Lambeth
Education

HEADTEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF PUPIL MOBILITY IN LAMBETH SCHOOLS

1. Introduction[1]

This paper examines the nature and causes of pupil mobility in schools and the implications of high mobility for the target setting process and school strategies for raising achievement.

Pupil mobility is defined as a 'a child joining or leaving school at a point other than the normal age at which children start or finish their education at that school'.

A survey was carried out in Lambeth schools in Autumn 2002. Information was sought on headteachers' views about the importance of addressing pupil mobility problems in their school, mobile groups and housing and family situations contributing to pupil mobility, and strategies adopted or considered in the future to address mobility. A total of 71 questionnaires were sent to the headteachers of all LEA primary and secondary schools. Of these, 59 questionnaires were returned, of which 51 were from primary schools and 8 from the 10 secondary schools (the response rates being 76% and 80% respectively). The overall response rate is higher than a typical postal questionnaire, but it is nevertheless important that the results are interpreted with caution in terms of generalising them. The main findings of the survey are summarised below:

2. Extent of pupil mobility in Lambeth schools

Table 1. Range of mobility rates in the LEA's schools

Mobility rate (%)	KS2 Cohort		GCSE Cohort	
	Number of Schools	%	Number of Schools	%
0-5	7	11.7	1	10.0
6-10	9	15.0	0	0.0
11-15	10	16.7	3	30.0
16-20	6	10.0	1	10.0
21-25	12	20.0	2	20.0
26-30	6	10.0	2	20.0
31-35	6	10.0	0	0.0
Over 35	4	6.6	1	10.0
Average Mobility	**60**	**20.0**	**10**	**22.0**

Table 1 summarises the main findings, giving the mobility rate by each cohort group taking national curriculum tests, and shows there was a variation between schools in the percentage of mobile pupils. Several features are immediately noticeable from this table:

- The analysis is based on the results of the samples of 2,422 pupils who completed KS2, and 1,244 pupils at GCSE. Of these, 20% of the pupils were mobile at KS2 and 22% at GCSE.
- About 26% of the primary schools had a mobility rate of less than 11%, 57% of the schools had a mobility rate between 11-30% and 10 schools had more than 30% mobility rate at KS2.

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The pattern of the mobility rate at GCSE was similar with 1 school less than 11%, 8 schools between 11 and 30% and 1 school over 31%

- The present average mobility figures already conceal a wide variation between schools. Among primary schools, the mobility rate was as high as 48% and as low as 0% at KS2. The corresponding figures for secondary schools were 55% and 2% respectively.

3. *Social background of mobile pupils in schools*

Table 2 shows the background characteristics of mobile pupils in schools. Three factors that are helpful to understand the nature of mobility were considered – eligibility for free school meals, level of fluency in English and ethnic background. Again, the pattern conforms to prior expectations about mobile pupils given what is known about social deprivation and the nature of pupils' mobility within the LEA as discussed above.

Table 2. Social Background of Mobile Pupils (%)

Social Background	KS2 Cohort		GCSE Cohort	
	Non-mobile	Mobile	Non-mobile	Mobile
Free Meals	41%	42%	39%	40%
Bilingual Stage 1-3	33%	19%	11%	29%
Bilingual Stage 1-4	45%	35%	33%	51%
English Speakers Only	54%	64%	67%	38%

Previous similar studies have indicated that mobile pupils are somewhat more disadvantaged than their non-mobile colleagues in terms of their free meals eligibility. This year, however, although this still remains the case, the gap is much smaller. For instance in the KS2 cohort 41% of non-mobile pupils are entitled to free school meals compared to 42% of mobile pupils. The corresponding figure for the GCSE cohort was 39% and 40% respectively.

There are questions about the reliability of using free school meals for new arrivals as some of them may not be entitled to claim free meals immediately. This may have distorted the aggregate statistics, which under normal conditions may have indicated a somewhat more disadvantaged position when compared to non-mobile groups.

In addition, the data in Table 2 confirms that mobile pupils in the LEA were more likely to be bilingual pupils with English as an additional language than were those who had been at the same school throughout. These findings are significant for studying the relationship between mobility and educational achievement. Previous research in Lambeth suggests that children who are non fluent in English have restricted access to the national curriculum and tend to do less well than those fluent in English.

4. *Nature and causes of pupil mobility in schools*

Overall, the finding from the above analysis is that the LEA pupil population is in a state of perpetual flux. Evidence from three years' trend data confirms that every year, pupils join schools and pupils leave schools. This is not surprising because during that period, in several countries, there were political and social crises which prompted the unexpected arrival in the LEA of significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers from Africa, Asia, Latin American and former Eastern Bloc countries and also large numbers of migrants from the European community including Portuguese speaking migrants.

As always, there are problems with the findings above without further analysis by background factors that are responsible for a high mobility within LEA schools. However, previous studies in the LEA indicate that schools whose catchment areas fall in disadvantaged areas within the borough have a high level of mobility. This section gives details of the findings of a survey into the nature and causes of pupil mobility in the LEA schools. A total of 59 schools returned the completed survey form. Of these, 88% of primary schools and 60% of secondary schools

agreed that pupil mobility was an issue for school management and development of strategies for raising standards in the school.

Table 3 below shows that 84% of primary school respondents in Lambeth thought that it was either very or fairly important to address mobility issues in their school, compared with 75% of secondary schools. It may be that mobility is more of an issue in primary schools where the movement of a few children has a proportionately bigger effect than in secondary schools. The national study also found that mobility in the primary sector was generally higher than in the secondary sector, and so more likely to be an issue. This corresponds with previous research, which showed that families with younger children were more likely to move.

Table 3. Headteachers' views on the importance of addressing pupil mobility problems

	Primary	Secondary	Total (%)	Total (No)
Very Important	40%	25%	39%	23
Fairly Important	44%	50%	44%	26
Not Important	14%	25%	15%	9
Total	50	8	-	58-

Three questions were further asked to understand the causes and circumstances of pupil mobility in schools. The first question was *which of the following groups contribute to both inward and outward pupil mobility in your school?* The main response from the survey suggests that the most commonly cited group that contributed to school mobility was "overseas migrants coming to join relatives or to work in London", with 71% of schools selecting this category. This was closely followed by "Social mobility from certain areas to others" at 66% and then by "Refugees/Asylum Seekers", which was a factor for 64% of schools.

Table 4. Mobile Groups Contributing to Pupil Mobility: Responses by School Type

Mobile Groups Factor	Primary	Secondary	All (%)	No
Refugees/Asylum seekers	62%	75%	64%	38
Families moving for work-related reasons	46%	75%	51%	30
Overseas migration to London for work/to join relatives	72%	63%	71%	42
Social mobility from one area to another	70%	38%	66%	39
High income families moving children to private sector	28%	13%	25%	15
Homeless families placed in temporary accommodation	50%	50%	51%	30
Single parents fleeing violence	34%	38%	36%	21
Seasonal workers	4%	0%	3%	2
Total	50	8	-	58

The second question related to links between housing and mobility and asked *which of the following housing situations contributed to pupil mobility in schools?* The most common reason for schools to experience inward mobility in the last year was due to "movement of families around Council and Housing Association accommodation" (66%). "Emergency re-housing" and "temporary accommodation" also contributed to inward mobility for about half the schools who responded. Data from the national survey also shows similar evidence and suggested that temporary accommodation and social housing were the most frequent responses. Since Refugees/Asylum seekers are very likely to be placed in temporary accommodation, it is not surprising that both these factors are mentioned in this LEA and in the national survey as contributing to mobility. A number of schools in the LEA also mentioned lack of choice of good secondary schools and parents moving to be closer to better secondary schools.

Table 5. Housing situations contributing to Pupil Mobility: Responses by School Type

Housing situations factor	Primary	Secondary	All (%)	No
New housing development	18%	20%	17%	10
Regeneration projects/demolition of high-rise flats	12%	13%	12%	7
Movement of families around council and housing association accommodation	68%	50%	66%	39

Emergency re-housing by Council/Housing Association	46%	50%	48%	28
Temporary accommodation (e.g. hostels and B & Bs)	46%	50%	48%	28
High level of surplus accommodation in the area	0%	13%	2%	1
Proximity to a Woman's Refuge	16%	25%	17%	10
Owner occupied housing	20%	13%	19%	11
Total	50	8	-	58

The third question relating to causes of mobility covered domestic circumstances and asked *which of the following individual/family situations are related to both inward and outward mobility in your school?* The most frequently mentioned situation cited as contributing to mobility was family breakdown/division. Table 6 shows that over half of the responding schools in the LEA cited family breakdown/division as the most likely individual/family situation to contribute to both inward and outward mobility in their school. Children taken into care was the next most relevant individual/family factor that contributed to mobility in schools. Other factors commented on by headteachers include unemployment of the breadwinner, job relocation, children joining families from overseas, children moving between schools, and those attending one school, while being on the waiting list for another 'more popular' school.

Table 6. Family situation contributing to Pupil Mobility: Responses by School Type

Family Situation Factor	Primary	Secondary	All (%)	No
Family breakdown/division	58%	75%	61%	36
Children taken into care	28%	50%	32%	19
Children who have been permanently excluded	14%	25%	17%	10
Bullying	14%	25%	17%	10
Total	50	8	-	58

5. *Strategies adopted by schools to address mobility problems*

One of the main aims of the school survey was to know the strategies adopted or considered in the future to address mobility problems in school. The findings from this survey are shown in Table 7 and give a useful overview of the work schools are undertaking to address mobility issues. Of the strategies reported by headteachers, the majority of schools (73%) were undertaking statistical analysis and tracking of pupil performance to help address the issue of mobility in their schools, and many schools were also providing language support for mobile bilingual pupils. Within this general framework, a number of other strategies adopted or to be considered are reported in Table 7. Further analysis also revealed that the types of strategy adopted by schools varied according to whether they were primary or secondary schools. For example, the three strategies which were most frequently reported to be in use at primary level were: undertaking statistical analysis and tracking of pupil performance, language support for mobile bilingual pupils, and target setting and literacy and numeracy initiatives focussing on mobile pupils, as Table 7 shows. In contrast, the four strategies that were most frequently reported to be in use or considered at the secondary level were target setting, language support for mobile bilingual pupils, undertaking statistical analyses and tracking of pupil performance, literacy and numeracy initiatives focussing on mobile pupils and training staff.

Table 7. Strategies adopted or considered in the future to address mobility problems in school: Responses by School Type

Strategies to address mobility problems	Primary	Secondary	All (%)	No
Training staff on issues of mobility	14%	38%	19%	11
Devising guidelines on mobility issues	18%	25%	19%	11
Statistically analysing and tracking pupil performance to inform policy	72%	75%	73%	43
New forms of class room organisation including setting	22%	25%	22%	13
Language support for bilingual mobile pupils	64%	75%	66%	39
Literacy and numeracy initiatives focussing on mobile pupils	36%	38%	37%	22
Target setting	60%	63%	61%	36
Total	50	8	-	58