get the culture of learning right. A member of staff in the English department of one school states, *'If we are doing it*

for them we need to know what we can do better for them. We need to know what they want from us.'

'We want pupil voice to be credible to the children. Pupils do feel that they have an input into policies etc.'

As school leaders we have to be flexible, to look at our population- know who is in the population- connect with the community. If the kids won't buy into the agenda they won't do it. We constantly reflect with the children.

The strength of pupil voice is summed up in the words of a one student to the headteacher,

'Well you know this place is good but we have to take it further.'

Pupil views are sought through School Council meetings with SMT, pupil questionnaires, target setting days, student committees and through a range of Action groups examples being Chaplaincy, Environment and Fundraising.

Inclusion: Inclusion in the four schools is of a high priority. Schools promote inclusion rather than exclusion looking at every type of support possible for a pupil before even beginning to think about exclusion. One Head of Inclusion suggested that *'to have a better life you need to get your academic qualifications'* but stresses the need for a holistic approach to supporting every girl to achieve this, *'developing the therapeutic support of each girl where necessary.'* Another school recognises that *the very best learning takes place in a culture of inclusion and loving environment, lives out it's school motto , 'Caritate et disciplina' 'With Love and Learning'.*

At all schools there is an emphasis on the needs of every individual child at the heart of the school. One member of school staff states:

We have high expectations of everybody, every teacher expects pupils to do as well as they can. We do see their differences and we make a virtue out of them. It's about the needs of those individuals...a focus on the individual student. I hope pupils never feel singled out for what they are, but we single them out because of who they are".

In order to meet the individual needs of students, schools have developed exceptionally strong, committed and very well-co-ordinated teams, who draw on a wide range of external, multi-agency professionals. These include the On it team, Compass and Young Carers, CAHMs, a police liaison officer and an on site part time counsellor.

Learning Mentors play an extremely valuable role in enabling students to overcome barriers to learning. One mentor states;

'My focus is always on what are this student's strengths? Is it debating, poetry, sport? I try to get them involved in a range of extra curricular activities in and outside of school. It's about finding them one good role model for them.'

"I focus on school work and reading: I set up ground rules with them, of respect, expectations of themselves and expectations of me. All students keep a Journal, to enable them to open up and get their feelings out on paper. It releases their stresses and the issues which are in their heads."

Highly effective and innovative support from the Learning Support Team in one school has had a significant impact on pupils' achievement and progress throughout the schools.

Any concerns about the transfer to Secondary Schools of vulnerable pupils, or those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, stem from the difficulties students face in dealing with the wide range of teachers they need to engage with. The benefit of one school's approach is described by a Learning Support Assistant (LSA):

"In this school you have an LST and three LSAs per year group, so we know pupils well.....We are a constant feature of the lessons, even when they change teachers, we are always there. We try to

balance up pupils to the adults they get on well with, because we spend all day every day with them”

We have a strong philosophy about working in the classroom in lessons, team teaching across the curriculum, not withdrawing. The strategies we use are good for all pupils, visual aids, key words, timing of activities. We plan with the teachers focusing on how will my child access this lesson, can we look at this activity in a different way?’

Such an excellent, well-co-ordinated approach enables the staff to get to know students and their families very well, providing much needed stability. There is an emphasis on the school, the family and the external agency working together to support the child and give them the same message.

Community and parental engagement: All four schools have strong links to their community and believe in the need to treat parents as partners in educating their children.

One school is a designated training school with a wide offer to the community; work experience, training, offering degrees.

A school Training status allows opportunity for community engagement. Many people are referred from the Stockwell Community Resource Centre to the school for a variety of training e.g. Family learning. Parents are brought into the school with the aim of making the school the heart of the community. The purpose of their continuing education is threefold; to raise their aspirations, to support them to support their children and to bring the community together.

As part of the higher school’s performing status the school has also been developing school improvement training.

‘We have trained 31 PGCE students; their experience was broad, they got trained in data analysis and a lot of them had experience teaching the middle band. This really makes their experience real.’ (Assistant headteacher)

Some of the teachers have been doing their Masters Degrees ‘in house’ through action research and many TAs and HLTAs benefit from this in house training.

The school works together with the local community resource centre which offers ESOL, IT, Social lessons and Morley College introducing parents / community members to e.g. advanced ICT, Digital Photography. Through the Business and Enterprise specialism the school is to launch a Community Project which will be available to 60 participants. This will bring together a range of ethnicities, Portuguese, Somali. Together they will decide on their focus, learn how to get funding and about working together.

At another school the headteacher believes an important way of bringing the community into school is to employ ex students, one is a Learning Support Assistant on her gap year. Her role has been so successful that the headteacher intends to recruit her replacement from the current Year 13 for next year. *‘I am an ex student on my gap year. I have done well- I am going to Bristol University next year to study medicine. I can be an example to the other girls, I know how hard it is, GCSEs are hard, A levels are hard.*

Use of data: Use of performance data for school improvement is a strength of the four schools. All see this as an essential part of school improvement and schools have used data as one of the key levers of change and improvement. The use of data involves all staff, governors and parents. One of the core elements of the schools’ success in raising achievement is a robust focus on tracking and monitoring individual student’s progress and achievement in the widest sense of the term. In the word of the teachers in the schools the use of data:

‘Raised the expectation of staff and pupils and makes you focus on what children are actually learning.’ (teacher)

‘The school is good in assessing all pupils and teachers look at data carefully.’ (Deputy Headteacher)

'We use data incredibly well for personalised learning and we have a well developed tracking systems with detailed assessment data and background information including ethnic background, language spoken, level of fluency, SEN stage, data of admission, mobility rate, years in schools, which teacher's class has been attended, attendance data, type of support and postcode data that is used for tracking pupil progress.' (Data Manager)

'Teachers use the data to review student performance to have reflections and good conversation and to produce class profile. This has been useful for assessment for learning and tracking individual pupils performance. You can not do without a data.' (Assistant Headteacher)

Targeted support: There is a broad range of interventions in the schools which have helped towards targeting support where needed. Examples include EAL support and pastoral support including peer mediation training, restorative justice and an atmosphere of children being able to manage their own behaviour.

English as Additional Language (EAL) targeted support: In all case study schools a high priority was placed on supporting language acquisition amongst EAL students not fluent in English. This often appeared to be the dominant feature of curriculum developments in these schools. The teaching and class support for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is well organised and led by able EMAG teachers or achievement co-ordinators. The individual support for EAL pupils is good and has enabled the pupils to take full part in school life. Every year a few pupils arrive in the school with little knowledge of English. The EAL or ethnic minority achievements grant co-ordinator assesses their language needs and works with subject teachers to help meet them. Pupils' success in English language and literature at GCSE demonstrates that this approach works well. Many pupils who arrive with little English are able and highly motivated. Once they reach a level of fluency in English which enables them to cope with the whole curriculum, they forge ahead.

Pastoral support: Specific examples of targeted support to pupils that need support with their personal development are the Kick-start Project, which is a 12 week programme for young boys, focusing on self-esteem, self-perception, the role of a male in society, sexual responsibility, and drugs awareness, and the Civil responsibility programme where pupils work with a police liaison officer around *'what does it mean to be a good citizen?'*. This is targeted at pupils in school whose behaviour might be seen as criminal outside.

An example targeted at girls is 'Emerge for girls' which works with borderline Year 7 girls who show potential. They meet once a week to discuss identity and work on raising aspirations, looking at them as future leaders.

Schools have also reflected on the impact of transition from primary school for many children. One school employs a SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) Lead Teacher working primarily with Year 7. This teacher team teaches Year 7 with the PSHE teacher at the beginning of year 7 and together they identify seven students who are then withdrawn to follow a curriculum, covering the five themes of SEAL- self-awareness, managing feelings, empathy, motivation and social skills. As a result of this work the Principal feels there are less incidences of poor behaviour.

One school has also opened 'The Retreat', an inclusion unit where students, possibly facing exclusion, might go to 'cool off'. They can take their classwork there, receive support and some counselling for their reintegration back into the classroom.

Similarly friendship groups are used a lot. An example of this is when a student went missing for two weeks and the school was able to successfully reintegrate her by using the support of her friendship group.

Academic support: There is also academic support for Year 7 and the transition process for certain students across the schools. One Assistant head stated:

In 2000-1 the school looked at the learning needs of children and realised that they had many children with a reading age below the age of 9 years. 'We set up a Supplementary curriculum - each year we had 60 children. This intervention was revolutionary and successful. These children needed the stability similar to that which they had at primary school- one teacher for the majority of subjects, not having to move around the building so much- this would be too disruptive for these children. They only went out for PE, drama etc.'

Another school set up an early morning reading club (8- 8.25am) for girls in Years 7 and 8 with lower reading ages run by the SEN department. This SEN corridor is open all the time for girls to go up and obtain the additional support they need with homework/coursework. They have access to computers. There is now a more formally run homework and coursework club at lunchtimes for targeted children to attend which is run by LSAs.

Similarly schools focus on the particular needs in Year 11 with targeted support. At one school targeted students do less GCSEs and receive extra support at school where none is available from home. Thirty students were targeted to achieve a GCSE C grade and a mentoring programme was established. Mentors would meet with their students every two weeks to motivate them with their course work.

Celebration of Diversity and culture: The four schools saw the diversity within the school community as a genuine asset to the life of our school, to widen students' horizons and to enhance learning. School leaders are committed to community cohesion and inclusion. Each school therefore is described by parents and staff as a family. A student from one school stated *"everyone should be proud of their heritage; as a community we have embraced the different languages that we have."*

One school organises a Gospel choir every year where parents and the community play a key role in the singing. Also the school has a strong link with St Martin-in-the Fields in Trafalgar Square and the whole school go once every year to sing there. This is a tradition the school has kept going since it was established and *'it is a beautiful finish to the end of the year by singing at St. Martins'*.

The displays around the four schools not only celebrate pupils' achievement but also acknowledge the diversity of its pupil population. At one school a staff member commented that, *"displays are the reflection of our community. They are part of the community dialogue. They reflect what is going on in the school. They are part of the ethos of high expectations"*.

The Triangle project links one St Martin's with Anchovy High School, St James, Jamaica and St Andrews Complex, Sekondi, Ghana. The project was developed to mark the bi-centenary of the abolition of slavery in 2007. It was named the "Triangle project" in recognition of the historical triangle of trade which existed between Britain, Ghana and Jamaica. The focus is on increased knowledge of identity, human rights, social justice and explores issues related to the transatlantic slave trade.:

The project has a Christian ethos of 'love' of other communities and shares the resource we are blessed to have here. Many of the children's parents have a close link with the community and value highly the school link with Ghana and Jamaica. This project not only helped to enrich the school curriculum here but also helped to improve cultural understanding and exchange between Britain and the two countries. Parents are very supportive of the school link." (School Chaplin)

One of the legacies of the "Triangle Project" was not only developing cross curricular material for classroom use but also the creation of a charity dedicated to fund raising initiatives designed to support the partner schools and to sustain the links.

As part of the St Martin's inclusion strategy it has introduced a Britishness project, to ensure students understand what Britishness means and how to be involved and how to play a key role in British society. It wants everyone to feel part of British society from whatever background or heritage. *"We celebrate heritage of all groups in our school and the contribution all made to British*

society". The students had a period of independent studies on Britishness. Pupils were given time and opportunities to do research into Britishness and reflect.

Teaching and Learning: There is an active focus on learning in the schools with a sustained focus on ensuring access to the curriculum for every pupil, whatever their background. Teachers have an excellent understanding of where pupils are at in their learning; they know the learning profiles of each child, what interventions pupils might need. Pupil progression is very much an area of discussion through the staff teams. A member of staff at Stockwell suggested '*We are keen to bring this microscopic view into the foundation subjects too.*'

Schools tailor their teaching and learning to their pupil bodies. In one school, Year 7 students, with attainment below national expectations, are put into smaller groups with specialist teachers, with whom they stay, and have, what the school describes as "a supportive curriculum". This eases transition from primary school. In Year 11, the 'Increased Flexibility' project enables students to attend local Colleges for practical/vocational training. Students are able to work towards NVQ Level 1 or Certificates in Construction which feed into school qualifications.

At one school there was a general recognition in school that many pupils did not have independent learning skills. This would have an impact on KS4 and going to University. In response to this the school started the 'Learning to Learn' programme which is promoted as a process of discovery about learning and involves a set of skills that teach pupils to be learners for life promoting the five attributes to becoming a lifelong independent learner; Resilience, resourceful, responsible, reasoning, reflective learning.

A strong part of the school's identity is the range of academies on offer to its pupils which extend the curriculum and develop skills beyond the classroom. Examples include the writing, drama, science, sports and film studies academies. Pupils apply for academies, '*going through the interview process is part of the Business and Enterprise identity.*'

There is now a big focus on Gifted and Talented pupils in one school. The Directors of learning take account of children in this area and all G and T pupils have Individual Education Plans which are monitored. Using data as a tool any gaps in the learning of G and T pupils is discussed with teacher, pupil and parents in order to consider interventions to raise achievement. To meet the needs of the G and T pupils the mathematics department is running different programmes, such as an after school club to organise trips and to prepare pupils for the UK maths challenge. One pupil was given the opportunity to attend a Maths Day which was organised by UK Maths Challenge which gave the pupil the opportunity to meet pupils from other countries.

Overall the evidence presented here enables the conclusion to be drawn that the four schools in this study demonstrate the many ways in which they work to support pupils from all backgrounds. Their success is due to a broad range of visionary and creative strategies that have raised the achievement of all pupils. Common characteristics include inspirational committed leaders; an inclusive ethos which focuses on pupils holistically; a celebration of diversity within the school community, links with the wider community, teaching and Learning that focuses on individual need and targeted support for individual needs to ensure the achievement of every pupil.

Section 5: Conclusion

The main findings of the research show that the GCSE results have improved significantly in the case study schools and the schools have consistently been rated as outstanding in their inspection reports. Overall the data shows that from the generally low starting points, students reach exceptionally high standards at GCSE in all schools, performing above national average. For example, in one school GCSE results improved from 11% in 2000 to 73% 5+A*-C in 2009 despite 72% of the pupils were on free school meals which is used as proxy for levels of disadvantage. In another school GCSE improved from 56% to 93% 5+A*-C between the same period.

There are a number of reasons why the schools are bucking the national trends and are doing much better. The research identified the reasons behind the schools' success, which includes

consistent student routines, quality of teaching and learning, effective leadership at all levels including maintaining discipline and paying attention to individual student's needs, supportive professional development by investing in staff and their communities, inclusive pastoral care, strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently and effective use of data to monitor performance and to identify underachieving groups. What is particularly special about the case study schools is that they adopt a range of strategies and target support to challenge underachievement and poverty through extensive use of a local diversified workforce including teaching assistants, EAL teachers and learning mentors. Each of the school strategies is explored in detail in the paper to reveal exactly what the school is doing to ensure it provides the very highest quality of education for all its students. This is followed by discussion on the findings of the focus groups and attitudinal survey that mirrored the views of those participants in the case study interviews.

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