Raising Achievement of Black African Pupils
Good Practice in Schools

Feyisa Demie

Foreword

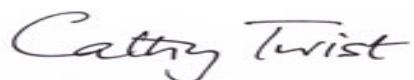I am pleased to introduce this research report into '*Raising Achievement of Black African Pupils: Good Practice in Schools*.'

This research aims to examine performance trends and the success factors behind high achievement of Black African students in British schools. The main findings of the research show that Black African students are more likely to gain good grades above their peers at GCSE. The study identified a number of areas of good practice that contribute to the success, including high educational aspiration of African parents and pupils, inspirational leadership, high expectations for all students, diversity in schools' workforces, strong parental support, an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of African students and strong links with African communities. In addition to the above, Black African parents place an extremely high value on education and teachers in the schools are equipped to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of children of Black African heritage. The study concludes that the main reasons for this success story are to do with education provided by schools and strong parental support of their children's education.

This research celebrates those schools that have created success for all their pupils ensuring that each Black African pupil makes the best possible progress. It is intended to provide evidence and practical tips to support other schools. I hope you find it useful.

Cathy Twist

Cathy Twist
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Cover photograph: Oluwayemi Togun at the Lambeth Achievement Award Ceremony. She received an award for high academic achievement on 22 January 2013. Photograph © - La Retraite School.

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Executive Summary

Over the past three decades, national research has shown Black pupils' achievements lag far behind the average achievement of the majority of their peers. However, recent research suggests that of the Black groups, pupils of African heritage achieve standards significantly above their peers, but few studies have asked African parents and pupils about the factors contributing to their success. This research aims to examine performance trends and the success factors behind high achievement of Black African students in schools. The main findings of the research show that Black African students were more likely to gain good grades above their peers at GCSE. There are a number of reasons why Black African students are bucking the national trends in the local authority schools. The study identified a number of good practices that contribute to the success, including high educational aspiration of African parents and pupils, inspirational leadership, high expectation for all students, diversity in the school workforce, strong parental support, an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of African students and adds to their growing pride in being African and strong links with African communities. In addition to the above, Black African parents place an extremely high value on education and teachers in the schools are equipped to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of children of Black African heritage. What is particularly special about these schools is that local communities are represented well in the school and they have staff who speak many of the languages of the local community. As a result, children feel that they can relate to a member of staff from their own cultural background and are highly motivated. Each of the above good practices is explored in detail in this study to reveal exactly what the schools are doing to ensure they provide the very highest quality of education for Black African students. The study concludes that the main reasons for this success story are to do with education provided by schools and strong parental support of their children's education. Policy and research implications are also discussed in the final section.
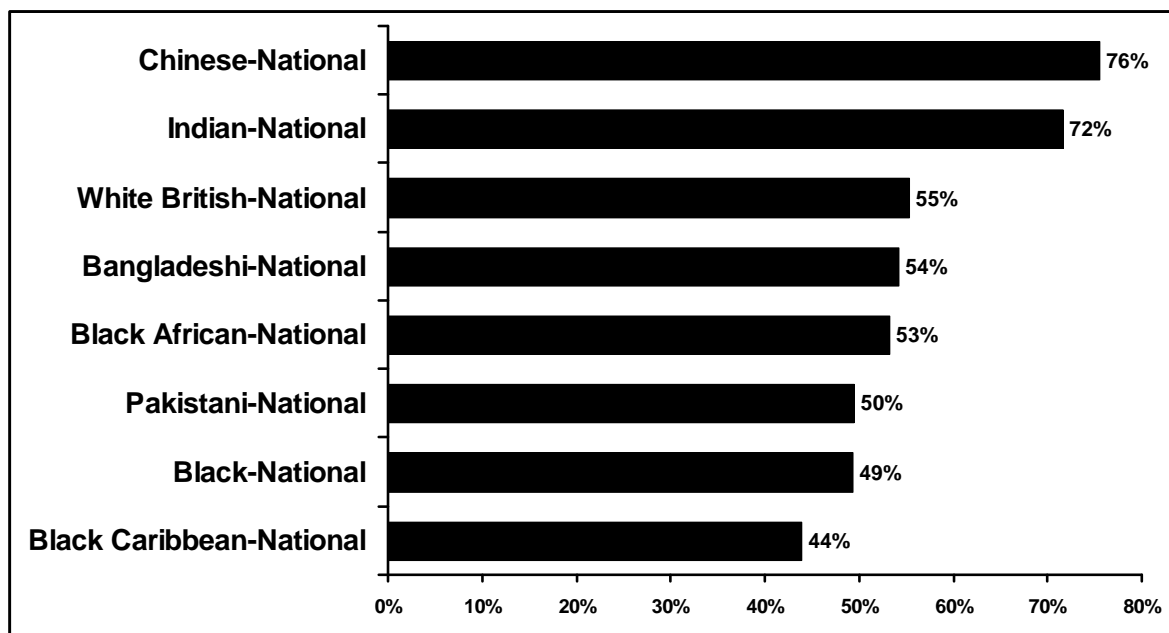
Section 1:   Introduction

What does the research tell us?

The core of this study is the achievement of African heritage students in British schools. Over the last three decades considerable attention has been devoted to the issue of underachievement of Black students in British schools. There is now much research to show that Black African students are underachieving within the education system and that they are less likely to achieve their full potential at school (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Blair, 2001; Demie, 2001; OFSTED, 2002). Research in the 1980s gave a good deal of attention to the underachievement of students of Black Caribbean backgrounds and confirms that they are underachieving as a group within the education system (Rampton, 1981; Swann, 1985). Other research in the 1990s also reflected earlier findings, with Black Caribbean and African students continuing to make less progress on average than other students (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Demie, 2005, 2003b, 2001). Each of these studies appeared to show considerable underachievement of Black Caribbean and Black African students in comparison with the achievement of White and Asian students.

Recent empirical evidence at the national level also shows that Black heritage students lag far behind the average achievement of the majority of their peers and that the gap at the end of primary and secondary education is growing. The DfE School Census (2012) suggests that the gap in performance is widening and many Black African children in England's schools are not sharing the higher educational standards achieved over the last decade. In 2011 it was identified that amongst those ending their compulsory education in UK, Black Caribbean and Pakistani students were least successful academically with only 44% of Black Caribbean and 50% of Pakistani students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and Maths. In contrast, around 76% of Chinese, 72% of

Indian and 55% of White British students achieved 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE (DfE 2012). Bangladeshi students also achieved better than African heritage students. Concerns persist, and there is now a need for a detailed case study of successful schools in raising the achievement of Black African heritage students, as a means of increasing our understanding of the ways in which schools can enhance students' academic achievement.

Figure 1: GCSE performance trends by ethnic groups in England, 2011
(% 5+ A*-C including English and Maths)

Ethnic group	Percentage
Chinese-National	76%
Indian-National	72%
White British-National	55%
Bangladeshi-National	54%
Black African-National	53%
Pakistani-National	50%
Black-National	49%
Black Caribbean-National	44%

Source: DfE (2012). The Statistical First Release: National Curriculum Assessment and GCSE/GNVQ attainment by pupil characteristics, in England, 2012 at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000448/index.shtml

Previous research within the authority into ethnic and gender differences in achievement, pupil mobility, underachieving groups and Black Caribbean achievement (Demie 2006, 2005, 2003b, 2002, 2001; McKenley et al, 2003) also identified serious concerns about the success of the education system and schools in meeting the needs of ethnic minorities' students, and argued the need for addressing underachievement in schools. These research reports concluded, '*while there were pockets of sound practice, many schools were not nearly as effective as they needed to be in tackling the underachievement of, for example, Black Caribbean, African, Portuguese and mobile students in its schools*' (Demie 2006:4). The reasons for underachievement of Black students at the national level are wide-ranging and complex. '*Within education literature recently four main schools related factors has emerged: stereotyping; teachers' low expectations; exclusions and headteachers poor leadership on equality issues. All of these can perpetuate low attainment and disengagement from learning by ethnic minority students' (Demie 2003:243)*. Other researchers also noted that the lack of adequate support to schools from Black parents, institutional racism and the failure of the national curriculum to reflect adequately the needs of a diverse and multi ethnic society (MacPherson, 1999; Gillborn 2002). Also the lack of knowledge and awareness of teachers and decision makers about the culturally diverse nature of the ethnic minorities communities served by the school system in England is one of the major reasons for underachievement of Black students in schools.

Overall the body of available research suggests that most previous studies have focussed on the reasons why Black or ethnic minority children are underachieving. However, in recent years, the need for a detailed case study of successful schools in raising the achievement of African and Black Caribbean students has become apparent as a means of increasing our understanding of the ways in which schools can enhance academic achievement. For this reason a number of previous research projects looked at examples of schools that provide an environment in which Black Caribbean students flourish, and identified key characteristics of successful schools in raising achievement. These include strong leadership, high expectation, effective teaching and learning, ethos of respect with a clear approach to racism; bad behaviour and parental involvement (see for details Demie 2005, DfES 2003b, McKenley et al 2003, OFSTED 2002, Blair and Bourne 1998). Demie (2005) and DfES (2003b) argued there is no 'pick and mix' option. An effective school will seek to develop all these characteristics underpinned by the practical use of data to monitor the achievement of particular groups of students to pinpoint and tackle underperformance. Much of the previous British research in this area again is on Black Caribbean students, and there is a lack of research into the factors which contribute to educational success and high attainment of African heritage students in schools.

Section 2:   The Aims and Research Methods

Research questions

Over the past three decades, national research has shown Black students' achievements lag far behind the average achievement of the majority of their peers, and the gap is growing at the end of primary and secondary education. However, recent research suggests some Black groups particularly students of African heritage, achieve standards significantly above their peers nationally (Demie et al 2012). This research aims to examine performance trends and the success factors behind high achievement of Black African students in British schools. Three overarching questions guided this research:

- What does the data tell us about the Black African students' achievement?
- Why are the case study schools achieving well?
- What are the factors contributing to this success?

Research methods

This research is an ethnographic study of outstanding schools in an inner London Local Authority. Two complementary methodological approaches were therefore adopted, each contributing a particular set of data to the study.

Firstly, empirical investigation of GCSE results was undertaken to draw lessons from the last seven years by examining in detail the attainment of all pupils in the authority.

Secondly, detailed case study research was carried out to illuminate how the complex interactions of context, organisation, policy and practice help generate effective practice in raising the attainment of all pupils. Six secondary schools with a high number of Black African students that serve disadvantaged communities were selected for case studies. The case study schools' GCSE results were exceptionally good and the schools as a whole covered a range of ethnic groups, community languages spoken, free school meals and EAL issues. A higher than average proportion of students in these schools come from disadvantaged backgrounds. On average 37% of all secondary pupils are on free schools meals but in one school it was as high as 72%. Key criteria for the selection of schools were as follows:

- an above-average proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals
- 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' grades overall in the most recent Ofsted inspection
- exceptionally good results, high standards
- sustained GCSE improvement over the last 10 years

Each of the case study schools was first visited for two days in 2005 and then re-visited between July 2010 and March 2011 as part of this research, again for another two days to track their progress. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, staff, governors, parents and pupils to gather evidence on how well all pupils are achieving and the factors contributing to their achievement. Topics explored the school curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning, how the school monitors pupils' performance, how it supports and guides pupils, school links with parents, parents' and pupils' views about the school and its support systems, race and ethnicity in the curriculum, quality of school leadership and management, competence and materials to use the existing flexibility within the curriculum to make subjects more relevant to pupils' own experiences and to reflect their cultural heritage. The latest visit focussed mainly on gathering more evidence on the case study schools' parental engagement and diversity in the school workforce.

The selected case study schools serve some of the most deprived wards in the Local Authority (LA). Many pupils come from disadvantaged economic home circumstances. The number of pupils taking up free school meals is about 34% and ranges from 19% to 72% for all schools. There is a high proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than usual times. Over half the pupils are from homes where English is not the first language. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is less than average but the number with learning difficulties is very high. The majority of the pupils are from a wide range of ethnic minority groups and speak more than fifty different languages, the most common being Yoruba, Portuguese, Spanish, Twi, French, Ibo, Ga, Krio, Tagalog, Somali and Luganda. The school population mirrors the community in which the school sits. Most pupils come from African, Caribbean, Portuguese and White British backgrounds. A significant proportion of pupils are of a mixed heritage. Despite challenges in terms of the level of deprivation in the area, the overwhelming impression the schools create is of confidence and cohesiveness. The schools are exceptionally inclusive. The schools promote community cohesion and ensure 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 the Local Authority.

Measures of performance

It is important to note that in the English education system, pupils aged 15 to 16 years at the end of KS4 take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams. These are the major qualifications taken by pupils at the end of compulsory schooling and are a series of examinations in the individual subjects the pupils have been studying. Therefore, the measure of performance used in the analysis is 5+A*-C including English and Maths.

Terminology

The term 'Black African' is used in the paper to identify students with Black African heritage. The great majority of these students in Lambeth schools have Nigerian or Ghanaian family backgrounds. It also includes a smaller number of students whose families originate in Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania. Because the greater numbers of students come from families of West African heritage, their views

and those of their parents are given greater emphasis in this report. However, many of the cultural attitudes, especially towards education, are shared by families from across Africa. It was also noted during the research that in terms of ethnic background all these groups considered themselves as African rather than their country of origin. This view was clearly summed up by one parent during the interviews:

> 'In terms of our identity in Britain, we all see ourselves as African rather than Nigerian, Ghanaian or Ugandan …We are Africans it doesn't matter which country … I identify myself as African. We are trying to combine the British culture with the African culture, it has to work together, but always we have to try to instil into the children where they are from, so they do not lose their African identities. We have to instil their roots but still they have to embrace the British culture, it has to go hand in hand.'

When asked about their identity and ethnic background the above views were also shared by all students and parents interviewed in the case study schools, again confirming their strong view of their African identity.

Section 3: Attainment of African Heritage Students in Schools

Ethnic background and attainment

Recent data collected from schools allows us to analyse GCSE results by ethnic background. The LA's schools contain a high proportion of Black African, Black Caribbean, White British, White Other and mixed race students with a number of smaller ethnic minority groups. The main findings of the data confirm that there are substantial differences in performance between different ethnic groups at GCSE (see Table 1). Of the largest ethnic groups sitting GCSE, Black African students performed the best, surpassing both the LA and national averages for students achieving 5 or more A*-C including English and Maths. Table 1 and Figure 2 also show the attainment of Black African students at GCSE in the case study schools compared with the other local authority schools. Standards of performance of Black African students in the case study schools have improved steadily and faster than in other schools in the local authority and nationally over the period. The research data shows 83% percent of Black African students in the case study schools achieved 5+A*-C GCSE's including English and maths, compared to 59% overall nationally and 71% in Lambeth schools. The empirical evidence also confirms there has been a substantial rise in GCSE performance of Black African students in the case study schools between 2007 and 2011 with a 31% improvement rate compared to a national overall improvement rate of 13%. In addition, Black African students in the authority achieved better than White British students at national level.

Table 1: GCSE performance trends of Black African students in the LA schools

5+A*-C incl. English and Maths	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Improvement 2007-2011
Black African Students - Case study schools	52%	64%	72%	72%	**83%**	31%
Black African Students - Lambeth LA	49%	51%	65%	66%	**71%**	22%
Black African Students - National	40%	44%	48%	53%	**58%**	18%
All Lambeth Students	40%	48%	54%	53%	**62%**	22%
All National Students	46%	46%	48%	53%	**59%**	13%

Figure 2: GCSE performance of Black African Students compared to main ethnic groups
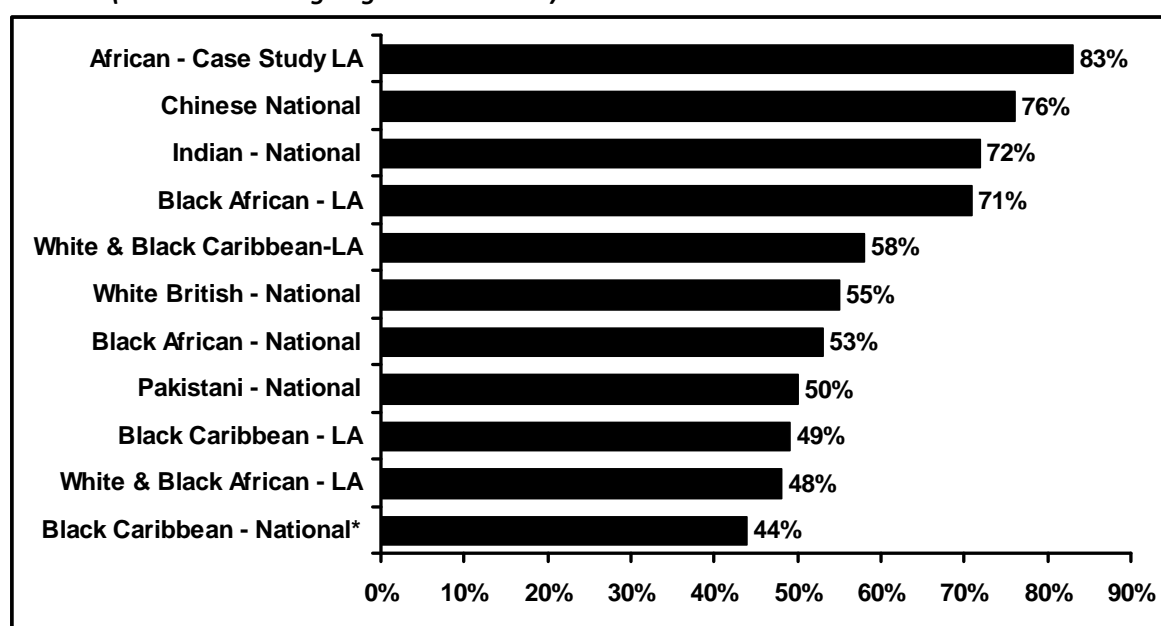*(5+ A*-C including English and Maths)*

Figure 3 also shows that the proportion of 16 years old Black Africans attaining at least 5+A*-C including English and maths, rose from 24% in 2000 to 71% in 2011. What is particularly significant here is that the data shows a dramatic improvement in the achievement of Black African pupils completing their compulsory schooling between 2000 and 2011 in the LA. This finding is useful for policy and practice as the Black African group generally achieves below the national average.

Figure 3: GCSE performance of Black African heritage students, 2000-2011
(5+ A*-C including English and Maths)
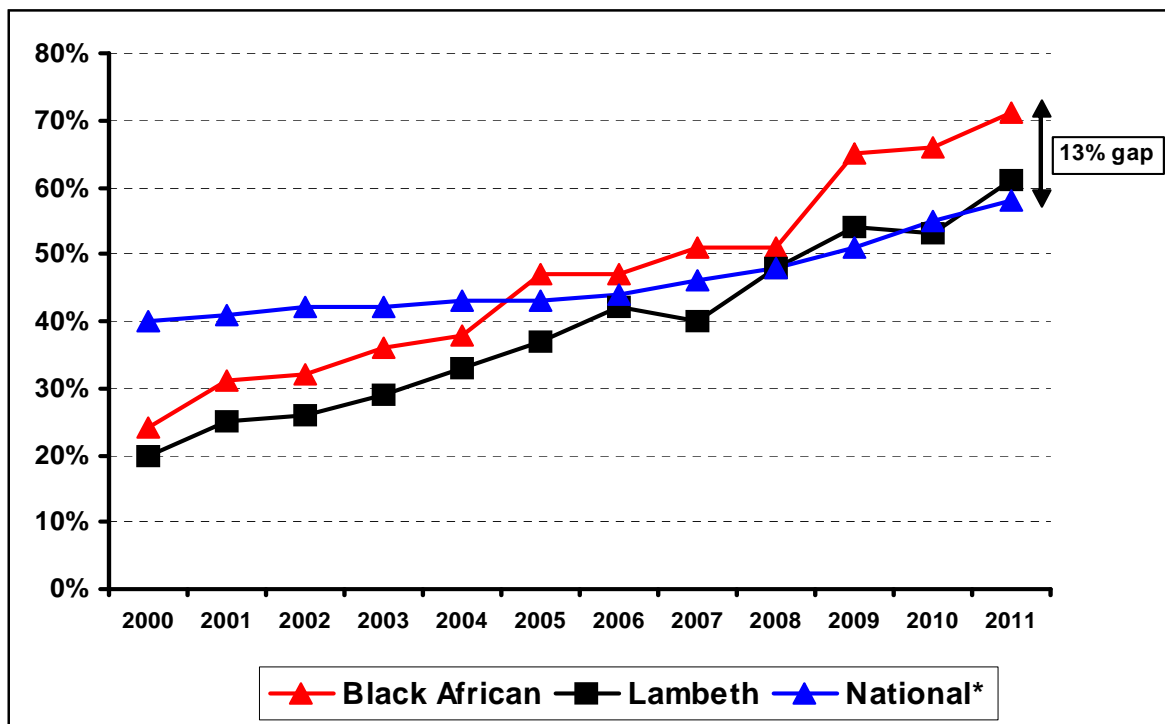
Language spoken at home and attainment

However, we would argue that the ethnic categories used above are often imprecise in content. For example, the Black African ethnic categories gloss over enormous linguistic diversity and difference. Of the 411 Black African students who took GCSE, 21% spoke English at home, 22% Yoruba, 13% Somali, 9% Twi-Fante, 5% French, 4% Igbo, 4% Krio, 3% Tigrinya, 3% Lingala, 2% Arabic, 2% Ga, 2% Swahili, 1% Luganda, 1% Amharic, 1% Portuguese and 2% spoke other languages such as Shona, German, Fang, Manding, Runyakata, Temne and Zulu. Yoruba, Igbo and Twi-Fante are spoken predominantly in West African countries including Nigeria and Ghana, whereas Lingala originates from Central Africa. Amharic, Tigrinya and Somali are spoken in East Africa, mainly Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. This constrains the categorisation of the official data available at national level.

The above analysis on performance by ethnic group is valuable in improving our knowledge related to ethnic background and achievement. However, even in the few studies where ethnic differences and educational achievement are considered, the importance of language diversity in achievement between ethnic groups is rarely reported. As argued earlier the ethnic categories used above are often imprecise for a number of ethnic categories, constrained by categorisation of the official data available at national level. In particular, the Black African and White Other ethnic categories gloss over enormous cultural, geographical and linguistic diversity. As such, it is useful to be cautious when using the national School Census ethnic categories. Ethnicity is clearly an important category which is connected to language, though obviously does not map straightforwardly onto it. As Von Ahn et al

notes '*while many languages "attach" to particular ethnic groups … knowing a person's language does not tell us about their country of origin or ethnic heritage*' (2010,p. 6).. The empirical evidence for this research shows that the Black African category is one of the most linguistically diverse in LA schools with 21% speaking English as their language at home, followed by Somali (17%), Yoruba (15%), Twi-Fante (10%), French (9%), Tigrinya (4%), Arabic, Igbo, Lingala, Amharic each 3%, Luganda, Krio, Ga, Swahili each 1%. Other languages spoken include Shona, Portuguese, German, Fang, Manding, Runyakata, Temne, Zulu and Oromo. Similarly, the White Other ethnic category is also highly linguistically diverse with Polish the most commonly spoken (45%), Spanish (21%), English (18%), French, Turkish and Albanian each 3%. In addition, a number of students speak languages such as Lithuanian, Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serb-Croatian, Bosnian, Slovak, Norwegian, Maltese, Latvian, Kurdish, Hungarian, Swedish and Danish (Demie 2012 and Figure 4).

Figure 4: Map of African Languages

Source: www.isp.msu.edu/afrilang/AfrLangMap.htm. Accessed on 16 September 2013. Copyright African Studies Center, Michigan State University.

However, it is possible now from locally collected data to unpick ethnic background by using language data. In terms of educational attainment, there are significant differences within ethnic categories, when the data is disaggregated by language spoken. For example, our data analysis of GCSE results

indicates that the Black African ethnic group contains some of the highest achieving language groups, but also some of the lowest. Analysing by language (see Table 2) reveals that the lowest achieving students are Lingala speakers, whose attainment at GCSE (45%) is well below that of the LA and national averages. In contrast, Black African students speaking Igbo, Yoruba, Luganda and Ga, all achieved better than English-only speaking White British students. Key findings from the data show that: Ga, Yoruba, Igbo, Twi-Fante, Luganda, Krio, Igbo speaking students do better than White British and the national average.

Table 2: Difference in GCSE performance by language spoken

Main languages spoken	Ethnic background	2011 5+A* - C English and Maths	2010 5+A* - C English and Maths	2009 5+A* - C English and Maths
Luganda	Black African	83%	33%	75%
Krio	Black African	78%	50%	75%
Igbo	Black African	76%	80%	100%
Yoruba	Black African	75%	68%	39%
Ga	Black African	75%	75%	64%
Tigrinya	Black African	67%	56%	75%
Twi-Fante	Black African	66%	84%	69%
Somali	Black African	61%	50%	48%
Swahili	Black African	50%	60%	40%
Lingala	Black African	45%	50%	0%
LA		61%	53%	54%
National		59%	54%	50%

Cautions: *Other African languages spoken by students who took GCSE examinations include Amharic, Tigrinya, Krio, Oromo, Arabic, Xhosa, Zulu, Hausa, Luo, Kikuyu, Manding, Runyakata, Temne. These language results have not been reported here because they have between 1 to 9 speakers which are too small to make a meaningful statistical interpretation. Care needs to be taken in the interpretation of the GCSE trend data of languages that have small numbers of speakers.*

Overall the analysis by language category illuminates the spread of attainment within broad ethnic categories, and suggests that some of the commonly used ethnic groupings may be too broad to be useful, and that language data can provide greater insight into which students may be in need of particular support. In addition the data confirms language speakers such as Amharic are too small to make meaningful statistical inference, although at individual levels the students achieve well above the national average (See Demie 2012).

English fluency and attainment

Another important factor relating to ethnic background and African achievement is English fluency. One of the main reasons for Black African students' successful achievement at GCSE is that almost all of the students are fluent in English. 89% of the Black African students in the LA schools are fully fluent in English, and about 10% are at stage 3 level of fluency with little need for additional support. Only 1% are at the beginner stage with considerable need for English language support. There are some striking differences when the performance data is further analysed by levels of fluency in English. Table 3 shows that fluency in English continues to have an influence on the performance of students with EAL background. Overall empirical evidence suggests students in the early stages of fluency perform at very low levels, while African students who are reasonably proficient in English perform better, on average, than English only speakers.

Table 3: Black African students achievement by level of fluency in English

English Fluency Level	5+ A*-C including English and Maths	Cohort	Cohort percentage
Beginner stage	0%	2	0.5%
Considerable support	0%	2	0.5%
Some Support	46%	41	10.0%
Fully Fluent in English	75%	366	89.1%
All Black African	71%	411	100%

These findings offer much encouragement for policy makers and school improvement practitioners. They demonstrate that African children do not face a large language barrier, and also once that barrier is overcome, it is possible to attain good levels of achievement in all key stages.

Section 4:   Good Practice for Raising Achievement in Schools

Introduction

The case study evidence, without doubt, confirms that Black African students have shown a dramatic rise in achievement (See Tables 1 and 4). This is despite a national trend of underperformance. In the next section we look into the factors that contribute to this success and the reasons why Black African students are achieving well.

Table 4: 5+ A-C including English and Maths GCSE performance by main ethnic group in 2011*

Main ethnic group in the LA	Case study schools	LA	National
White British	68%	57%	55%
Black Caribbean	60%	49%	44%
Black African	83%	71%	53%
All Blacks	71%	60%	49%

In recent years the need for a detailed case study of successful schools in raising the achievement of Black African students has become apparent, as a means of increasing our understanding of the ways schools can enhance students' academic achievement (see Demie, 2005; McKenley et al, 2003; OFSTED, 2002). Research has been carried out at national and local level into what works in raising achievement of Black African, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi students. The main findings show that the key factors for high achievement for these students and indeed all other students are: inspirational leadership, effective teaching and learning, high expectations for all students and effective use of data to monitor performance. The findings from our research and observations in the case study schools show that all schools demonstrate strong leadership by the headteacher and senior management teams (SMT). Leadership and management in all case study schools are excellent and a great strength. Headteachers and deputy headteachers have worked closely together for many years and are very well supported by a committed team of teachers and support staff. Through excellent role modelling the headteachers provide a clear, shared vision of where the school is heading. There is a strong commitment to continuously raising standards and effective monitoring of the curriculum at all levels. A key success of the case study schools is due to the trust the headteacher inspires and has built, in parents and staff. Black African students and families still model the aspirations of first generation economic migrants, a powerful discourse for the school to build upon. The general hypothesis is that African students achieve well when there is a strong partnership

between the ethos of the school and the home. In addition, in all case study schools, a high priority was placed on supporting language acquisition amongst African students not fluent in English and this often appeared to be the dominant feature of curriculum developments in these schools. The teaching and class support for students 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 students is good and has enabled those pupils to take full part in school life. Every year a few students arrive in the school with little knowledge of English. The ethnic minority achievements grant (EMAG) co-ordinator assesses their language needs and works with subject teachers to help meet them. Students' success in English language and literature at GCSE demonstrates that this approach works well. Many students 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.

Previous research overall confirms the strong evidence relating to leadership, quality of teaching and learning. However, little research has been done on how diversity in the school workforce, an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of African students and strong African parental supports play key role in raising the achievement of Black African students. In the comprehensive research carried out into good practices in the five secondary schools, researchers had further visited the schools to gather additional information how these factors helped in raising achievement of Black African students. The main findings are summarised below.

Leadership and management

The findings from our research and observations in the case study schools show that all schools demonstrate strong leadership by the headteacher and senior management teams (SMT). Leadership and management in all case study schools are excellent and a great strength. Headteachers and deputy headteachers have worked closely together for many years and are very well supported by a committed team of teachers and support staff. Through excellent role modelling the headteachers provide a clear, shared vision of where the school is heading. There is a strong commitment to continuously raising standards and effective monitoring of the curriculum at all levels

For example, interviews in one school revealed headteachers are passionate about the contribution schools can make to the lives of Black African pupils and their parents. Commitment is seen as non-negotiable and drives the school. A parent, who felt leadership of the headteacher and the Christian ethos of the school were crucial in her choice of school, characterised the leadership style as '*infuse and enthuse.'* She felt the powerful message of the gospel choir's theme song: 'So Strong' by Labi Siffre was indicative of the schools' commitment and passion. Pupils in one school acknowledged the importance of the headteacher, seeing her as a third parent in their lives. Staff felt it would be difficult to work in this school if you did not share this approach. Staff are expected to take their jobs as role models seriously. In both contexts they feel very proud of their school and its achievement. One teacher stated:

> '*It has become a very enjoyable school in which to teach and learn and that is reflected in the vitality of the school which shines out from the outstanding quality of display that graces the walls of the school. Outside the school is misleadingly understated, inside there is a vibrant learning community.'*

An assistant headteacher described one of the objectives of his school being, '*to make our children feel beautiful.*' Both Black African pupils and parents acknowledge and appreciate the work being done on their behalf. A re-emerging theme in this school is its'commitment *to nurture the individual*.' One member of staff stated '*It is a passionate school – comfortable with the emotions, expectations and consequences of its mission 'to make every student feel special' and this is reflected in the ethos*

of the school.' A Black parent governor noted the individualised responses to students as, '*each child is respected individually within an inclusive and confidently diverse community.*'

The strong mission of all schools' leadership teams is powerfully transmitted through the tools and processes adopted to monitor the performance of pupils in the school. Strategies to overcome the barriers to learning and access to the curriculum have been reframed within an overall commitment to building an inclusive, godly, learning community. Data is used across the school within departments, by form tutors, year directors, achievement coordinators, ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) teachers, the small team of learning mentors, the senior leadership team and by governors. All members of the workforce play their role in monitoring the academic and emotional well being of pupils in this school. This consistent approach and strong sense of purpose is shared across the schools.

A key success of each of the case study schools is the trust the headteacher inspires and has built in parents and staff. Black African pupils and families still model the aspirations of first generation economic migrants, a powerful discourse for the school to build upon. The general hypothesis is that African students achieve well when there is a strong partnership between the ethos of the school and the home. If relationships are strong at home underpinned by a strong faith, a virtuous circle is created and this is frequently the case with Black African heritage pupils in these schools. The majority of families attend local churches, which have a strong focus on self-improvement and the importance of education.

Effective teaching and learning

Teachers in the case study schools are innovative and make every effort to make lessons more creative to access learning for African heritage pupils and other groups of pupils in the school. In these schools the quality of teaching is seen as crucial to the process of raising achievement of African heritage pupils. The emphasis on quality teaching and student achievement is accorded by evidence from student interviews. When asked what they value most about the school, a common response was to identify good teachers who were effective subject teachers and who delivered interesting lessons and responded sympathetically to students needs.

Our classroom observations in the case study schools confirm that high quality teaching is a feature of these schools. There is good teaching which is supported by a well balanced, academically robust, multicultural curriculum that reflects the African pupils' heritage, culture and experiences. The views of one school headteacher on the quality of teaching and learning summarise the feeling of many in the case study schools:

> '*We have staff who are really committed to their teaching and their pupils and multicultural curriculum.*'

In all case study schools a high priority was placed on supporting language acquisition amongst African students not fluent in English and 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 a full part in school life. Every year a few pupils arrive in the school with little knowledge of English. The 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.

Parental high educational aspiration and support

High educational aspiration of parents and pupils

African parents value education very highly. Some have themselves received a good education and gained professional qualifications although they may not be working in jobs in the UK that fully reflect this. Staff in schools recognise that parents, whatever their jobs are able to build and support a culture of achievement at home to support their children's education. Many parents are themselves continuing their studies. One parent commented *'my child's father is Nigerian and he is very focused on learning. He never says 'I haven't got anything to do', he is always improving his skills-set. This definitely is an African thing; it is like that in Jamaica too.'* However, while this is well understood by staff and parents, some work in jobs with low pay and low status. They share the view that they need to work together to give children the best start in life. All see a good education as the key to their children's future success in life. This is shown in parents' comments:

> - *'Africans invest in education because we need it. Back home we do not have the opportunity that these children have. Education makes a way for you.'*
> - *'My background was such that I wasn't able to go to school due to lack of money. When I sit down with my kids I tell them I do not want them to have the life I have had. Children now have choices – education is the key.'*
> - *'Without an education you cannot earn a decent salary, without qualifications you cannot get a good job. The best thing is to push your children as hard as you can.'*
> - *'Being a Black woman if you don't have education in this country, what job will you have to do, clean people's toilets?'*
> - *'I have taught my children to get an education and you have choice, as a social worker I see children having choice in this society.'*
> - *'Without knowledge you are nothing. Even if you get money you wouldn't be able to manage it without wisdom.'*
> - *'Knowledge is a lifetime investment, money comes and goes but knowledge lasts forever.'*
> - *'Behind many of the African student's achievement, you will find some of the most dedicated parents supporting their children to ensure their children are high achievers. It is not always the school you go to, it's how strong the parental support network is behind you.'*

These attitudes are the driving force behind parents' support of their children and schools. Teachers recognise and welcome the shared values and aspirations:

> *'I like to teach here because I know I have the support of African parents. If I advise them what to do they will do it, whereas other parents might not. African parents may sometimes be poor, but their standards are higher… standards regarding their aims for their children. They expect and want their children to achieve and they will do whatever they can to help them and make sure it happens. It is not so important to other groups. Because we promote this, and they already have this sense of the importance of education, we can work together. We know we have their backing so there are no behaviour issues to be resolved.'*

Parents also have strong views on the importance of mutual respect and respect for authority. One parent commented in Africa 'the *teacher is an authority figure in the class room. There is a good tradition where the start of lesson is marked by students standing up to greet the teacher. Pupils should respect the authority of the teacher.*' When asked what parents expect their children to do at school a parent replied: '*Hard work, respect, discipline, listening to the teacher, working together. What you feed them at home is what they bring to school ---this is reinforced at school.*' In this they support the authority of teachers. A teacher with twenty years experience comments: '*parents show respect for teachers – they defer to professionalism…they want to know what they can do to help and this plays a big part in children's success…it is backed by action.*'

One of the most frequent ways that parents support teachers and their children is by ensuring that they do their homework. At primary age, parents often help students with homework. '*I will meet teachers at the end of the day. I want my child to get ahead and I ask for ideas about homework, especially in the holidays. I read to them even while we are away on holiday.*' At secondary level, parents check homework diaries and follow up comments made by teachers, ensuring that work is completed.

Parents regularly attend open days and evenings to discuss their children's progress with teachers. The attendance rate is generally very high because parents value the opportunity to discuss with teachers their child's progress. In secondary schools, teachers share performance data with parents who are included in discussions about target setting. In this way, parents feel well informed about the progress of their children and children feel that parents know of their success. As one Year 9 pupil at a school where tutors and teachers regularly telephone parents commented '*When I do well they tell my parents. This reflects on me at home.*' A Year 13 pupil at the same school linked the common efforts of parents and teachers: '*Parents give strong motivation from day one… Our head of year really pushes us – he's really behind a lot of students' success.*'

Partnership with parents and the community

All the case study schools have strong links with their student communities. Each school's headteacher and senior management team have devoted substantial resources, both in terms of their time and commitment. A feature of these schools is that this is central to the core activity of the school and they get good support from parents. For example, interviews in one case study school revealed impressive parental support by staff and found partnership with parents is a key component of the school's success with African families. In this school, parents feel a close alignment between their aspirations and the way the school engages with their children. Parents are involved early in any lapses of behaviour and appreciate the school's commitment to keeping them informed of their children's progress.

> **Interviews with African parents:**
>
> **Parent A:** Father of daughter in Year 9. Generally supportive of the school which was not his first choice but is supplementing his daughter's education with a home tutor. He also calls on his extended family, his oldest son who is a graduate is also expected to help. The family take regular trips home to Nigeria to maintain traditions, to let children know they have an obligation to fulfil their potential.
>
> **Parent B:** Father of three daughters, two of whom have already left the school. One daughter is currently in Year 10. He is very pleased with the dialogue between family and school. He believes the school shares his expectations of his daughter and is respectful of Sierra Leone culture. Respect and responsibility are the two cornerstones of the parenting philosophy he conveys to his daughters. However he is also of the view that sanctions should be applied if his daughters 'step out of order' and then it's a case of 'tough love.'

Both parents feel that key features contributing to African achievement are maintaining African traditions at home; letting children know they have an obligation to maximise the opportunities available in the school and seeking to *'blend with the best of British society'* and consciously protect daughters from its worst, more permissive, anti-education elements, as they perceive them. They have also argued the importance for home and school of early intervention, to get students back on track. It is also interesting to note that both African parents are keen to continue their studies as well, which models family commitment to education as a transformational tool.

Many schools in this country pay lip service to notions of school-parent partnership, but it is a lived reality in these schools and is demonstrable in the engagement of Black African students and their parents in co-constructing an achievement culture in all schools. It is not a matter of the school doing all the work, Black African parents form a critical mass in the school and their commitment to education and their children's achievement is equally significant. Many students have parents who went to university, either here or in Africa. High achievement is part of the tradition of their families and if not, parents still maintain a strong desire for continuing education.

Partnerships between school and home are actively fostered and maintained. The headteacher is an active church going parent herself and makes common cause with other Black parents trying to enable their children to achieve their potential. This sense of kinship is much appreciated by Black African parents. Schools know their parents well, leadership has encouraged and promoted the involvement of parents of Black African students. Parents are passionate about church-school education. Most students have two parents at home who are focused on achievement. Typically both parents, but especially the father, attend parents' evening. Aspirations are clearly set in advance of joining the school and their first statement is often their hope that their child can go to university.

Schools engage parents in key strategies to raise achievement. For example one school recently used external consultants to teach study skills to Year 7 and Year 8 students during the school day and offered this as a master class for parents after school as well. The strong faith backgrounds of families is recognised and supported and schools conform to African notions of a church-school with its formality and sense of pride. For example, there are no tensions for Black African students around uniform. The formality of school processes reflects notions of respect and courtesy towards teachers and between students e.g. always line up before entry to lessons, formal introductions and prayers before each lesson starts. This is the school's ethos, its niche market, which is clearly communicated and endorsed by Black African parents.

The timing of parents evenings in this school at the beginning of the academic year encourages students and parents to review and evaluate the year that has passed and renew their commitment to targets for the coming year, reflecting the symbolic ritual of renewal. There are lots of social evenings for parents and staff to interact. When the parent-school relationship does not work, it tends to be that the parent has not responded to the invitation to be part of the community and is too distant from key processes and interventions. But even in these circumstances, recovery is always available. When the school does well, the headteacher writes to parents praising them for their contribution.

One mother, a recently arrived refugee has drawn on the school for support. She feels the school support is there not just for the child, but the parent too and feels the school has encouraged her daughter to exceed her expectations. This engenders powerful feelings of support and gratitude towards the school. She feels the school provides opportunities and activities which *'I cannot afford to do at home'* through field trips, social events and activity visits, most of which are educational. She likes the balance between social and academic and describes the school *'helping her daughter to make up her mind to become a doctor'* through their involvement in the 'Access to Medicine'

programme. As a result her daughter knows she wants to be a paediatrician but she has also been able to take part in drama activities sponsored by the Shell Company based in the authority.

For those parents who have not achieved their own educational goals, the school's shared aspirations are important:

> *'To be a person in life, her education must be better than I was able to achieve. I want my daughter to achieve so many things in life so that they are a credit to you back home. I do not want to be ashamed in the future.'*

A parent who came to the UK as a refugee explained:

> *'I hope she becomes someone in life. She has decided to become a doctor and I was not confident since English is her third language. Miss B (a teacher) says she has made up her mind and sees that she can do it. The teachers have talked me through it and so I now believe she can do it.'*

This success has not come without a struggle, as one teacher acknowledges, *'the school is fighting the anti-education cultures of the 'street' and the 'estate' which is a strong pull even for Black African students with strong backgrounds.'* His aspiration is to make 'educational achievement' more powerful and credible which is no easy task, but his school is making significant inroads. Such possibilities and opportunities are regularly reinforced in the displays on corridors and in classrooms.

Overall these case study schools are unremitting in their efforts to maintain good motivation and have very good holistic and pastoral systems to support students and their families. This is an area of parent-school partnership which is of great importance in raising and maintaining high standards for Black African students. Other schools in other circumstances undoubtedly also find they have to counteract 'street culture.' What makes this authority partnership so strong is that parents, teachers and students share the same aspirations and the same values.

Effective use of diverse multi-ethnic workforce

Another key success for the case study schools is the leadership's ability to create a community ethos by employing a diverse multi-ethnic workforce. The quality of staff recruited including the diversity of the staff team is seen as crucial in case study schools. Many schools pointed to their ability to acquire the right calibre of teaching staff, i.e. staff that would buy into the explicit culture and core values, as crucial to their success in raising the achievement of all pupils. They recruit teachers who want to be in the school and who believe in real partnership with pupils and their parents. The teachers are seen to come with attributes to enhance and help.

There is a great diversity in the workforce in the case study schools in terms of range of roles, skills and ethnicity. In one outstanding case study school there are currently 169 members of staff. Of these, 33% are Black Caribbean, 30% White British, 15% Black African, 7% White Other, 2% Mixed White and Black Caribbean, 2% Mixed White and Black African, 2% Other Mixed Race, 1% White Irish, 4% Pakistani, 2% Indian, 1% Bangladeshi, 1% Other Black and 2% Any Other group. The school prides itself in its diversity. Overall, over 70% of the school workforce is of ethnic minority origin and many of the languages, cultures and faiths of the pupils are reflected in the workforce. What is also special in this case study school, is that over half of the leadership team and 64% of teachers are from an ethnic minority background. The headteacher of this case study school believes that by recruiting staff from the local community, she sends a strong message to the community that is valued. It has helped the school to become the central point of the community and has built trust. Children feel that they can relate to members of staff from their own cultural backgrounds. They can empathise

with pupils, they speak the same language and understand how the systems operate 'back home.' A senior manager at the school feels that because there are teachers from the same cultures as parents and pupils, those teachers can be direct about children with their parents, without being perceived to be stereotyping.

Some staff of African heritage are represented across the case study schools and within the leadership team. Three of the six case study schools are run by Black headteachers, two schools by White headteachers and one school by an Indian headteacher. Parents value and highly appreciate the role played by Black and White headteachers in turning challenging schools into outstanding schools. The great contribution of White staff is affirmed in the case study schools. Above all, these are confident headteachers who take risks and trust their hunches. They are innovative headteachers because they are focussed on the moral purpose of raising achievement of inner-city pupils and through the accumulated experience of the past turbulent decade of educational change, they emerged as strong advanced practitioners in raising achievement of Black African pupils as well as all other pupils. One of the black headteachers has over 14 years of experience in the same school as headteacher. Almost all headteachers are long serving heads in the same schools and are passionate about working with the community to raise achievement. Four teachers of African heritage agreed to be interviewed and were asked for their perspective on the achievement of African students at their school.

Teacher A: Joined the school last year and was struck at the sense of community which pervades the school and to which she felt welcomed. She had worked as a supply teacher in other London secondary schools in the previous three years so felt well placed to make comparative judgements about the ethos. She feels the headteacher is a community leader whose open door approach makes both staff and students feel acknowledged. Teacher A enjoys the diversity of the African school population in the school and has blossomed in the aspiring culture of the school community.

Teacher B: Has worked in the school since joining as a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) in 1996 and has felt supported by colleagues throughout his time. He feels the leadership to encourage and support staff is an explicit part of their brief. In his view the school's shared unity of purpose is the secret of its success

Teacher C: She is an African teacher from Ghana. Teacher C is one of the longest serving staff members and was struck at the sense of community which pervades the school and to which she felt welcomed. She worked as teacher of EAL and the last three years she heads the EAL section and also teaches literacy. She is well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable and highly praised by the headteacher for her work. She feels the headteacher is a community leader, is inspirational and ensures that the school has high aspirations for all its pupils regardless of their ability or background. *'I enjoy the diversity of the school population in the school. I am the first person to be seen by EAL pupils because of my role as head of EAL. One of my main roles is helping EAL parents as they have difficulty in English language. I am the first point of contact for EAL parents when they are new to the school I help with form filling, I support them with their interview with the head and admissions forms. Parents also come for help with many things not related to school as advice. I help them and sometimes even act as a mentor. I also support the parent EAL class. Parents see having a diversified workforce and Black African teacher has made a big difference for the children and they are confident that they get help for any questions. I think this school is the best school doing a lot of work for Black African and other students. A lot of this changed with the current headteacher and the school is now an outstanding schools. This is highly appreciated by parents and community. I enjoy teaching in the school and supporting all pupils.'*

> **Teacher D:** The school has a number of Black Caribbean teachers who feel very confident in their roles as teachers - *'I am a well-educated black woman in a position of authority which helps to confront stereotypes in British culture'* - and role models to all girls in the school. *'I bring my Caribbean background into my teaching and make common cause not just with Black Caribbean girls but also those Black Africans with a similar experience. I feel that generates a powerful discourse in a school where 75 per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.'* Some Black teachers like Teacher D use this 'insider' position to challenge assumptions and raise expectations by invoking a traditional view of what would and would not be acceptable 'back home' in their countries of origin. *'I ask the girls 'How many of you have been back home and seen such behaviour?' I use this as a powerful lever around confronting negative behaviour.'* They share their confidence in their own ethnicity with the girls: *'I bring the resource of living and being educated in two countries (Barbados and England), which gives me a bi-cultural competence. If the Black Caribbean students don't have a powerful sense of identity and culture, they'll be lost. I know this approach has had a positive impact on achievement.'*

Schools reflect the local community they serve and respond to their needs. A large number of staff and learning mentors are recruited from local communities.

> *'Our staff are ethnically diverse and we have a good number of African teachers from Ghana and language support assistants who speak Twi, Ga and French between them, a Greek Cypriot, Irish, two Maltese, a Welsh teacher and two South Americans who speak Portuguese and Spanish. ….'* (Teacher)

Diversity is also represented in the profile of school departmental teams. All staff, Black and White, are clear about the importance of teachers as role models. Good relationships are observed and modelled by both staff and students. Black African teachers treat all students the same but share 'village life' stories with Black African students which reinforce the virtues of working and studying hard. There is a strong identification with African cultural norms and desire for achievement for children which are reinforced by the school and teachers. The wide and diverse range of Black staff in the school are happy to be seen as role models and those include non-teaching staff. One Black teacher defines his teaching as *'passionate but strict.'* His knowledge of Black history and the experience of African Diasporas are key to his sense of himself as an effective Black teacher. He feels the school embraces the heritage of the students very positively within the curriculum. Staff feel a professional sense of pride and reward at seeing children achieve above and beyond what they themselves thought they were capable of. The Ghanaian view that every teacher is your parent prevails. New staff are inducted into the ways of the schools which gives parents confidence.

The opportunities are clear and African parents appreciate the school's efforts. African parents are generally school-supportive and try to present this approach to their children. If they do wish to challenge the school, they do that with teachers in private and not in the children's presence. Some African families struggle with the comparatively permissive nature of English education and the freedom enjoyed here is hard for those parents who were brought up in much more disciplined, respectful and less equitable pupil-teacher relationships. Most students manage to walk that rather tricky tightrope of school and home expectations and remain on track in eight out of ten cases, but for those one or two, the freedom leads to underachievement. For those small numbers of students, routine trips back home are used to reinforce the general view that opportunities on offer in the UK are not to be squandered. The school operates a Student Learning Centre with counsellors and mentors to support those students who stray from their family's script.

African teachers are often asked by parents for advice and this has to be handled carefully so as not to contravene school procedures. There is a cultural assumption that teachers are the 'third parent' and have their children's interests at heart. This is a real asset for African teachers who enjoy their role model status and their insider knowledge.   They are also keenly aware of the sanctions many parents operate in desperation when their children refuse to comply with home or school discipline, such as sending students back to Africa.

Celebration of cultural diversity

Each school celebrates diversity in every sense of the word. In one school a range of social and cultural activities such as royal visits, representations of students and teachers hard at work in drama, on courses, in school and beyond are pictured and framed on departmental doors and on the corridors. This is regularly reinforced in behaviour and interactions in corridors and in classrooms. In one school the work of the media resources officer in organising the quality of display throughout the school is outstanding.

Parents are invited to a range of assemblies which celebrate a range of cultures. Significant main ethnic groups are celebrated in assemblies on Celebration Days. 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 people. Each class presents their country through an assembly- last year we learnt about 12 countries, this ingrains diversity in the children.'*

Annually there is an 'International Food Day'. Staff, pupils and parents dress up in their traditional dress and share food from around the world. Parents from all backgrounds:

> *'Mingle and share recipes and children are encouraged to try different foods which opens them up to other cultures.'*

As part of a strong community link and to celebrate diversity, one school has organised an annual International Day. This event involves pupils, parents and neighbours celebrating cultures from across the globe at the school. In the words of the headteacher:

> *'All the colours, sights and sounds of the world were brought to life at a buzzing international day. The parents and pupils from different parts of Africa played colourful African dances and music in traditional dress from Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia and other African countries. A Scotsman played the bagpipes in traditional dress, while elsewhere a steel band played by pupils from the Caribbean world and there was African drumming by pupils from African continent. Many parents and students performed traditional Portuguese dance and music.'* The Headteacher of the school said: *'It went really well; the best turnout we have had. It is something we have been doing for many years, and it is about including all our different communities.'* A teacher who helped in organising the events added: *'it was a really great atmosphere, and a really good way to get everyone socialising together to celebrate the achievement of the school and the community the school serves.'*

There is also abundant and high quality displays that celebrate pupils' achievement and acknowledge the diversity of its population and the wider society. As one staff member commented, 'Displays are

a reflection of our community. They are not put up to fill wall space. They are part of a community dialogue. They reflect what is going on in the school. They are part of an ethos of high expectations.'

In addition, in this school there is a positive approach in effectively tackling prejudice and stereotyping through a culture of respect for people as individuals and as members of particular communities.   Above all, the school has a strong commitment to equal opportunities and multicultural education. The policies for multi-cultural education are unambiguous and direct, as shown by this extract from one school policy statement:

> *"Our school is multi-cultural and multi-racial and we value the cultural diversity. Every member of the school community should feel their language, religion and culture are valued and respected. In order to achieve this we will use what children know and understand about themselves in our teaching".*

Such statements of policy are not simply rhetoric in the case study school. Any signs of failure are dealt with swiftly and decisively by the determined headteacher who leads on equal opportunities.

Using a relevant inclusive curriculum

As shown in previous sections, the case study schools have achieved high standards in key national curriculum subjects including English, maths and science at KS3, and all subjects at GCSE. However, emphasis on these subjects has not deflected these schools from the provision of a curriculum rich in other aspects that are not covered by the national curriculum. In these schools, headteachers encourage teachers to use their creative intuition to deepen the quality of learning. Schools are engaged in curriculum development and innovations using the diversity of their local communities to enrich the national curriculum and to bring greater relevance for African students. Schools have no problem in questioning the national curriculum. There is a wide range of activities to enhance the curriculum in teaching African history, the celebration of Black History Month, arts events, arts based curriculum, African music and drama, choice of texts that promote positive models about Black people, African cultural celebrations and links with African schools which are discussed below.

When the head of English in one school was interviewed, he spoke about the curriculum. He mentioned the very strong sense of Black heritage that should be embraced and enjoyed in school, which is demonstrated in the choice of texts and ethos of the department. This includes choice of authors who promote positive models of Black people and external writers and poets who visit the school. An EAL six-month intervention model is used at KS3 to enable students to access the curriculum. There are cultural focus evenings on key countries and regions across the world. Evidence in displays around the school of past evenings on Cuba, Japan, Egypt and Portugal reflect the cross-curricular, cross-departmental approach taken, for example pictures of Black students dressed in kimonos during the Japanese event. One school is keen to extend its curriculum links with Africa, perhaps in collaboration with two other schools.

Another school has developed a powerful arts-based curriculum, which is consciously designed to broaden students' horizons and enrich both the lives of students and the professional expertise of staff who work in the school. Specialist status has been used to underpin the school's curriculum. Engaging more deeply with the arts, media and music, working with Creative Partnership and being part of the pilot DfE Aiming High project, has given staff the confidence and tools to develop an arts-based whole school curriculum.

The school set up a working party to review the diversity of the curriculum. Led by two of the deputy headteachers, the school used INSET and curriculum writing workshops to develop a responsive pedagogy. As a result, the school increased the range of extra and cross-curricula activities in Key

Stage 3 which built students' confidence and their ability to work in project teams. This approach pays dividends to the quality of relationships and capacity to work together in Key Stage 4. The school feels that the focus on curriculum builds an element of sustainability in contrast to concentrating efforts in mentoring programmes.

The link with Creative Partnerships has been very productive. Each term a set of arts projects, activities and opportunities are provided to target groups across the school as part of strategies to raise achievement, broaden horizons and challenge students so that their aspirations can be high and achievable. London's rich cultural life is harnessed to the school's cause. Examples of the range of projects include: trips to the Royal Ballet School, live jazz performances at the Royal Albert Hall, dance courses at Waverley School in Southwark and participating in the Re-imagining Africa film and media project.

The use of the arts-based curriculum is evident in the range of activities displayed on corridors around the school including a visit by the Education Minister to an arts event; Citizenship Day, Maths Fair, Bigger Science Day and A Day of Sport.

Other subject departments are encouraged to be more creative. The head of design and technology asked the textiles teacher to visit the Horniman Museum for an INSET session on African materials. The music department has worked hard to broaden the range of musical traditions studied in both key stages.

Like many local authority schools, another case study school celebrates Black History Month each year. This gives a high profile to the experience and achievements of Black people in Britain. In recent years the focus has been more on the African Caribbean experience but students and parents show a keen interest in their African heritage. One teacher runs an after-school discussion group – the Bulla Club, where boys come to discuss issues of particular relevance to them. They compiled an anthology of Anansi stories, drawing on family traditions and turned them into a performance. Parents were delighted. Those spoken to on the visit acknowledged the pleasure with which they heard Nigerian songs at a concert given by students. They indicated that they would be glad to see more aspects of African culture celebrated. In this school, students acknowledge that they consider their Black teachers as role models, and sometimes as friends with whom they can share their concerns.

The school is also a partner in the authority link to schools in Takoradi, Ghana. In recent years staff from the school have visited their partner school in Ghana and exchanged letters. The head of science has set up a curriculum link. At present, this is in abeyance as the headteacher in Ghana has moved on and the link between the two schools needs to be revived. However, the head of science has produced a lively video of his visit to Ghana which has been shown in assemblies. A class of Year 8 students watched it for the first time during the researchers visit and were very interested in Ghanaian children's school experience. One pupil said that it made him feel proud that he was Black because the film showed Ghanaian children asserting their own pride in being Black. Such links with schools in other countries bring home an international dimension to children in the UK. For students with their own African heritage, it can be a source of learning and pride.

Overall, schools in the case study are very committed to an innovative curriculum that motivates African heritage students and have developed links with Africa and rich artistic and sporting communities in London such as the Royal Ballet, the Royal Festival Hall, English National Opera, London Museums and London Artistic worlds. They have created an environment where African students feel their history, culture, languages, religion and individual identities are respected and valued within the school curriculum. Black History Month is part of the curriculum and well celebrated in all the schools.

Well-coordinated targeted support and guidance

All case study schools adopt a holistic approach to supporting and guiding Black African pupils and parents. This is manifested in various ways. The use of the ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) in raising achievement is seen as a core task of the form tutor and much of the focus of the EMAG department is on English as an additional language (EAL). One case study school is involved in the London Challenge 'Making the Grade' project. In another school the head of EMAG, reframed as the achievement co-ordinator in this school, works with a team of two learning mentors and home-school liaison officers in some cases. There is a systematic use of data to trace pupils and design interventions to ensure students are on track. Although Black African pupils are targeted for EAL support as some come from French-speaking African countries or East Africa, they are a small minority of the 'case work' of the team. However it is felt that early interventions with those Black African students who are referred, tend to have immediate impact.

All schools have a gospel choir which have grown in popularity particularly, but not exclusively, with Black African pupils. Both students and teachers consider the choir to have had a motivating and positive impact on students who are involved. In one school, the gospel choir now involves over 70 pupils who are invited to lead assemblies and do early evening recitals, but who are also encouraged to be part of the main school's classical choir.

All schools have mentoring arrangements in place. Almost all staff are recruited from the local community. One school has two learning mentors and a school counsellor. Another has informal mentoring from staff. Pupils feel that teachers look out for them and provide a range of opportunities for individual special talents to emerge. One girl, recently arrived from Burundi having spent 6 years in a refugee camp, has been encouraged to develop as a long-distance runner and now represents the county. Her prowess at running was something that had only been noticed at this school.

The range of extra curricular opportunities is seen as a great strength. Examples include intervention programmes e.g. booster and catch up classes, homework clubs, breakfast clubs, the Oxbridge Access programmes, Saturday coursework clinics, a good range of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, a strong programme of arts and drama opportunities and a range of supplementary additional activities under the Aim Higher widening participation banner. These include trips to Higher Education institutions, Houses of Parliament, the South Bank and opportunities to travel and perform. The success of these is evident in the display boards which are an exceptional feature of one school. On every corridor the school displays students' achievement within class and beyond. The media resources officer does an excellent job at capturing the school at work and play, which reinforces the ethos of the school. The new sports hall and new sixth form provision also signal that the school cares about the experience of students and is ambitious on their behalf. Widening participation and raising students' expectations are considered within the Aim Higher framework. A pupil in one focus group looked round at her six other peers and described in each case the *'special talent'* the school had brought out and nurtured. For example, *'X is an amazing actress who recently performed in a school play in a theatre in Croydon; Y was noticed by the physical education department and now sees herself as an athlete, she now runs for the county and wants to become a doctor.'*

One school has devised a 'parallel curriculum' for those pupils who are having difficulty in Key Stage 3. Each term the school runs a short programme (students are withdrawn from five lessons) of yoga, drama therapy, circle time, and anger management to support students who are underachieving. Students are referred by form tutors to the head of year who liaises with parents. The emphasis is on supporting students to become better and more focused learners. Initially this was a response to poor or deteriorating behaviour, but is increasingly seen as a key tool for working with students with

low self-esteem and coping strategies. It tends to be most effective in Year 7 and Year 8; Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) and timetabling makes it more problematic in Year 9 but the programme is generally seen as effective.   Parents are often initially resistant but once fears are allayed, the programme is supported. Learning mentors and teaching assistants are encouraged to attend parents' evenings as part of the team and their role also includes supporting parents of children who are having difficulties.

Many Black African families go to church a number of times in a week including midweek and weekends.   Pupils and staff often attend the same local churches. Not only does this provide a sense of family, but ensures the strong Christian or synonymous Muslim ethos is supported by the school.

This school has highly effective pastoral systems which are linked to achievement. These include the full range of intervention programmes listed above. Staff often use mobile phone text messaging to notify parents of good behaviour and suggest treats as a reward. Sanctions are framed within an achievement culture so if students transgress, their punishment is linked to catching up on work missed. Interventions include compulsory attendance at Key Stage 4 (KS4) Saturday morning classes to catch up on missed work and meet coursework deadlines.

There is excellent follow-up support given to students who are suspended or permanently excluded, sanctions genuinely used as a last resort. Early intervention with individual pupils always involves parents at an early stage.   The school's philosophy is that parents are partners and have to be involved in sharing the problem and the solution and data is part of the evidence used to underpin such processes.

Interviews with pupils in all schools confirmed the support and guidance described above. Students described the aspiration that there is no such thing as an unreachable case and that an achievement culture is applauded in school. Schools see its goal as one in which achievement is given the same respect as 'street creed' and this makes pupils strive to be a success. Teachers were said to give up their Saturdays to help with coursework to build *'that learning mentality'* in pupils. If you fall behind, it is noticed. Students noted that in Black African families, everyone has a role to play in achieving the family goals. Students are seen as role models to siblings and to family back home. Many families know the reality of poverty in Africa for those who did not have access to or succeed in education, hence the aspiration and the discipline. Schools also '*support my belief that God is central to my life and purpose*.'

One student summed up the school's strengths with the following words:

> '*solid foundation, community, loving, diverse and Christian. The schools are sensitive to the pressure that some Black African students face to conform and deliver their parents' aspirations and concerns about domestic workload of some students, while their parents are out at work in the evening, is seen as unreasonable and has to be mediated with parents*.'

The way one girl described the support and guidance received from her school summarises how these schools support their pupils:

> '*At the beginning your parents and teachers are running alongside you and coaching/driving you with their aspirations e.g. Aim Higher visits etc, but at some point in Year 11, you begin to run on your own, and want their goals for yourself. Even after that the school is still looking out for you – monitoring.*'

This was qualified by her parent who stated:

> *'The school has given her the confidence, it has helped her to discover her direction. I feel that I do not have to impose it, the school has helped her to come to that knowledge and understanding herself. I have become merely the taxi driver.'*

Effective use of data for monitoring and self-evaluation

Use of performance data for school improvement is a strength of the case study schools. Data is used as a driving force for raising standards and is central to the school self-evaluation process.

In all case study schools an experienced deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher leads work in monitoring pupils' performance. These schools are now in a data rich environment and children are assessed at age 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 using key stage assessments, Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs) and GCSE public examinations (see Demie 2003a for details). Schools use spreadsheets and school management software to keep careful records of all pupils. It is possible to look at attainment using baseline assessments / tests on entry, KS2, KS3 and GCSE by any combination of ethnic origin, gender, free school meal status, mobility rate, EAL stage, SEN stage, years in the school, term of birth, which teachers classes had been attended, previous school, number of schools attended, date of admission and pupil addresses and postcodes. Schools produce their own internal CAT, KS3 and GCSE information that is widely used by senior managers, assessment co-ordinators, heads of year, heads of department and classroom teachers.

In addition schools effectively use RAISEonline reports for self-evaluation. RAISEonline is circulated to the senior management team. In the words of one of the deputy headteachers responsible for monitoring performance he pointed out that *'RAISEonline is useful but it does not tell us any thing we do not know. It confirms our judgements.'*

The schools also use a range of historical comprehensive benchmarking, contextual and value-added data provided by the Local Authority (*see Demie 2003a: 449-461 for details*). Schools use the Local Authority School Profile which provides a comprehensive set of benchmarking data to support governors and headteachers in developing their roles and exercising their responsibilities for the strategic management of schools. The school profile data is used to identify possible strengths and weaknesses of the school and asks a number of questions of overall school performance such as *'What does it tell me about my school? Do we know why we are in that position? Are we happy to be where we are? Where do we want to be in one or two year's time and how do we get there?'* (Demie 2003a:463).

In addition, the case study schools extensively use customised Local Authority contextual and value-added data (see Figure 5 for sample). The KS3 and KS4 contextual report provides analysis by factors such as gender, ethnic background, fluency in English, free school meals and mobility rate. Value-added data is also used extensively in schools to track the performance of individual pupils to monitor their educational progress[1]. This value-added information is '*seen in the schools, along with other pupil performance information, as essential to enhance teachers' abilities to analyse their*

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[1] The school uses value-added scatter plots for all subjects between KS2 and GCSE with a confidential code number for each pupil. In the attached sample of a median line value-added chart, the solid line shows the median performance, i.e. 50% of pupils nationally with a particular KS2 score achieved a GCSE results above the line, and 50% achieved the result below it. The two thin outer red lines represent the upper and lower quartiles, and pupils above the top line are in the top 25% nationally, conversely, the pupils below the lower line in the lower quartile and area making the least progress.

effectiveness in terms of the progress their pupils have made and to enable them to take necessary steps for improvement' (Demie 2003a: 453).

The schools and governors use contextual and value-added reports to monitor progress over time and to identify factors influencing performance, to identify key areas of action, to ensure improvements and to set targets and address issues of underperforming groups of pupils. Over time the schools own data, the Local Authority contextual and value-added reports and RAISEonline reports have been very useful in asking a number of the following questions in context of factors influencing performance in the school:

- How does the school compare to other borough schools in respect of performance at entry (KS2), KS3 and GCSE, by gender, free school meals, mobility rate, terms of birth and level of fluency in English?
- What is the relative performance of different ethnic groups and mobile pupils in the school compared to the Local Authority average and similar schools?
- How many pupils appear to be achieving less than expected levels at the end of KS3 and GCSE tests?
- What are the school's strengths and weaknesses?
- What must be done to improve?

These questions are debated and discussed at staff and governors meetings as a basis for self-evaluation and raising standards in all schools. As a result the senior management team, teaching staff and governors are now well informed of the performance trends of the schools.

Examples of the use of data in two case study schools:

School A: This case study school is well known nationally for raising the achievement of underachieving groups through effective use of data. The school was featured in a series of Local Authority reports and an OfSTED report Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Secondary Schools (see OfSTED 2002, and McKenley et al 2003). The attainment of Black African pupils in this school is consistently high. The school's GCSE performance in 2012 at grades 5 A*-C including English and Maths was 87% and is the highest in the Local Authority. The standard of attainment of GCSE is high and the improvement rate has been impressive over the last few years. Since 2006, the percentage of pupils gaining 5+*-C including English and Maths increased from 66% to 87% in 2012. 94% of African heritage pupils in the school achieved this measure compared to 79% Caribbean and 90% White British. The value-added of the school is also very impressive and pupils in the school progress much higher than similar pupils nationally (see sample Figure 5) with a higher proportion of pupils in the upper quartile and inter quartile ranges. African pupils progress better than any other group as 29% are in the upper quartile compared to 25% nationally. The interquartile performance is even higher as 69% of African pupils are in this range compared to 50% nationally. Only 2% are in the lower quartile range making less progress, compared to 25% expected nationally. Previous studies and current evidence again confirms that good use of data is a basic feature of this schools practice. In particular:

1. Monitoring of pupil progress is seen as a core activity for the class teacher and the school. The school undertakes extensive assessment using NFER tests at Year 7, CATs at Year 8, KS3 assessment at Year 9 and GCSE at Year 11 and keeps detailed records for tracking all pupils' performance. This data is

analysed by ethnicity, gender, free school meals, mobility rate, EAL level of fluency in English, SEN stage and term of birth and which teachers classes had been attended. Data is used to provide baseline to monitor and review progress, especially to identify signs of underachievement and to help set targets for the pupils and subject departments. Data is made available across the school and is used by teachers, heads of department, assessment co-coordinators and the senior management team to help review the pupil progress. The data is also shared with the school governors who help to determine the schools' budget and priorities.

2.   The school extensively uses KS2 to GCSE value-added data to improve the attainment of individual pupils, in addition to monitoring the standards of year groups or the whole school. Each individual pupil is plotted on the chart according to their GCSE point score and a level point score.

3.   Ethnic monitoring is seen as an effective method of raising achievement levels. It is used positively as a means of identify learning issues and shortcomings in school provision to make target setting more responsive to the needs of students. Each year in this school, when KS3 and GCSE results are available, heads of departments prepare a very detailed response regarding academic achievement including their conclusions of ethnic background to target individual students.

4.   Teachers use data effectively to review the performance and expectations of pupils, to identify groups of pupils who are underachieving and to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. The school encourages teachers to plot their student results and set challenging, but realistic targets.

5.   The senior management team sifts through the data to pick out highlights and address issues at least one weekend a year, as part of school away day. Every department then spends a day writing a departmental action plan, for which the department analyses the results of every cohort of students.

School B: This school also uses similar data as above but the successful use of data in this school owes much to capable and determined assistant headteachers who have sole responsibility for monitoring the effective use of data in the school. In this school the assistant headteacher is responsible for collating and monitoring trends, results and analysis of how well the school performed in relation to similar schools and schools nationally. Comparisons are made between subjects, mostly using value-added analyses. In this school, heads of departments are held accountable for their examination results and this has helped to sharpen the focus to raise achievement. Heads of departments are expected to identify and target specific areas of improvement in their development plan. Teachers are also asked to identify and monitor the progress of individual pupils who are underachieving. The departments have developed a strong sense of pride and unity of purpose in their effort to improve teaching and learning through effective use of data.

The appointment of the assistant headteacher five years ago was key and the school now has an individual tracking system that is used to produce a termly class profile and to monitor the progress of individual pupils, class and groups at all key stages.

> *'To build the process the school developed first a baseline profile on
> each student in order to establish their strengths, areas of
> improvement and identify future potential. This data is now used to
> set targets for each student and to monitor progress towards the
> target throughout the year. We look at the information year by year
> and identify key issues that may need to be addressed.'*

The school is particularly proud of its approach to ethnic monitoring. It uses ethnicity data to identify individual strengths and weaknesses. This monitoring is done by all teachers and heads of departments. It was clearly noted during the assistant headteacher's interview and classroom observations that teachers are using data in a number of ways to motivate their class pupils:

> *'Every child in the school knows their previous results and what they
> should achieve at GCSE. I use the data quite a lot to target Maths
> pupils at GCSE using KS2, KS3 and QCA option tests. Using this data I
> am telling children how far they are off the next grade. Our
> experience is that this helps pupils and motivates them. Having the
> information also does help the teachers to be able to focus on what
> they trying to achieve.'*

The use of data at all levels by teachers, the senior management team (SMT) and department heads also means that areas of weakness are picked up and can become a priority for early interventions.

The school has been effective for a long time in using data to identify particular pupils who are underachieving. Schools look at the pupils who are underachieving at a very early stage against the KS2, KS3 results and this has led to a number of interventions and strategies where data analysis highlighted issues to be addressed in the school. The most commonly reported interventions in the school as a result of looking at the data, were providing additional support including one to one, booster groups, tailoring teaching levels of the curriculum, mentoring and target setting.

Overall the use of data in the school for tracking pupils' progress, target setting, identifying underachievement, monitoring departmental performance and informing teaching and learning is widespread. A comment from the assistant headteacher captured the climate and views in the school about effective use of data, which supports conclusions raised in this paper:

> *'Data is critical for raising standards. Without data it is difficult to
> assess the strengths and weaknesses of the school and track
> individual pupils' performance to improve teaching and learning.
> Teachers need good data and it is a requirement for all schools. Not
> just having it but using it effectively.'*

Figure 5: National median line relating pupils' KS2 APS in 2007 to their uncapped GCSE total points score 2012
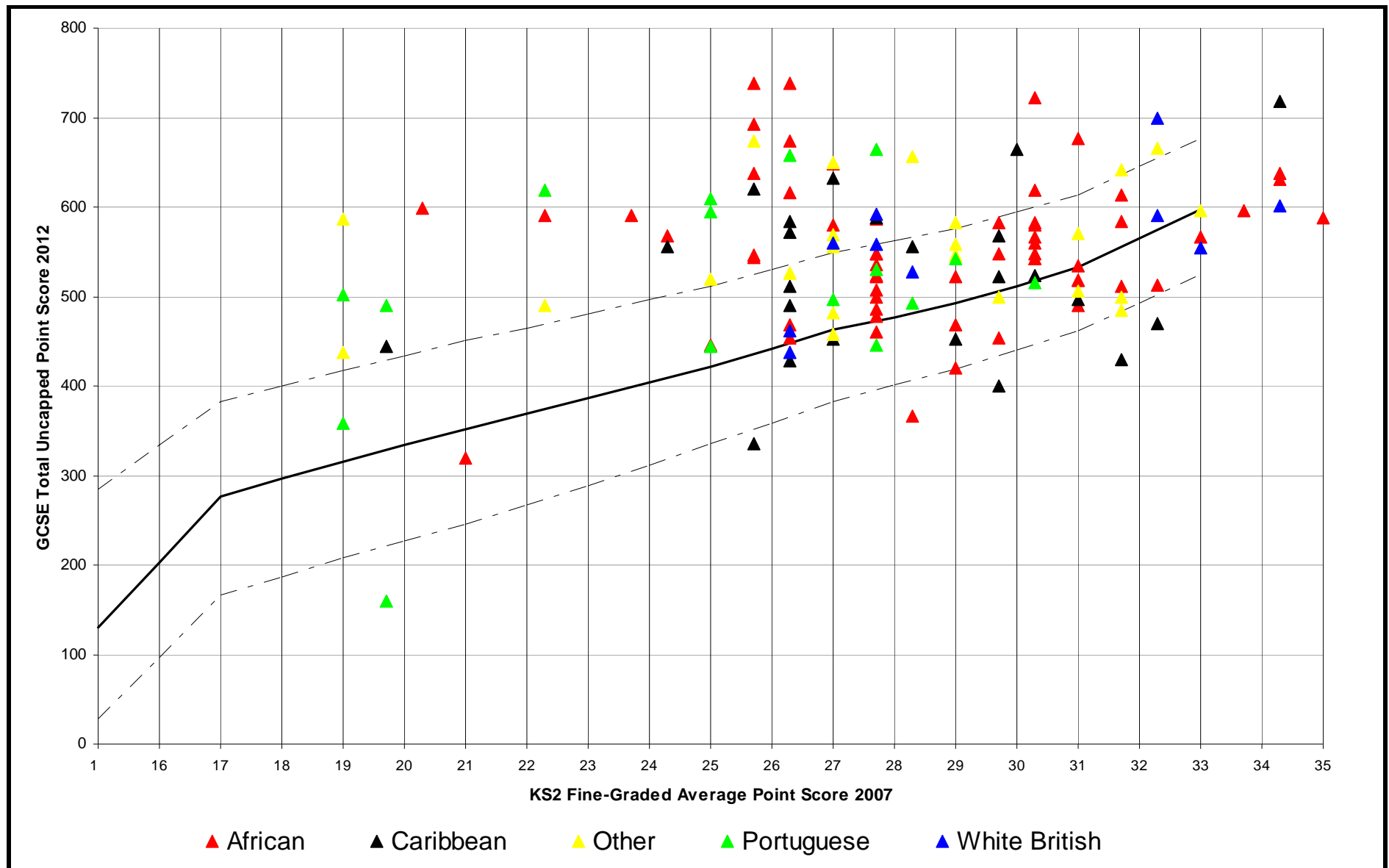
Effective support for English as an additional language

Support for EAL is a strength of the schools. The schools recognise that proficiency in English is the key to educational success for their bilingual learners. Our observations and interviews with staff suggest that the level of expertise within the schools to support students with learning English as an additional language is outstanding. Departments are very small but the EAL coordinators are well qualified, experienced, knowledgeable and very committed to the profession. Specialist staff, for example those who support students with EAL, provide effective support during lessons and elsewhere. As a result, there is a clear package of support for pupils with EAL. This starts with a detailed assessment on arrival in order to place the student to his or her best advantage and inform teachers of the new pupil and their needs. It continues with rigorous scrutiny and analyses of students' performance data in order to appropriately target resources towards specific individuals or groups.

The interviews and observations clearly demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of EAL pedagogy and strategies that have been developed as a result and which ensure that the teaching of pupils with EAL is in-class, where language would be contextually embedded. Withdrawal sessions are planned only for the immediate needs of new arrivals or to address specific needs. Most schools have clear induction processes for new arrivals, which incorporate assessment of both English and where possible of their literacy and numeracy skills in their first language, to ensure that teaching is pitched at the appropriate cognitive level.

Teaching strategies to engage EAL learners have been carefully planned in all the case study schools. It is very evident that in all schools EAL is not an 'add on', but is seen as an advantage and considered within every aspect of school life. As one headteacher commented *'EAL is not a barrier but a bonus'* and another *'As staff we don't see it as a challenge, we see it as an opportunity ….we have all these EAL children, what a wonderful opportunity to share our languages and our culture … EAL permeates everything we do.'* Examples given were:

- using the children's languages and home stories in school in teaching and learning
- training embedded within school development, for example, where maths was the focus, a training session and subsequent classroom observations focused on EAL issues and strategies in maths
- liaison between the EAL coordinator and curriculum manager to ensure the EAL perspective was embedded in the curriculum
- reading interventions reviewed and adapted to make more appropriate for EAL learners

On every visit, all staff talked about effective EAL practice being 'automatic' and senior managers considered it to be an integral part of high quality teaching. There is no one key strategy, but rather a holistic approach which incorporates a range of teaching strategies known to be effective for EAL learners. This chosen model has clearly developed sustainability within the schools, especially in those where EAL trained teachers work in partnership with class teachers and is summarised by the teacher who commented that *'we weren't here for the EAL programme, but we have learnt from the school because that's the way it's still done here. The EAL teacher has modelled it for us too.'*

There is a strong focus on learning in the school to make sure no EAL student falls behind. Through detailed monitoring and tracking, EAL students below the expected level or at risk of falling behind, are quickly identified and individual needs are targeted. All students are assessed carefully using the Lambeth stages of fluency in English to ensure that they receive the appropriate support and are making the required progress. The most common types of data driven intervention employed in the school are: providing additional support, including one to one support or booster groups; making

changes to the teaching programme or curriculum such as more personalised learning; differentiated teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils with EAL; other targeted initiatives to improve performance. In addition, the EAL coordinators keep a register of all children with EAL needs in the school by year group and the school is very good at tracking the performance of EAL children. This register records their name, sex, date of birth, date on roll, SEN, family origins, home language/s including literacy, their stage of English fluency by each year throughout their school career and attainment and test results. This information is updated once a term. All class teachers are given this information so that they have an up to date picture of their pupils' EAL stages.

Figure 6: EAL students GCSE performance by levels of fluency in English
(5+ A*-C including English and Maths)
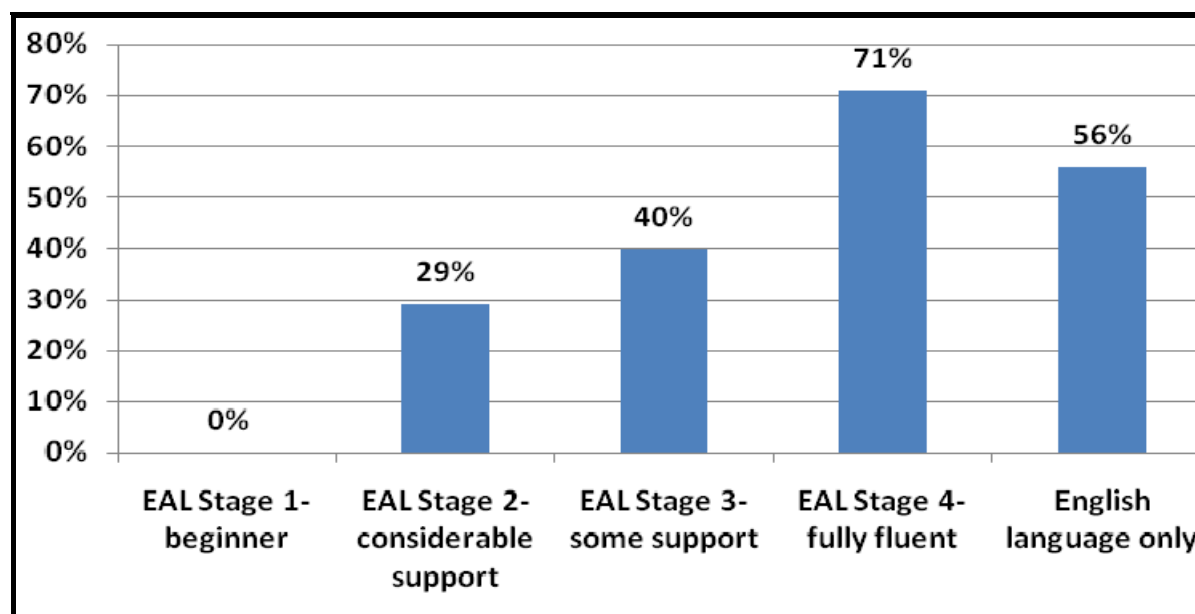
The extents to which EAL students make progress in the LA schools are shown in Figure 5 and 6 and samples of case studies are outlined below. This evidence shows that students make rapid progress and achieve outstanding results.

Case Study A: Student A came from Angola in 1999 and attended primary school at Kensington and Chelsea. She speaks Portuguese at home and was fluent in English by the time she completed key stage 2, gaining Level 4+ in English, maths and science. Through targeted support which included booster classes, one to one tuition, and in class intervention, she achieved As at GCSE in French, mathematics and Portuguese, B in English literature, C in English language, business studies, economics, religious studies and science.; D in arts and design (textiles). What is particularly special about student A is that her value-added score tops national expectations and she has shown excellent progress between KS2 and GCSE.

Case Study B: EAL Student B speaks Yoruba as a mother tongue and came from Nigeria in 2000. He was at beginner (stage 1) level of fluency in English when he started his primary education in Lambeth. Through targeted support which included one to one support and booster classes his language fluency improved fast. At GCSE he achieved A* in Chemistry, English Language, English Literature, Spanish and D&T Textiles Tech; with A grades in Biology, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies, Citizenship. He

also achieved C in Applied ICT and Study Skills. The school has made a big impact on Child B. He is one of the high flier EAL students. In addition to excellent performance in threshold results his value-added progressive between KS2 and GCSE was also excellent and top of the national league.

Case Study C: Student C is Black African of Somali heritage and arrived in UK in 2005. She attended a Lambeth primary school and was assessed as stage 2 when she took the KS2 tests, that is, she required considerable English support to access the national curriculum. As a result of her English language barrier, her results at KS2 showed that she achieved no level in English, 2 in Maths and 4 in science. However, with the help of the school this has changed considerably. Through one to one, booster classes and in-class support, her level of English fluency improved to stage 4 (fully fluent) by the time she took GCSE. The school's support was considerable and this helped her to achieve B in History, Mathematics, Religious Studies, Science; C in English Language, English Literature, French, Citizenship and Sociology. This is a remarkable achievement for a child who had had only six years in the UK Education system.

Case Study D: Student D came from Somalia in 1999 and attended primary school in Lambeth. She speaks Somali at home and was a beginner English speaker on arrival in the UK. She achieved Level 4+ in English, maths and level 5+ in science at KS2. By the time she completed GCSEs her fluency in English had improved to stage 4 (fully fluent). Through targeted support, which included booster classes, one to one tuition, and in-class intervention, she achieved A grades at GCSE in English Literature and Mathematics, with B grades in English Language, Chemistry, Physics, Religious Studies and Study Skills. She also achieved C grades in Biology, Engineering, Statistics and Business Studies. What is particularly special about student D is that her value-added score tops national expectations and she has shown excellent progress between KS2 and GCSE.

Case Study E: Student E is Black African and of Somali heritage. She attended primary school in Lambeth. She speaks Somali at home and was completely new to English on arrival in 2000. Her English fluency improved rapidly and she achieved level 5+ in English, maths and science at the end of KS2. Through effective targeted support at school, she achieved A* in English Language, English Literature, French, Biology, Chemistry, History, Mathematics, Physics, Religious studies; A grades in Additional Maths, Citizenship, Statistics, and B in Study Skills. The school has made a big impact on her learning and academic progress and her value added score topped national expectations.

In all case study schools, a high priority is placed on supporting language acquisition amongst EAL students not fluent in English. This often appeared to be a dominant feature of curriculum developments in these schools. The teaching and class support for EAL is well organized and led by EAL coordinators. In general, in all of these schools, pupils in the early stages of fluency perform at very low levels, while bilingual pupils who are fully fluent in English perform better, on average, than English-only speakers. As a concluding remark, we would argue that the schools are highly effective at analysing data in order to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving. The excellent range of support provided has had a positive impact on the achievement of EAL pupils and those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.

Section 5:   Conclusions

This research aims to examine performance trends and the success factors behind high achievement of Black African students in schools. The main findings of the research show that Black African students were more likely to gain good grades above their peers at GCSE. There are a number of reasons why Black African students are bucking the national trends. The study identified a number of good practices that contribute to the success, including high educational aspiration of African parents and pupils, inspirational leadership, high expectation for all students, diversity in the school workforce, celebration of cultural diversity, strong parental support, an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of African students and adds to their growing pride in being African and strong links with African communities. In addition to the above, Black African parents place an extremely high value on education and teachers in the schools are equipped to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of children of Black African heritage. What is particularly special about these schools is that local communities are represented well in the school and they have staff who speak many of the languages of the local community. As a result children feel that they can relate to a member of staff from their own cultural background and are highly motivated. The study concludes that the main reasons for this success story are the quality of the education provided by schools and strong parental support of their children's education.

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