

Transforming Education

The Lambeth Story



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The views expressed in the research report, however, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Lambeth Council. We accept full and sole responsibility for any mistakes or unintentional misrepresentations in reporting the findings.

Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser for School Self-evaluation
Christabel McLean, Former Headteacher and Education Adviser



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Note:

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are the local councils in England that are responsible for education. Lambeth was a Local Education Authority (LEA) from 1990 to 2005. This was changed to the term Local Authority (LA) by the Children’s Act 2004.

Executive Summary

The main purpose of this research is to explore the remarkable transformation of education in Lambeth, and to examine the success factors behind its outstanding improvement. It draws lessons from a decade of research undertaken in the local authority (LA) and asks the following questions: Why is the LA achieving so well? What are the factors contributing to this success? What are the lessons for school improvement?

Four complementary methodological approaches were used. Firstly, a review of literature including papers, minutes of the education committee, scrutiny committee and Ofsted LA inspections reports were carried out in order to ascertain the historical context of Lambeth as a local authority. Secondly, KS2, GCSE attainment data and Ofsted judgments were analysed to explore changes. Thirdly, using an ethnographic approach, detailed case studies were carried through discussions with headteachers and staff to gather evidence on how well the LA was achieving and what the factors were contributing to this. Fourthly, a survey was undertaken to collate the views of Lambeth headteachers, teachers, former Directors of Education, governors, school improvement advisers and council staff on what they perceived as being the reasons behind the transformational shift in educational outcomes in Lambeth. This was further triangulated with the findings of the case studies to identify examples of good practice.

The research findings confirm that attainment at KS2 and GCSE has risen much faster in Lambeth than nationally and is now six percentage points above the national average. This is a huge improvement compared to a decade ago when its schools' performance was 20% below the national average. There are a number of reasons why the schools and LA are bucking the national trend. The research identified eleven key factors that have underpinned the transformation of the local authority including:

1. Ambitious LA leadership at all levels
2. Strong school leadership
3. High quality teaching and learning
4. Effective governing bodies
5. Effective research and data service
6. An effective school improvement service
7. Maintaining strong partnerships and trust
8. Effective use of local initiatives and support for school causing concern
9. Tackling disadvantage beyond the school gates
10. Effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language

These factors are explored in detail in the study. The lessons from Lambeth suggest that a well-managed and effective LA can make a real difference in raising achievement and narrowing gaps in the locality it serves. The overall conclusion of this study is that Lambeth LA has bucked the national trend through the use of a range of strategies to raise educational attainment at KS2 and GCSE and has transformed education in its schools. The study argues that improvement in the LA's schools in the last decade is an exceptional achievement and offers a worthwhile example of a success story that is worth learning from by central government.

The research findings also contain a number of important messages for central government. There is a need to end the confusing and muddled structure of the English school system. The current government's policy strategies of transferring local democratic accountability to either central government, academy chains, academy school commissioners or local Directors of School Standards, have created serious confusion in the English educational system. Parents need access to a single, local body responsible for holding their children's schools to account. Every successful school system in the world has a middle tier of governance between school and central government. England should not ignore the lessons from the successful school systems in the world. Our research identifies a need to strengthen local education authorities' role as the middle tier in the English school system as a means of making the increasingly fragmented schools system better coordinated and more accountable to those it serves for the standards attained by schools. Local authorities are uniquely placed to play this role and to provide a number of key school improvement services including:

- monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervening in schools to ensure they meet statutory requirements
- engaging all schools in the local children's agenda
- performance categorisation for all schools through a School Improvement Monitoring Group (SIMG)
- providing performance data to support school improvement, to identify underachieving pupils and prioritise areas for development
- direct provision of local, high quality traded services

A number of successful local authorities are developing this education service in a variety of different ways by strengthening and re-focusing its school improvement service or by creating 'education trusts' or 'learning trusts' as an autonomous department. Such approaches should be considered positively by central government as it provides local democratic oversight of the school system, while enabling the Director of Education to act swiftly and flexibly, no matter how schools are governed, when concerns are identified. It also ensures that the LA will be able to engage with all schools in the area including academies to improve community cohesion and to tackle disadvantage.



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The context and issues

This study aims to challenge the status quo and inject new ideas into the education debate in the UK by exploring the factors behind the outstanding success story of the transformation of schools in the London Borough of Lambeth.

Over the last three decades considerable attention has been devoted to studying how successful practice has helped in raising achievement against the odds in British schools. A review of available British and international research suggests that efforts to improve school performance and student outcomes have traditionally focused on initiatives and strategies at the individual school level (Ofsted 2009, Demie and Lewis 2010, Barr and Parett 2007). As a result there is a growing body of evidence which shows conclusively how schools that serve disadvantaged communities can, and do perform as well as other schools in more affluent areas. For example, the National Commission on Education (1996) argued that children from deprived backgrounds could perform as well as anyone else. Recent research into good practice in schools by Ofsted (2009), Demie and Lewis (2010), Demie and McLean (2013) also shows schools serving deprived areas can succeed against the odds in raising achievement. The research identified the reasons behind a school's success, which included the quality of teaching and learning, effective leadership at all levels, supportive professional development, investing in staff and their communities, inclusive pastoral care, strong values and high expectations and the effective use of data to monitor performance. One crucial aspect, without which the above would not be as effective, is the quality of leadership by the headteacher. The majority of headteachers spread the credit for success widely but they have played pivotal roles in creating the ethos of the school and exercising strong pedagogical leadership (Ofsted 2009). In addition, Muijis et al (2004) highlighted evidence from British literature which demonstrates that effective leaders exercise a direct and powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students in most countries. They maintain that headteachers in effective and improving schools keep their focus on teaching and learning issues. They put students first, invest in their staff, and nurture their communities. They are also good at proving constantly that disadvantage need not be a barrier to achievement (see Demie and Lewis 2010 and 2013). The issue many policymakers and researchers have ignored is that the impact of deprivation is more widespread than in any single school.

A similar situation exists in the United States. For example, Edmonds (1982) and Williams et al (2005) analysed high-performing schools to identify the common characteristics that could be the source of their success. The USA research on school effectiveness has found that successful schools have strong leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, shared goals in the professional community, parental involvement and a positive and academically focused school climate. Barr and Paret (2007) also completed a meta-analysis of 18 research studies into high performing and high poverty schools across the United States. As in England, their studies are about schools rather than students or districts and local authorities. In general, good practice in education has traditionally focussed on successful schools. Such work has acquired a significant following particularly among education policy makers and school effectiveness and improvement practitioners in the last decade in the UK and USA, yet has largely ignored the work of LAs or districts. However, a few researchers have challenged the status quo. For example, Boyle and Humphreys (2012) looked into how Hackney local authority in England transformed its schools through the leadership of the Learning Trust. Zavadsky's (2009) research was also concerned with what might be learned from successful districts and gave a detailed study of five school districts in the USA that demonstrated the greatest performance and improvement in student overall achievement, while reducing achievement gaps among poor and minority students. She identified good practice such as rigorous standards, 'aligned curriculum' and 'smart investment in human capital' that led to great schools and successful districts. Recently Woods et al (2013) also explored the extraordinary transformation of education in Tower Hamlets and identified seven key factors that are behind the remarkable transformation of education in that local authority. These are:

'Ambitious leadership at all levels, very effective school improvement service, high quality teaching and learning, high levels of funding, external integrated services, community development and partnerships and a resilient approach to external government policies and pressure.' (Woods et al 2013:18)

We would argue that research into school effectiveness and improvement is helpful, but has not focused on Local Education Authority (LEA) and District effectiveness in either the UK or USA. In order to tackle disadvantage more systematically we need to look at high performing education systems in deprived areas, rather than individual schools. Concerned about limitations of scalability when focussing solely on one school, this research focusses at the LA level, with Lambeth LA as a case study. In Lambeth before 1998 many schools struggled to provide a decent standard of education for their pupils, and a significant number were judged to be performing unfavourably against national standards of achievement at KS2 and GCSE. But with the challenge and support of an increasingly effective LA, over a number of years, they made dramatic strides in improvement. Lambeth is therefore an important case study, offering evidence of area based educational

transformation and improvement. It tells us the remarkable story of how a local authority in England transformed its schools and the life chances of its young people. We would argue that successfully improving areas and districts is more challenging than individual schools. Individual schools can develop their own improvement, but system improvement at LA or district level needs more sustained and multifaceted approaches.

1.2 Research aims and methods

The aims of the research

The main purpose of the research is to explore the remarkable transformation of education in Lambeth, and to examine the success factors behind the outstanding improvement between 1997 and 2013. Four overarching research questions guided this research:

1. What do pupil attainment data, Council minutes and Ofsted reports tell us about the performance of Lambeth over the period?
2. Why is the LA achieving so well?
3. What are the factors contributing to this success?
4. What are the lessons for school improvement?

Research methods

A number of complementary methodological approaches have been used in the research, to study the reasons for the vast improvement including:

- Reviewing papers and minutes of the Education and Scrutiny Committees.
- Analysing KS2, GCSE attainment data and Ofsted judgments to explore changes.
- Case studies: Using an ethnographic approach, detailed case studies have been carried out to establish the factors that contributed to the huge improvement at school and LA level.
- Questionnaire survey: A survey was undertaken to collate the views of Lambeth headteachers, teachers, former Directors of Education and Children's Services, governors, school improvement advisers, parents and Council staff on what they perceive as being the reasons behind the transformational shift in educational outcomes in Lambeth. This was further triangulated with the findings of the case studies to identify examples of good practice in Lambeth.

The study drew on a range of data, including pupil attainment data, Council minutes, Ofsted reports, questionnaires, surveys and interviews with key participants to trace the story.



CHAPTER 2: LAMBETH IN CONTEXT

Lambeth is one of the 13 boroughs that make up inner London. It is the second largest inner London borough with an official population of 303,100 (Census 2011).

The borough is an area of great diversity and social deprivation. The latest deprivation data places Lambeth as the 19th most deprived council area nationally and the fourth most deprived in London. The borough is more ethnically diverse than the rest of London and has a growing African and Portuguese speaking population.

Figure 2.1: Map of Lambeth by Town Centre and Wards



Lambeth contains 90 schools with a total roll of 35,891 pupils. Of these, 34% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM), 47% speak English as an additional language (EAL) and 28% are not fluent in English.

Table 2.1 School Population

Type of School	Number of Schools/Units	Pupil Roll
Nursery schools	5	493
Primary schools	62	23,254
Secondary schools	16	11,488
Special schools	5	448
Pupil referral units	2	208
Total	90	35,891

Source: Education Statistics 2014, Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

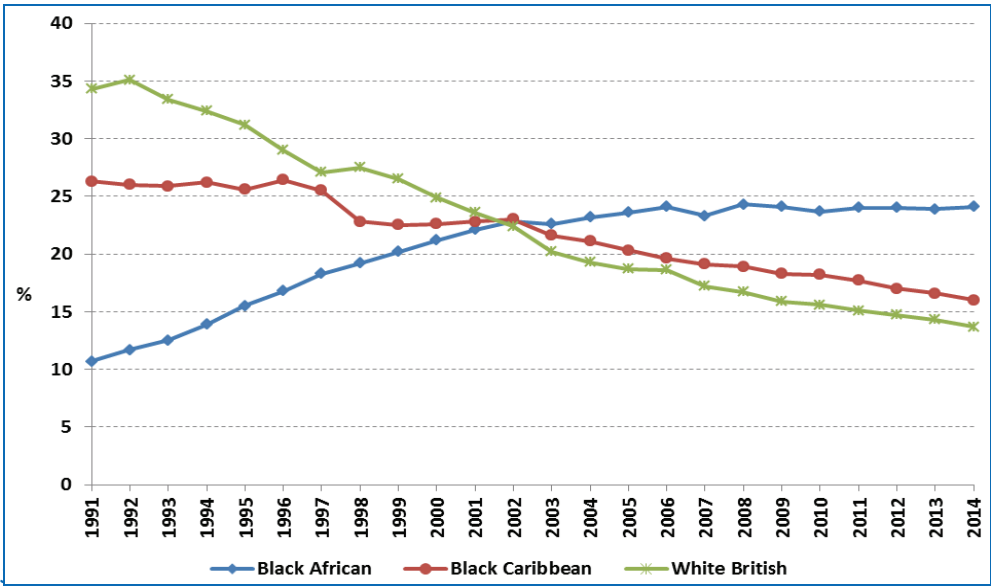
The LA schools are truly multi-cultural, where the diversity of ethnic origin, languages spoken and cultural heritage, brings real life to learning. The diversity of Lambeth's population is a strength to be celebrated and is reflected in all aspects of school life. The great majority (85%) of Lambeth's school population is from BME groups. The largest ethnic groups are Black African (24%) and Black Caribbean (16%), Black Other (16%), followed by White British (15%), Mixed Race (13%), White Other (9%) and Portuguese (5%). The LA also has a smaller number of Indian, Chinese, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Vietnamese and Turkish pupils, as well as a growing number of Mixed Race White and Black African and White and Black Caribbean pupils in Lambeth schools. There is a strong integration and interaction between these different ethnic groups, including the White British pupils in schools. This interaction has a positive effect on attainment and community cohesion in the local authority.

The ethnic composition of the school population has changed considerably since 1990 (Figure 2.2). The composition of the White British school population has declined from 34% in 1991 to 15% in 2014, and no longer represents the largest group. The proportion of Black Caribbean pupils has also declined by 11 percentage points. The Black African pupils now form the largest group, having increased by 13% since 1991.

The diversity of Lambeth's population is reflected in the exceptional number of languages and dialects spoken in its schools, with the Lambeth Pupil Survey of January 2013 recording 147 languages (Hau et al 2014). Out of the 34,677 pupils recorded in the Pupil Survey, 16,819 pupils spoke or understood a language other than English at home. This represents 48.5% of the total number of pupils.

Portuguese is the second most common language spoken by Lambeth pupils after English with 2,470 (7%) of speakers. Spanish is the third most spoken language with 1,708 (4.9%) of speakers, closely followed by Somali (4.5%), French (3.7%) and Yoruba (3.6%).

Figure 2.2: Changes in School Population in Lambeth by Main Ethnic Group, 1991-2014 (%)



A number of children and young people also live in special circumstances. For example:

- In 2014, 25.6% of pupils in Lambeth schools were identified as having a Special Educational Need.
- The total number of children on the council’s children’s disability register is 629.
- 532 children are looked after by Lambeth Council for a variety of reasons.
- Lambeth is in the top ten districts for lone parents with dependent children and is 13th nationally for female lone parents. It is also in the top 10% of districts for female lone parents not in employment.
- 360 children are subject to a Child Protection Plan in 2014 because they may be at serious risk of harm.



CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION IN LAMBETH

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to look back over a 20 year period and identify sequentially certain key events and actions that helped to transform Lambeth, once described as having some of the worst schools in the country, to one where many of its schools provide a world class education. The journey to its present position has involved many inspirational leaders and managers, some of whom have remained loyal to the Local Education Authority (LEA) through all its ups and downs over the past two decades. This chapter seeks to chart Lambeth's journey from failure to success.

3.2 Underachievement in education: 1990-1999

Lambeth Education Authority was established in 1990 after the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) by the Education Reform Act 1988. This ended the unitary system of education that had existed in Inner London for over a hundred years. A former ILEA Inspector, Alan Radford, describes the demise of this institution:

'On the face of it, the ILEA as a large powerful Education Authority had much in its favour from a history of a hundred years' service and its wide range of support services. Above all there was the capacity to understand the complexities of a socially divided city and to translate this experience into policy making. Its very size meant that it could provide economies of scale and it could co-ordinate school admissions policies across inner London. This power of co-ordination was particularly useful in running support for children with special needs, adult education, the schools' psychological service and a careers service. Yet the ILEA had been severely criticised by Margaret Thatcher who alleged that there was low attainment in ILEA schools, particularly secondary schools despite spending more per pupil than any other education authority, it achieved some of the worst examination results.'

These allegations were challenged by the ILEA which insisted that the results had to be seen in context because many of their schools were working in a complex and demanding major inner city environment.

It seems that the ILEA had good knowledge of the breadth of problems in providing education in the inner cities and saw the solution in hugely diverse support programmes. Some of these measures included a well-developed Education Welfare Service, a generous interpretation of a pupil's right to have free school meals, community support programmes for specific racial groups and generous support for its students. One of the great strengths of the ILEA was that it was able to provide influential organisation that could not possibly be provided by smaller local authorities because of economies of scale, these included specialist subject teacher's centres, a comprehensive central library and a wide range of field centres.

The 1988 Education Reform Act saw the devolution of substantial powers to the boroughs of inner London, but in the area of policymaking, these boroughs were much weaker than the former ILEA. The more wealthy boroughs of Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Wandsworth and Camden were very pleased with their having a separate administration. However, the majority of inner London boroughs, such as Lambeth, Islington, Greenwich and Tower Hamlets struggled to provide an efficient service let alone deliver the wide-ranging support for pupils and families that schools had grown accustomed to as part of the ILEA.

The transition from the ILEA to Lambeth Education was fraught with challenges, and Lambeth Council was publicly identified as a financial shambles as it consistently failed to keep its spending within budget. An audit revealed that some teachers had been paid long after they had left their jobs, others who had never worked in the borough being paid, failing to reduce pay for those on maternity leave and paying others more than the proper grade. Lambeth blamed 300 overpayments on inaccurate information given by the ILEA in April 1990, when it handed over responsibility for paying Lambeth's 1700 teachers. But it never explained why the ILEA payroll lists were checked so poorly.

In 1993, the District Auditor published a lengthy and extremely critical public interest report on the local authority, outlining detailed criticisms of most aspects of the Council's financial systems and budgetary control. Changes in political control in 1994 led the Council to begin tackling the major issues. The Council also appointed Heather Rabbatts as Lambeth's new Chief Executive in late 1995 and this signalled the start of a revolution in all aspects of the Council's management culture (Bottrall 2013).

Before 1998 many schools in Lambeth were judged to be performing unfavourably against national figures for standards of achievement at KS2 and GCSE. These concerns were also raised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) from inspections of the local authority's schools. In particular, in Autumn 1995 following concerns about the numbers of schools

judged to require special measures, HMCI decided that all Lambeth schools should be subjected to an accelerated inspection programme. Consequently, they were all inspected by the end of December 1996, and 14 schools were judged to require 'special measures.' The average grade for the quality of teaching was well below the national average. The challenge faced by Lambeth was also echoed by Bottrall (2013) who argued that:

'Lambeth Education was facing such immense problems at that time (headed by the need for budget cuts, far too many poorly performing schools and a huge number of unfilled school places) that even the most brilliant Director of Education would have found it impossible to overcome in a year or two.'

The Ofsted report was stark, and damning. Supporting school improvement was a key concern of the Ofsted 'blitz' inspection. The local authority, it reported, had been:

'Complacent about its performance and there was a lack of strategic planning, poor management of its services (which were not serving its schools and pupils well), poor relationships between the LEA and its schools, characterised by distrust and neglect, a culture of failure and inefficiency was evident, and a pervasive lack of belief that things could ever improve in Lambeth.' (Ofsted Inspection of Lambeth LA schools 1999, p3)

A significant concern was that the LEA's advisory service had lacked the skills to support and challenge schools to raise standards and there was a culture of low expectations. The Ofsted report was a call to action for the council. The challenge came in the words of one Lambeth headteacher that it was time for the LEA 'to reinvent itself.' (Ofsted 1999)

Following the accelerated Ofsted inspection programme and the damning inspection report, Lambeth Council acknowledged the underachievement issues in its schools and determined that the highest priority should be given to raising educational standards by challenging schools to improve. To take this challenge forward, the Council appointed a new Executive Director of Education, Heather Du Quesnay in March 1996. Du Quesnay immediately reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the Education services and reported to the Council's Education Committee that:

'The LEA Schools' Support Services are unresponsive, bureaucratic, and sometimes staffed by people who lack the necessary professional expertise to support and challenge schools. This is notably the case in Finance, Schools' Human Resources, Special Educational Needs and the Advisory Service.' (Du Quesnay, 1996, p2)

She embarked on a radical overhaul of the Education Department, and the start of a revolution in all aspects of the Council's management culture (Bottrall, 2010). All senior and middle managers posts were subject to review, and a completely new team was appointed to the department after a national advertisement which read:

'Are you prepared to take the challenge of turning round one of the worst local authorities in the country?'

Robust action was taken and a dramatic transformation of the LEA's services to schools was implemented. The old inspection service was disbanded and a new highly focused school improvement advisory service and Research and Statistics Unit was established with clear strategies for supporting and developing schools with monitoring and intervention where required. The new small team of advisers (all with a proven track record of successful headship in London schools and Ofsted trained) were to take up the challenge of transforming education in Lambeth over the next decade led by Sue O'Sullivan, the Assistant Director of school improvement who was a former HMI. The School Improvement and Development Division as it was called at that time, included advisers, a Head of Research and Statistics, Schools' Human Resources officers, Governors' Services, Special Educational Needs support services and School Finance officers.

Since the LEA review in 1996 and the damning Ofsted report, marked improvements began to take place in Lambeth. By 1999 an Ofsted inspection team found many signs of improvement and maintained that much of the current Education Department was unrecognisable from those 'days of despair'. The Department had been radically re-structured and virtually:

'The whole senior and middle management teams are new appointments from outside the LEA. Undoubtedly, staff at all levels in the Education Department have worked hard to raise expectations and to turn around the worst local authority in the country.' ... 'The LEA provides high quality advisory support to schools particularly in the area of target-setting, literacy and in supporting schools to become more self-evaluating. The work of assigned advisers is increasingly effective and well-regarded.' (see Ofsted 1999, p5).

Ofsted also heralded *'the Research and Statistics Unit as a strength of the LEA. It provides both the Education Directorate and schools with a comprehensive range of performance data to aid target-setting and strategic planning. Schools are well supported in this task by the comprehensive range of performance data produced by the Research and Statistics Unit and the service is well regarded by schools.'* (Ofsted 1999, p.5)

Likewise the BBC reported in July 1999 that:

‘The London Borough of Lambeth’s education service has made so much progress that it is ‘unrecognisable’ from its troubled past...While inner-London boroughs such as Islington and Hackney have been severely criticised by inspectors, Lambeth, which also has high levels of deprivation, has been commended for its progress.’ (BBC July 1999)

3.3 A huge improvement: 2000-2013

The Education Authority was re-inspected by Ofsted in 2000. The inspection team found again numerous signs of further improvement. Inspectors reported:

‘The School Improvement and Development Division is the key service for the implementation of the Education Development Plan (EDP). Although small, it is well led and managed’The expertise of advisers and consultants is good and they have a good knowledge of work in progress. Primary and secondary schools now regard the work of the advisory service overall as a strength of the LEA.’ (Ofsted 2000)

Inspectors singled out the data produced by the Research and Statistics service as ‘good’ – they commented:

‘Governors and teachers have been widely consulted to produce documents which are a model of clarity. Data circulated to schools help to raise questions that pinpoint strengths and weaknesses precisely. Governors, school staff and officers have received extensive training. Schools value the data and the work of attached inspectors in mediating it.’ (Ofsted 2000)

Over the next decade, significant improvements took place in Lambeth. When the LEA was re-inspected again in May 2004 Ofsted reported on additional progress:

‘The LEA’s support to improve education in schools’ continues to be highly satisfactory. Schools value the advice and guidance of the LEA.... Improving leadership and management has high priority.... Officers encourage headteachers and middle managers to use the national training programmes. They also make good use of headteachers to support others by facilitating networking and setting up more formal collaboration. There has been decisive action to attract, develop and retain teachers. Inspection shows that the quality of teaching and learning in schools is above the national average and rising.’ (Ofsted 2004)

A recent HMI survey in 2013 of what works in local authorities in support of school improvement, gave similar reasons for the continuous improvement in Lambeth including:

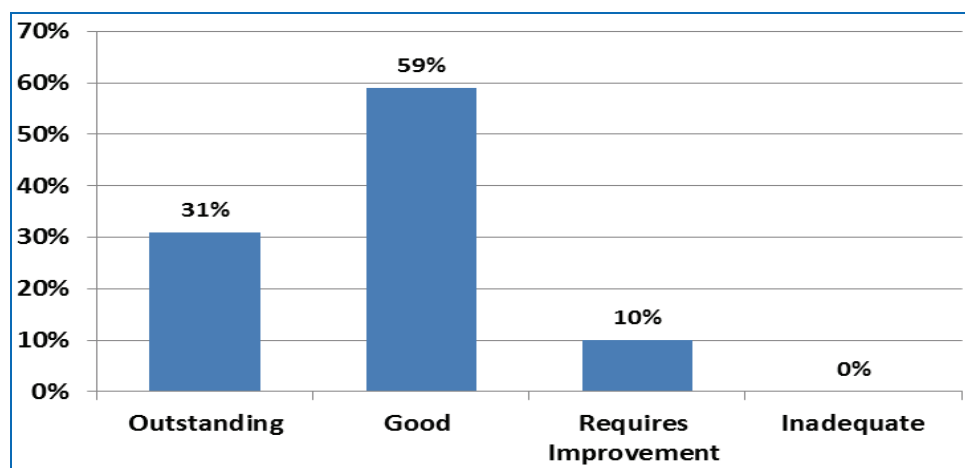
- ‘The huge commitment to excellent outcomes in education from the top to bottom of the organisation- elected members, senior officers and schools
- The high profile of education as a passport out of poverty
- Senior officers share a vision and are visionary about school improvement - but also hold schools to account.
- Schools are very positive and complimentary about senior officers who lead school improvement
- Advisers are very high calibre and assist in the professional development of headteachers
- The LA provides a comprehensive range of performance data. What is helpful is that it is sent out early in the academic year. It is effectively presented and accessible to governors, teachers and support staff. ‘Schools have high regard for this which is influential in helping them to identify school based priorities.’ (Ofsted 2013)

Lambeth schools’ performance has improved year on year. By 2005/6 none were in special measures (Bottrall 2013). This strength of the LA was further endorsed by the recent annual report of HMCI which confirmed that:

‘90% of Lambeth children attend a primary school that is rated either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’, putting Lambeth as the eighth top performing local authority out of 150 LAs in England.’ (Ofsted 2012)

The inspection of all schools also shows that 90% of Lambeth children attend schools rated good or better in 2013 (See Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1: Ofsted overall effectiveness grade for all LA schools 2012/13



Source: Ofsted Inspection outcomes 2012/13, Ofsted



CHAPTER 4: RAISING STANDARDS – WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

This review of the literature has revealed a remarkable transformation in the quality of education in Lambeth's schools, resulting in a dramatic rise in the achievement of pupils that is worth learning from. It also highlights the absence of research into the factors that have contributed to this success by a local authority, suggesting the need for further research. Such a study has important implications for the development of educational strategies for raising achievement at national and local levels. In the section that follows we look at what the data tells us about raising standards and narrowing achievement gaps.

4.1 Standards at Key Stage 2

Since 1996, statistics have been collected on the percentage of pupils gaining Level 4+ in English and Maths (Table 4.1). In 1996 attainment on entry to primary schools inspected in Lambeth was judged by Ofsted to be below national average in most Lambeth schools. Moreover, Ofsted reported that at all Key Stages in 1998, attainment still remained below national averages. In English, 56% of pupils in the borough achieved level 4+, compared with 64% nationally, while in maths it was 49% of Lambeth pupils and 58% nationally. Ofsted also reported Lambeth's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 English tests between 1995 and 1998 was 19 percentage points, which was above the national rate of 16 percentage points and in mathematics the improvement rate as 15 percentage points, which was above the national rate of 14 percentage points. In 1998 Lambeth was ranked 135th of 150 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English, mathematics and science tests.

Between 1999 and 2001 improvement at Key Stage 2 was greater than that nationally, particularly in mathematics. In 2001, At Key Stage 2, 68% of pupils achieved Level 4 or higher in English, and 66% in mathematics. Progress in English over the previous five years was significant, rising 16 percentage points as compared with a national rise of 12 percentage points. In mathematics there was a rise of 14 percentage points over the previous five years, compared with a national rise of 8 percentage points. During this period the LEA had set challenging targets for eleven year olds in English and mathematics. These results marked a steady upward trend. Nationally, in 2001, the rate of improvement slowed at Key Stage 2, but Lambeth schools and pupils were able to demonstrate progress in line with or above the national picture. The 2002 targets for the end of Key stage 2 however, presented a huge challenge for schools i.e. 80% of pupils to reach level 4 in English and 75% in mathematics. When these targets were set, Lambeth accepted the challenge of raising the standards of all its primary pupils, by choosing to set its own targets at the levels set by the Government for all pupils nationally in 2002.

Given the substantially lower performance of many of Lambeth’s schools over many years, these targets demonstrated a determination to raise the quality of education for all pupils to the standard provided by the best schools. Lambeth’s primary schools were meeting this challenge with increasing success with significant improvements in almost all schools, even in those which were already high-performing.

Table 4.1. Percentage of pupils reaching level 4 and above at KS2

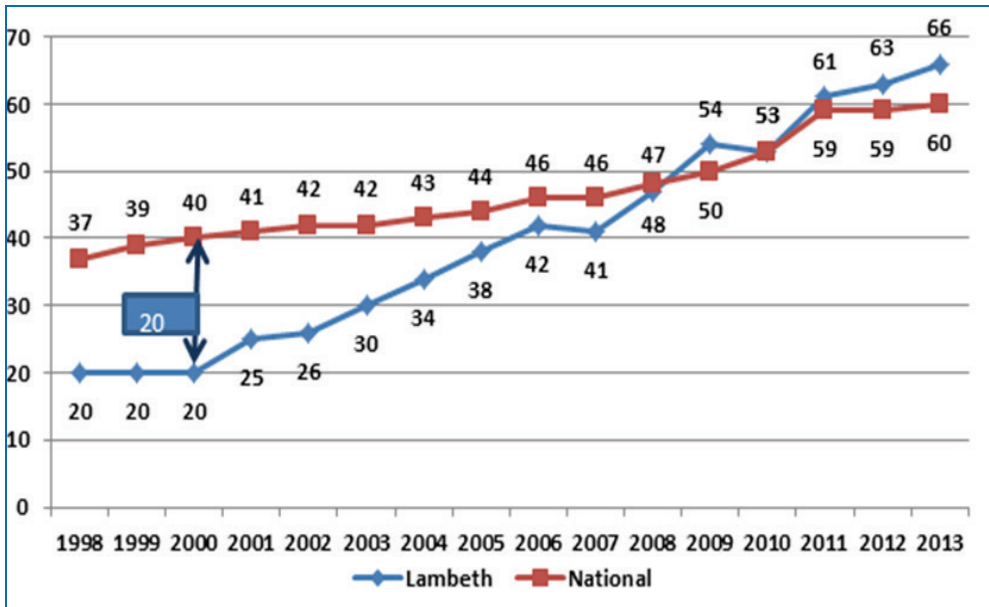
Year	Lambeth		National	
	English	Maths	English	Maths
1996	46%	43%	56%	53%
1997	52%	52%	63%	63%
1998	56%	49%	64%	58%
1999	62%	62%	70%	68%
2000	68%	65%	75%	72%
2001	68%	66%	75%	71%
2002	68%	67%	75%	73%
2003	72%	67%	75%	73%
2004	76%	70%	78%	74%
2005	76%	68%	79%	75%
2006	78%	70%	79%	76%
2007	77%	71%	80%	77%
2008	80%	74%	81%	79%
2009	79%	78%	80%	79%
2010	82%	81%	80%	79%
2011	84%	84%	82%	80%
2012	88%	88%	85%	84%
Change 1996-2012	+42%	+45%	+29%	+31%

Source: Education Statistics, Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

A similar level of improvement is also evident at KS2 between 2004 and 2008. Table 4.1 shows that Lambeth schools have made a significant improvement in national testing at the end of Year 6 and have exceeded the national average since 2010. For example in 2012, 88% of 11 year olds achieved level 4 and above in English and maths compared to 85% in English and 84% in maths nationally. Lambeth schools’ performance improved year on year.

4.2 Standards at GCSE

Figure 4.1 - Lambeth 5+A*-C including English and Maths (%)



Source: Education Statistics, Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

Lambeth pupils have been achieving more 5+A*-C grades year on year. There was an increase from 20% in 1998 to 62% in 2008. Since 1998, achievement by Lambeth pupils has increased above the national rate of improvement. In 1998 there was a gap of 17 percentage points in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths. The transformation of Lambeth has continued apace such that in the last decade, attainment at GCSE has risen much faster in Lambeth than nationally and was reduced to one percentage point gap in 2008. By 2009 the LA had closed the gap and is now six percentage points above the national average for 5+A*-C including English and maths (See Figure 4.1). Progress rates in both English and maths from Key Stage 2 to GCSE also bucked the national trend. No schools were below the DfE floor targets and the vast majority had been judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding.

Overall, Lambeth as one of London's poorest boroughs has a history of remarkable improvement in attainment over the last 13 years, where, in some instances that improvement has been faster than the national level.

4.3 The achievement gap in Lambeth schools

It is now widely acknowledged that closing the gap in educational attainment between different ethnic groups is a pressing concern of both local and national importance. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show the average performance of the largest ethnic groups at KS2 and GCSE between 1998 and 2013. Analysis of trend data in KS2 and GCSE performance data for different ethnic groups reveals an interesting pattern. The data shows that all ethnic groups are now achieving above the national average at KS2 which is a significant improvement for this group of pupils due to a focus by schools and the LA in raising achievement of all groups.

Table 4.2. KS2 attainment by ethnic background (1998-2013) - Reading and Maths average (level 4+)

	Black African	Somali	Black Caribbean	White British	Other White	Other Black	Portuguese	All Black	LA	Nat
1998	57%	n/a	47%	59%	59%	55%	36%	51%	53%	61%
1999	67%	n/a	54%	68%	69%	61%	36%	59%	62%	69%
2000	71%	n/a	62%	70%	62%	68%	52%	66%	74%	74%
2001	68%	n/a	61%	74%	68%	70%	51%	66%	67%	73%
2002	71%	n/a	62%	74%	66%	62%	52%	65%	68%	74%
2003	68%	n/a	60%	75%	77%	72%	54%	66%	70%	74%
2004	78%	42%	61%	77%	75%	65%	60%	69%	73%	76%
2005	74%	43%	64%	78%	74%	73%	57%	69%	72%	77%
2006	72%	58%	64%	81%	78%	73%	59%	69%	74%	78%
2007	76%	54%	65%	80%	83%	70%	63%	71%	74%	79%
2008	78%	65%	72%	81%	83%	72%	64%	74%	77%	80%
2009	76%	75%	71%	87%	85%	75%	71%	74%	79%	80%
2010	82%	74%	78%	84%	90%	80%	75%	80%	82%	80%
2011	84%	84%	78%	89%	88%	82%	76%	82%	84%	81%
2012	87%	88%	84%	92%	93%	90%	86%	86%	88%	85%
2013	90%	92%	87%	96%	92%	91%	88%	89%	91%	86%
1998-2013	33%	50%	40%	37%	33%	36%	52%	37%	38%	25%

Source: Education Statistics, Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

Portuguese and Somali pupils have also been included as these are increasing groups in Lambeth, and their performance was a cause for concern due to the significant gaps in their achievement when compared with other groups and national average. Up until 2012, Portuguese pupils were always the lowest attaining group. However, over the last fifteen

years they made the highest net improvement, up 52 percentage points, compared with an overall Lambeth and national improvement rate of 38 and 25 percentage points. Somali pupils have also made excellent improvement, up 50 percentage points. They closed the gap with Lambeth and are now achieving above the national average and White British pupils.

Table 4.3. GCSE attainment by ethnic background (2006-2013)

Ethnic Group	GCSE Results (% 5+ A*-C incl. English and Maths)								
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Change 06-13
African	47%	51%	51%	65%	66%	71%	66%	75%	+24%
<i>Somali</i>	15%	10%	20%	48%	50%	61%	61%	67%	+57%
Caribbean	36%	33%	40%	43%	45%	49%	53%	56%	+23%
White British	38%	37%	45%	45%	46%	57%	61%	69%	+32%
White Other	28%	32%	51%	62%	49%	62%	72%	72%	+40%
Portuguese	17%	27%	37%	39%	42%	52%	56%	55%	+28%
Black Other	45%	36%	58%	60%	41%	51%	52%	57%	+21%
All Black	42%	40%	47%	56%	54%	61%	60%	63%	+22%
All Mixed	52%	44%	53%	51%	50%	59%	65%	67%	+15%
Lambeth	42%	40%	48%	54%	53%	61%	63%	66%	+24%
National	45%	46%	48%	50%	54%	59%	59%	59%	+14%

Source: Education Statistics, Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA

At GCSE, pupils of all ethnic groups were making good progress, well above the national average for Black African, Somali, White British, White Other, All Black and Mixed Race. Overall the data confirms that between 1998 and 2013:

- All ethnic groups have improved their performance in Lambeth considerably and in addition the relative gaps between them have narrowed.
- At KS2, the attainment of Black African pupils in Lambeth increased by 33 percentage points, Somali pupils by 50 percentage points, Black Caribbean pupils by 40 percentage points, White British pupils by 37 percentage points, Portuguese pupils 52 percentage points and All Black pupils by 37 percentage points.
- At GCSE, the attainment of Somali pupils in Lambeth increased by 57 percentage points, White Other pupils by 40 percentage points, White British pupils by 32 percentage points, Portuguese pupils by 32 percentage points, Black Caribbean pupils 23 percentage points and all Black pupils by 24 percentage points compared to LA and national averages of 24% and 14% respectively.

- White British pupils had consistently high levels of attainment at KS2, with rates of improvement at or exceeding the borough average. In contrast the achievement of White British pupils at GCSE has consistently been below the borough average, although in 2013 this gap considerably narrowed.
- Attainment of Black African pupils has been consistently high at GCSE for many years and above national and LA averages.
- Black Caribbean, Somali, Portuguese pupils, traditionally the lowest attaining of the main ethnic groups have been closing the gap with the other main ethnic groups and the overall LA average in both KS2 and GCSE.

Overall, the findings from KS2 and GCSE data show huge improvements across Lambeth schools between 1998 and 2013. These data reveal a remarkable recovery and evidence of steady and sustained improvement in education. At both KS2 and GCSE, attainment is clearly above corresponding national levels. Furthermore the borough achieves extremely well on the KS1-KS2 two levels of progress indicator, being joint second highest LA out of 150 in reading, joint third highest in maths and joint highest in writing in 2013. Lambeth's results in mathematics with 91% gaining the expected level, is the joint highest of any LA in the country. (Demie et al 2014).

The improved educational outcomes have been shared across ethnic groups in Lambeth and almost all of them now perform above national average compared to a decade ago when all were underachieving. Based on this trend at KS2 and GCSE, the Lambeth improvement cannot be attributed to specific groups as all have made dramatic progress. The data suggests that something extraordinary has taken place in Lambeth since 1997, not just for some ethnic groups but for all ethnic groups.

We would argue that the improvements from 1997 to 2013 represent a complete transformation of education in Lambeth. A key question for our research is 'how did Lambeth LA achieve these improvements'? Our research reveals a clear consensus of views about the reasons for success achieved by Lambeth. We will now explore the factors behind this remarkable transformation in the sections that follow.



CHAPTER 5: A SURVEY OF FACTORS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN LAMBETH

As part of this research in transforming education in Lambeth, we used a survey form to gather the views of Lambeth’s headteachers, teachers, and former Directors of Education and Children’s Services, governors, school improvement advisers and council senior staff on what they perceived as being the reasons behind the transformational shift in educational outcomes in Lambeth between 1997 and 2013. We asked the question, ‘How much do you feel the following factors contributed to Lambeth’s improved educational performance at KS2 and GCSE, placing Lambeth above national results?’ We asked the respondents to rate the level of impact using one of the five possible responses including ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘not sure’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree.’ Respondents were required to tick the box relating to the levels of agreement. We also asked additional question in the survey to describe the most important factors that you feel have contributed to improved results and to give examples of good practice. The survey was completed by 40 people who have worked with or in Lambeth schools for significant periods since 1997. These include three Directors of Education, one Divisional Director of Education, one Chair of the Education Committee and a Chair of Governors, thirteen headteachers, nine governors, nine education advisers, three education consultants and one head of finance.

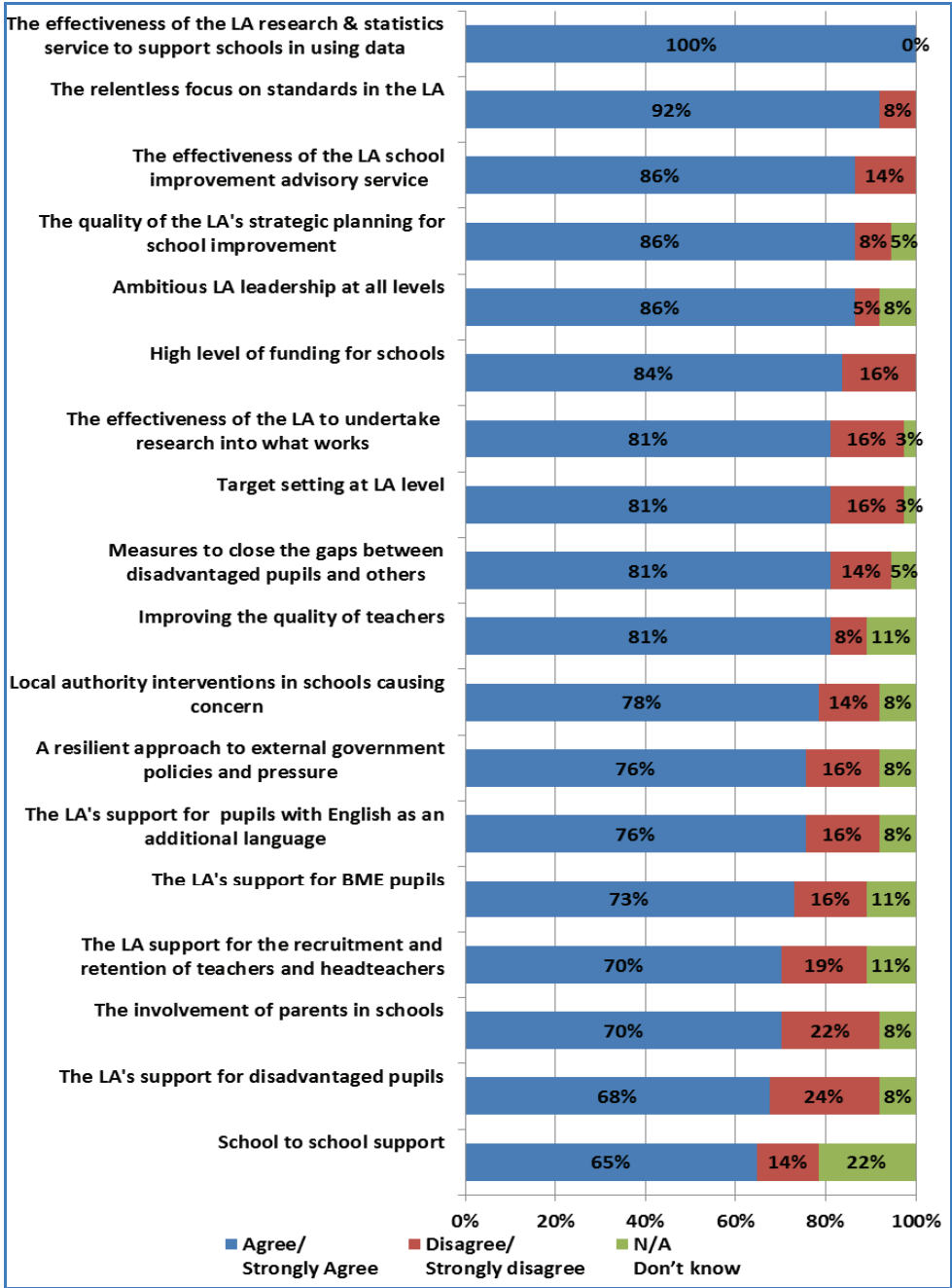
Table 5.1 shows the length of time respondents have worked in Lambeth. The majority of respondents (90%) had been working in the local authority and its schools for over 5 years, with 77% between 5 and 20 years and 13% over 20 years. To gain more insight into the educational transformation we only sent the survey form to people who have had long - term working experience in the LA. No survey form was sent or completed by anyone with working experience of three years or less.

Table 5.1. Length of time respondents have worked in Lambeth local authority

	Number	%
>3-4 years	4	10%
5-10 years	12	30%
11-15 years	12	30%
16-20 years	7	18%
20 years	5	13%

The results of the survey are presented in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.1: Extent to which the survey respondents agreed with the following statements about the impact of the local authority in transformational shift



Source: A survey of factors that contributed to improved educational performance

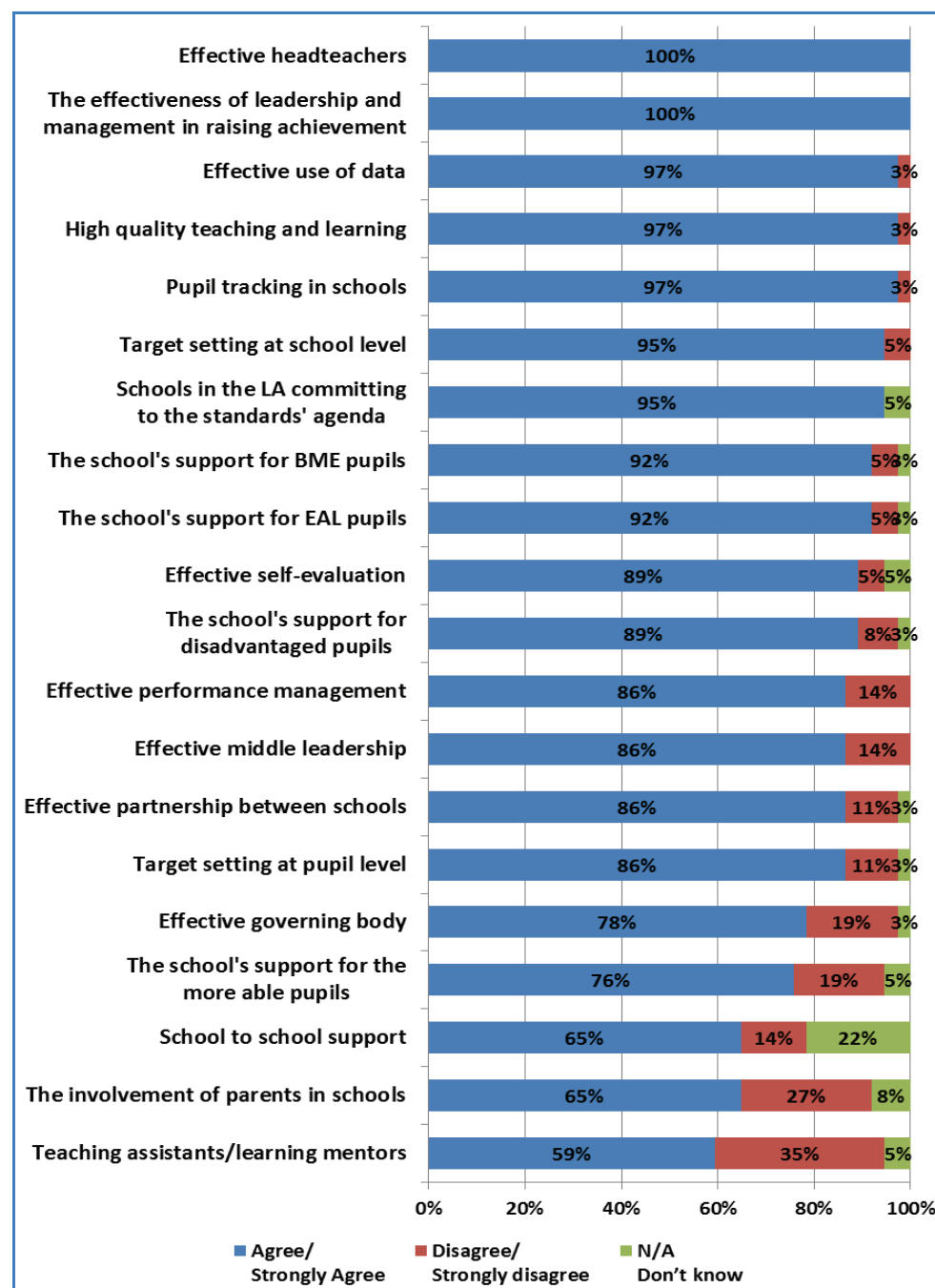
The statements were not presented in the order in which they were given in the questionnaire. Rather, they have been ranked in order of the overall strength of agreement (as measured by the sum of the percentage of those ticking 'agree' or 'strongly agree'). Overall the survey showed that there are many reasons behind the transformational shift in educational outcomes in Lambeth and that the local authority and the schools in partnership played a key role as part of that process of change and each contributed to the success. There were eighteen statements where the respondents agreed and strongly agreed (the percentages agreeing ranged in each case from 95 to 66 percent) on the impact of the LA had on the transformation of education. These statements were, in descending order of percentage, as above.

The factors that respondents rated as having the greatest impact on educational transformation and performance in the local authority, were the effectiveness of the LA Research and Statistics Service (100%) followed by LA relentless focus on standards (92%), ambitious LA leadership (86%), the effectiveness of the LA school improvement advisory service (86%), high level of funding for schools (84%), LA strategic planning for school improvement, improving the quality of teachers, measures to close the achievement gaps, the LA intervention in schools causing concern, research into what works, support for pupils with EAL, resilient approach to government policies, support for disadvantaged pupils, support for BME and school to school support (See Figure 5.1).

Similarly, the survey also asked respondents how far they agreed with statements about the impact of the schools on transforming education in the local authority. Responses are shown in Figure 5.2. The respondents rate the reasons of greatest impact, the effectiveness of school leadership, effective headteachers, high quality teaching, effective use of data, pupil tracking, commitment to the standard agenda, target setting, support for BME, EAL and disadvantaged pupils, effective performance management, effective school partnership and effective governing bodies.

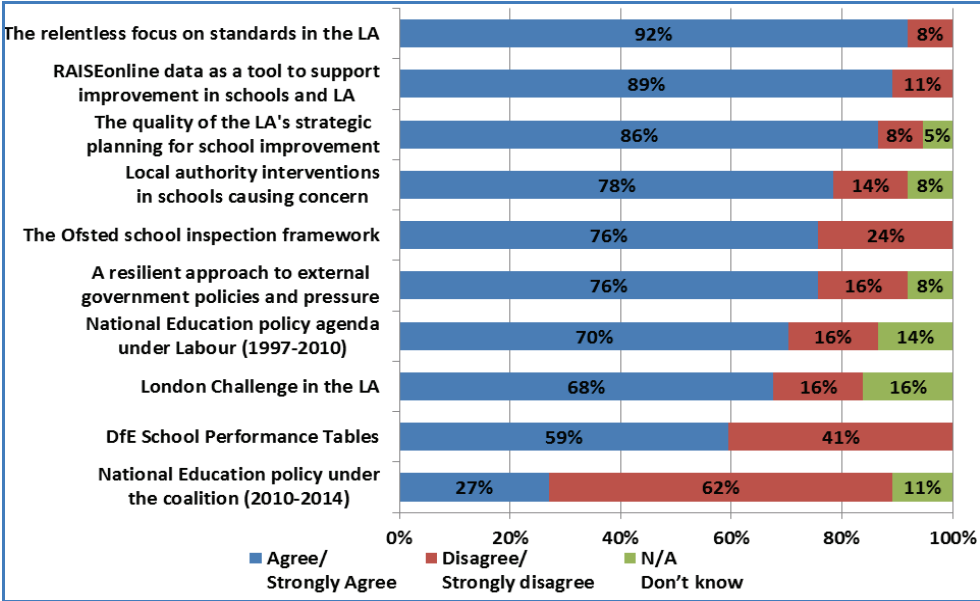
Survey respondents were also asked questions about the impact of local and national initiatives on the transformation of education in Lambeth. Figure 5.3 shows the impact of each of the factors. The data below and previous Figures have already shown the focus on progress to drive up attainment through effective use of LA data and local initiatives. The LA's relentless focus on standards, the quality of the LA's strategic planning, local initiatives such as local authority interventions in schools causing concern and the LA taking a resilient approach to external government policies and pressure scored very high. Between 92 and 76 percent of the respondents agreed that these have all had an impact on educational transformation.

Figure 5.2: Extent to which the survey respondents agreed with the following statements about the impact of schools in the transformational shift



Source: A survey of factors that contributed to improved educational performance

Figure 5.3: Extent to which the survey respondents agreed with the following statements about the impact of local and national initiatives



Source: A survey of factors that contributed to improved educational performance

From the national initiatives, RAISEonline data which is supported and disseminated to schools by LA Research and Statistics team scored high for impact followed by the Ofsted inspection framework and Labour education policy between 1997 and 2000. However, the evidence from the survey suggests that national strategies such as the London Challenge, DfE league tables and national education policy under the coalition had less impact compared to the LA initiatives and other work of the LA.

The finding from the survey also questions previous research which shows the reasons for improvement in London schools are because of the London Challenge or national policy initiatives (see Baars et al 2014, Claeys et al 2014, Hunt 2013, Ofsted 2006 reports).

‘Many factors have been identified as playing a part in the improvement and it is difficult to separate out those that had the greatest impact. Although the studies evaluating the London Challenge acknowledged the role local authorities played in partnership with the challenge advisers, other research has much less to say about the role and impact of local authorities.’ (Hayes and Cassen 2014:25)

A number of other studies also argued a key reason for improvement in London was not only because of the work of London Challenge, but because of other factors (see Burgess 2014, Greaves 2014, Hayes and Cassen 2014). New research provides alternative explanations that ‘The capital’s ethnic diversity (Burgess 2014), previous national primary literacy and numeracy strategies (Greaves 2014), improved support from local authorities (Demie and Mclean 2014, Woods et al 2013, Hayes and Cassen 2014) were one of a number of key reasons why teenagers in London score higher GCSE results than those in the rest of the country.’ We would argue the improvement and difference in results in London was down to a ‘complex series of factors.’ It would be simplistic and misleading to suggest that improvement in attainment was largely accounted for by the London Challenge, higher school funding, demographic composition or national literacy and numeracy initiatives. It needs to take into account other complex factors including the huge contribution of local authorities in raising standards.

The findings of this survey have led us to develop a number of explanatory factors that we believe have aided the educational transformation and improvement of the LA. Drawing on the survey data, we have identified eleven key factors which we believe underpin the transformation of the local authority including:

1. Ambitious LA leadership at all levels
2. Strong school leadership
3. High quality teaching and learning
4. Effective governing bodies
5. Effective use of data
6. Effective school improvement service
7. Maintaining strong partnerships and school to school support
8. Effective use of local initiatives
9. A resilient approach to government policies and national initiatives
10. Tackling disadvantage beyond the school gates
11. Effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language

These factors are now explored in detail in the sections that follow, as part of the LA and school case studies. Case studies’ interviews were undertaken with headteachers, LA school improvement advisers and governors. In addition, other documents including LA and school Ofsted reports, education and scrutiny committee reports, good practice research reports in the LA and schools were also examined.

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CHAPTER 6: THE IMPACT OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IN EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

6.1 Ambitious LA leadership at all levels

Raising the level of ambition and stimulating excellent leadership among Lambeth's school leaders was the primary focus of all Executive Directors of Education in Lambeth. Although they adopted different leadership styles, their roles were always to provide clear strategic direction, enabling the development of a coherent approach to school improvement.

The LA appointed Heather Du Quesnay in 1996 after the damning Ofsted report. Du Quesnay exemplified strong leadership, and had a track record of success as Executive Director of Education in a much larger local authority outside London before she took up her post in Lambeth. Du Quesnay was well-known for her entrepreneurial skills and her ability to give clear direction, inspire ambition and gain trust. She also had a powerful vision to 'make a difference' to the life chances of some of the most disadvantaged children in the country. Her success lay in her ability to make tough decisions and stick to them. In the process the whole Education Department was restructured and many new key appointments were made. Those new to Lambeth and those who remained after the restructuring process were enabled to excel and perform at their best, as individuals and as teams, in the process of transforming education within the borough.

Lambeth already had strengths on which to build, although these were minimised by the national adverse publicity which labelled the borough as being 'the worst in the country.' Indeed there were some excellent schools with dedicated, skilled headteachers who had a desire to see children succeed and were keen to grow, innovate and operate collaboratively.

Yet in spite of a number of good schools, strong ambition and leadership were not displayed consistently. Consequently, Lambeth's overall performance persistently lagged behind national benchmarks. Compared with many other LAs, several inter-dependent issues were holding Lambeth schools back from realising their full potential. Initial priorities for Heather Du Quesnay therefore were:

- to establish a strong School Improvement Division which would lead to significant improvements in outcomes for pupils
- raise the quality of leadership so that excellence became the norm

- promote a stronger culture of ambition among school leaders, not only through ‘stretching’ targets in English and mathematics, but by encouraging a drive to succeed and innovate in grasping new opportunities offered by various partnerships
- to provide educational research and statistical information to schools, governors and teachers to support them in the effort to raise educational standards.

During her leadership, Du Quesnay made significant changes to the Education Department which in turn led to improvements in outcomes for children and young people. It was a ‘top down’ approach which led to dramatic changes in some schools, for example, changes of leadership at all levels, amalgamations, closures, ‘fresh starts’. Where headteachers and governors were found wanting, the LA took decisive action such as insisting on a change of school leadership. Crucially the Executive Director of Education and senior officers were closely involved with the appointment of new headteachers and did not hesitate to use their powers to prevent an appointment where they thought the governors’ recommendation was inappropriate.

External pressures from the Department for Education and Ofsted gave impetus to the change agenda, galvanising others e.g. the local authority’s elected members, and governors to act in contributing to this agenda of transformation. A former Council lead member for education recalls that period of dramatic change within Lambeth LA:

‘There was a major change in the composition of the Council in May 1994, which led all three parties to commit themselves to a major reform of the LEA (and the rest of the Council) in response to extremely poorly performing schools and unresponsive leadership among senior officers. This led to the appointment of a high-flying, reforming Director of Education in 1996 and in turn to a radical transformation of senior leadership in the LEA.’

He goes on to identify:

‘The ability of leading elected members and senior officers to negotiate efficiently and robustly with government ministers and officers of the DfE irrespective of the (often different) political parties in charge on either side.

as another significant factor in the process of Lambeth’s transformation (Bottrall 2013).

Following the departure of Heather Du Quesnay there was a six month period of 'Interim' leadership of the Education Department, which was smooth and described by Ofsted as:

'The interim management arrangements for the Education Directorate put in place in March 2000, worked effectively and the service developed well under the stewardship of the acting executive director' Alan Wood.

At the end of 2002, there was a further change of Executive Director of Education and high value was placed on appointing someone as successor who was not only committed to continuing the school improvement drive, but also had exceptionally good collegial management skills.

Among the many perspectives on leadership, recent research by Tamkin et al (2010) suggests that outstanding (as opposed to 'good') leaders adopt four 'organising principles' that guide their behaviour:

- they think and act systemically: they see things as a whole, connecting the parts by a guiding sense of purpose
- they see people as the route to performance: they are people and relationship
- relationship-centred rather than just people-oriented. They understand that they must engage people and their capabilities to achieve exceptional performance
- they are self-confident without being arrogant: they are highly motivated to achieve excellent performance and they do this not through systems and processes, but through themselves and the ways they interact with and impact on those around them.

The next Director of Education to be appointed, Phyllis Dunipace, had the ideal mix of professional expertise and detailed knowledge of Lambeth. Both of her predecessors had been 'outsiders' before coming to Lambeth. Dunipace's understanding of the complex needs of families and children in this exceptionally diverse borough proved critically important in reinforcing the Department's central drive to raise standards, with many contextually appropriate ancillary activities designed to make the best possible sense locally of the 'Every Child Matters Agenda' brought in with the Children Act in 2004 (DfE 2004).

Top down approaches may not necessarily be effective where key messages need to be contextualised and relevant to a wide variety of audiences. Dunipace's appointment in 2003 signalled a different kind of implementation process that was more distributed and had broad ownership. As Director of the Lambeth Children and Young Peoples' Service, Phyllis Dunipace embedded a culture of excellence and as Chris Ashton, the former Divisional Director for Inclusion and Standards observed:

'Once a culture of excellence was established most schools were keen to ensure that the children attending the school did as well as they could. Schools also looked outwards to others, broadened the experiences in which children could become involved (e.g. SouthBank Schools Music Festival). So although raising standards was a key focus, ensuring that all children could become involved in a wide range of activities to develop their talents and skill became the norm across Lambeth schools. The LA acknowledged schools successes in a variety of ways such as publications and award ceremonies.'

Phyllis Dunipace dedicated her life to public service and improving the lives of children and families, particularly the vulnerable, and was awarded an OBE in 2010 when she retired. Under Dunipace's leadership, Lambeth's Children and Young People's Service was judged by the Joint Area Review in 2009 as 'good across all areas', with three quarters of schools judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and none causing concern.

The ambitious and coherent vision for educational outcomes established by Du Quesnay was rigorously embedded during Phyllis Dunipace's leadership:

'The vision was carefully managed and structured through well produced termly information booklets for heads and governors and termly 'Working Together' meetings. A Headteachers' Executive (representing the Heads' Council) met three times per year with senior LA officers, to jointly plan. Likewise a Governors' Forum was established to meet with senior officers to plan regular seminars for governors. Great attention was paid to the selection and training of governors who actively represented the communities they served. Annual publication of the Lambeth Chief Inspector's Report celebrated the educational achievements of schools and focused on annual events such as the Lambeth Achievement Awards for the highest achieving children at all key stages. The Annual Music Festival at SouthBank involved in excess of 50 schools; model United Nations events for young secondary pupils, and a maths Olympiad for young mathematicians to name but a few of the events and activities that were initiated or supported by the LA.'
(Director of Education, Learning and Skills)

A Lambeth headteacher acknowledged that under Dunipace's leadership there began

'An LA determination to hold schools together in a family in the face of increasing fragmentation, e.g. through the Working Together meetings and conferences.'

Another headteacher attributes Lambeth's success to *'Phyllis Dunipace as Director of Children's Services with her relentless drive for excellence.'*

On Dunipace's retirement Debbie Jones took up post as Executive Director of Children and Young People's Service. Under Debbie Jones leadership Lambeth became the only local authority in the country to secure four 'outstanding' awards in children's services for adoption, fostering, looked after children and safeguarding in June 2012 (Ofsted 2012).

In September 2013 Cathy Twist, also a long-serving Lambeth professional, was appointed Director of Education, Learning and Skills. Twist, through her long association with Lambeth and formerly as Assistant Director for Schools and Educational Achievement, had detailed knowledge of Lambeth schools and an excellent rapport with school leaders.

In an environment of reduced public funding it was necessary to develop in Lambeth, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to help target interventions most effectively. Twist's positive relationships with schools led to the development of a range of innovative new models of school leadership. They include soft and hard federations, (involving schools of different character), collaborative and partnerships brokered by the LA between schools with track records of consistent attainment and progress and the capacity for system leadership. Twist instituted the innovative 'Future Leaders' and 'New Models of School Leadership' programmes which have won national acclaim. Her strength is in encouraging more leaders, teams and individuals (both within the LA and in schools) to exhibit progressive and innovative behaviours that enable others to perform at their best.

Analysing the reasons for ‘the long tail of underachievement’ in the borough in the early days Twist reflects in the survey:

‘It was as much about a range of isolated small institutions that no-one really wanted to work in: small primary schools, separate infant and nursery schools. Creating the climate for success through structural change – schools became all-through primary schools for example rather than separate infant and juniors. Schools began working in a range of partnerships: soft and hard federations which mean that the best headteachers stay in the borough to become system leaders as executive headteachers. A real problem was that a school is only as good as its leader at that moment; so their fortunes fluctuated because a small school could not afford to pay for the best leaders. In federations heads get the next stage of their career and also grow the next tier of leaders through the ‘head of school’ role. All this supported by excellent capital development programmes, funded in part by Building Schools for the Future and part by the Council, so that almost every school has been rebuilt, refurbished or redeveloped.’

Time and again, headteachers and governors commented in our survey on the quality of leadership from the LA as being the most significant factor in Lambeth’s transformation:

‘The vision and leadership of the Director of Children and Young People’s Services, Phyllis Dunipace and subsequently Cathy Twist in sustaining the vision and the continuing improvement in standards in Lambeth schools.’ (Headteacher)

‘Clearly focused and determined leadership from Cathy Twist – she is always the best in the council at what she does.’ (School Governor)

These exceptional Directors of Education have all contributed substantially to Lambeth’s outstanding success. It could be argued that without the courage and determination to tackle the range of insurmountable problems associated with improving the quality of education in the borough, it might never have been possible. Yet they have succeeded because they were able to effectively harness the drive, initiative and ambition of those around them. Strengthening a culture of ambition is not an event but a long-term process of enabling individuals to raise their sights, nurturing their confidence to succeed and removing the organisational and psychological barriers that lie in their way.

6.2 Effective school improvement service (Advisory Service)

‘A strong and stable team of school advisers.’ (Headteacher)

Another significant factor in the transformation of education in Lambeth has been a high calibre advisory service. This service was the key service for the implementation of the LA’s school improvement strategy and spearheaded by an increasingly effective team. Initially, schools’ assigned advisers reported directly to the Executive Director of Education and were responsible for overall co-ordination and liaison (with others both inside and outside the LA) and had a particular role with the school in that she or he represented the local authority and their legal responsibilities for the school’s performance. The small core team of advisers, recruited by Heather DuQuesnay (some of whom are still part of the service today) were all formerly experienced and effective headteachers in London schools, and had Ofsted inspector status. They were attracted to the challenge of working in Lambeth, because of a strong moral purpose and a desire to make a difference to the lives of children in one of the most deprived parts of London. Because of their experience of leading and managing very good schools and in some cases, a broader experience of evaluating schools nationally, advisers had credibility with headteachers in Lambeth, who were on the whole, willing to accept and act on advice given.

Lambeth LEA had started from a very low base with 14 schools placed in special measures in 1996 and many others causing serious concern. By the end of the 2001 academic year, either through significant internal improvement (including the recruitment of new headteachers) or the closure programme, the number of schools had been greatly reduced. Only two primary schools were in special measures, two primary schools and two secondary schools were judged to have serious weaknesses, and six schools were causing serious concern to the LEA (five primaries and one secondary school). In some cases, infant and junior schools were amalgamated, or others given a ‘fresh start’. It was a measure of Lambeth’s considerable success in monitoring the performance of schools that the concerns relating to all schools had been identified, with substantial support given both before and after formal categorisation. Advisers worked without fear or favour and reported on the basis of evidence from monitoring quality and standards.

The former Divisional Director of Inclusion and Standards, Chris Ashton, (who was appointed by Heather Du Quesnay as a member of the advisory service) suggests that the trust and partnership which was built up between the LA and schools and the resulting agreement that Lambeth children could achieve as well as or better than children anywhere has been

key to the overall improvement in outcomes for children. He commented:

‘This trust was achieved by well experienced and effective LA officers being appointed in 1997 and 1998, whom headteachers and governors could see were knowledgeable and committed to raising standards. Lambeth set out to focus on school improvement and brought together a range of officers which had skills that complemented each other and created a driving force to raising standards. These officers were able to at first work closely together and support each other in raising standards.’

Ofsted (2000) noted that ‘improvements have been particularly good in the support for numeracy, school management and for schools causing concern... current strengths and weaknesses are clear.’

Support for schools causing concern comprised multi-disciplinary action groups which were co-ordinated and chaired by the school’s assigned advisers and included the headteacher, chair of governors, or diocesan representatives (where appropriate), Literacy and Numeracy consultants, Early Years advisers, School Finance, School Human Resources (HR), Educational Psychology Service (EPS), Education Welfare Services and Governor Services. The role of the adviser was to identify, broker and co-ordinate the support for the school and to evaluate the impact at each subsequent action group meeting.

Members of the advisory team worked collaboratively with colleagues to carry out ‘monitoring visits’ to schools causing concern, usually taking place over two or three days. These resembled mini Ofsted inspections and involved evaluating teaching and learning, work in pupils’ books, and meetings with members of the leadership team. Detailed written reports were sent to the headteacher, chair of governors and to the School Improvement Monitoring Group. As early as 1998 school monitoring visits often incorporated joint monitoring of teaching and learning by advisers with heads and deputy heads, and this developmental approach had a major impact on schools’ ability to evaluate their own performance.

The collegial approach and excellent teamwork within the advisory service, was a significant factor noted in the following comments made by advisers in the survey:

‘Joining Lambeth LA was one of the highlights of my career. Being part of such a talented high achieving team enabled me to learn so much about securing rapid improvement and

gave me the professional courage to support and challenge in appropriate measures. The collegiate approach was underpinned by rigour and a sense of purpose. The School Profiles were such an amazing tool and the quality of the audit trail for each school robust and secure.’ (Education Adviser)

‘The strength and calibre of leadership with the LA school improvement service – all previously senior school leaders, all Ofsted inspectors with complementary skills, strengths and areas of expertise.’ (Education Adviser)

‘There was courageous decision-making and intervention when a school was underperforming.’ (Education Adviser)

Whilst initially high focus was given by advisers to schools in severe difficulties, in special measures or serious weaknesses, removal from special measures meant that a school had reached a level of basic competence, but further capacity building was needed to lift it from that state to a level of continuing effectiveness. During this process much further change was necessary. In Lambeth, the continuing professional development of staff, either through government or LA initiatives, was fostered to ensure schools became self-evaluating and autonomous in their own improvement.

The regular termly meetings of the School Improvement Monitoring Group monitored the progress of all schools and those receiving additional support. The group chaired by the Director of Education also oversaw the development of local authority action plans for schools placed in an Ofsted category or causing the LA concern. The headteachers and chairs of governors received termly update letters confirming progress of schools receiving additional support. The advisory team were involved in sharing their knowledge of schools’ strengths and weaknesses, identifying the kind of support needed and the strengths available. This pooling of knowledge brought about innovative solutions such as the first federation between a small Church of England primary and a very large, successful community school in 2007.

The challenge for the advisory team was now to consider ways in which small, struggling schools could be linked with stronger (usually larger) schools in ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ federations to build capacity. Between 2007 and 2008, four pairs of schools and one group of three schools worked in ‘soft’ federations and one pair in a ‘hard’ federation.

In 2008, the role of advisers changed with the implementation of the national School Improvement Partner (SIP) programme and they had a different role in supporting and challenging schools. By this time, the process of transformation of schools within Lambeth had been largely achieved as there were no schools in any Ofsted category. The ability of schools to evaluate their own performance had been developed to an extent that the need now was for the School Improvement Partner (SIP) to help leadership to accurately evaluate their schools' performance, and identify priorities for improvement and plan effective change. Whilst the context in which councils support school improvement continues to evolve, schools are being given increased autonomy and are expected to take more responsibility for their own improvement.

The recent HMI survey of what works well in Lambeth in supporting improvement in schools also identified similar reasons for continuous improvement in Lambeth including:

- 'The School Improvement Strategy is transparent. A strength is the role of the school improvement advisers offering regular dialogue and advice on headteachers performance management and the visible commitment of senior leaders
- Schools were very positive and complimentary about senior officers who lead school improvement
- Advisers are very high calibre and assist in the professional development of headteachers.' (Ofsted 2013)

6.3 Effective research and data service

'The work of the Research and Statistics team is unique and has become a bible in many Lambeth schools. The data provided to schools has helped in securing school improvement.' (Chair of Governors and former Lambeth Council lead member of Education)

The use of performance data for school improvement is a strength of Lambeth LA and schools. In Lambeth the provision of performance data provided to schools, governors and senior managers is of major importance and the Research and Statistics Unit leads the LA's work on strategies to support schools in the effective use of data to raise achievement. The LA established in 1997 a dedicated Research and Statistics Unit as part of the School Improvement Division to provide educational research and statistical information to schools, governors and local authority staff to support them in their efforts to raise educational standards.

The former Divisional Director for Inclusion and Standards reflects on the significant role that performance data played in Lambeth's school improvement strategy:

'The use of data became a core activity in the raising achievement agenda. Clear, local, comparative performance data was produced benchmarked against national averages, before national data was developed, which enabled headteachers and governors to have focused conversations with LA officers about what needed to happen in the school to improve outcomes for children. The understanding and use of data sets, both local and national, became a feature of school improvement work in the LA.'

Schools and the LA recognise the effective use of data to raise achievement as an essential part of school improvement, and schools have used data as one of the key levers for change and improvement. Headteachers comments from the questionnaire included:

'The Research and Statistics Team have produced very good information for schools...' 'Excellent analysis of school data with local and national comparisons'... 'The Research and Statistics department work in providing the data which supports a narrative of improvement and which has also put Lambeth on the national map.' (Headteachers)

A significant feature of the LA's support in the effective use of data is the provision of different kinds of data at different stages of analysis, including its own customised school profile data, contextual and value-added data. The LA has issued all its governors as well as all headteachers and teachers with a 'School Profile: Making Figures Speak for Themselves' every year since 1997. The main aim of the school profile is to provide a comprehensive set of data to support governors and headteachers in developing their roles and exercising their responsibilities for the strategic management of schools. The school profile offers an important tool and is used to identify possible strengths and weaknesses of the school, and asks a number of questions about school performance such as:

- *What does the overall school performance 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 years' time and how do we get there?*

- *How does the school compare to other borough schools, national average and similar schools in respect of free school meals, pupil mobility, English as additional language (EAL), level of fluency in English, summer born, pupils with statements of special educational needs, KS1, KS2, KS3 and GCSE?*

The information in each school profile shows the data from each school in relation to the LA's schools and nationally. Typically it is presented using charts, with schools positioned from left to right according to their decreasing level of performance.

The LA also provides its schools with customised contextual Foundation Stage Profile (FSP), KS1, KS2, KS3 and GCSE reports including analysis by factors such as gender, ethnic background, fluency in English, free school meals and mobility rates. The schools' staff and governors use each individual key stage contextual and value-added report to monitor progress over time and factors influencing performance, to identify key areas of action to ensure improvements, set targets and address issues of under-performing groups of pupils. The LA also uses the data to identify whether improvements have or have not been made, and whether the attainment gap between under-achieving groups and their peers is being reduced. In addition, Lambeth provides a value-added report and schools are able to track the performance of individual pupils between KS1 to KS2 and KS2 to GCSE. These value-added reports have helped headteachers and teachers to address a number of questions:

- *What does the value-added data tell me about pupil progress?*
- *How many pupils appear to be achieving less than expected levels at the end of KS2 and KS3 tests and GCSE examinations?*
- *Are there any common characteristics of the pupils who appear to be achieving less well than expected? For example, are there a high proportion of pupils of one particular ethnic origin, or a high proportion of boys?*
- *What are our weaknesses and strengths? What must be done to improve?*

The provision and use of data in the LA is backed by extensive training. The training is customised to each school's needs and to look at the ways in which school performance data can be used for school self-evaluation and raising achievement. The format of training sessions is interactive and includes presentations, practical exercises and open discussions on good news and key issues raised from the school performance data with implications for Ofsted inspections. School staff and governors use data to draw up action plans.

Significant numbers of governors, headteachers and teachers have attended the training programmes, which have made them aware of the issues of underachieving groups in their school and how good practice can be used to raise achievement. This training has led to a greater focus on issues that impact on school improvement and target setting. Governors and teachers were asked how they rated the support, the conferences, training programmes, the good practice reports and commented that:

'Almost all the respondents felt that the service and the information provided by the LA were either very useful or useful. General comments were positive and schools felt that all the reports were useful for their school improvement and self-evaluation and helped them to draw action plans and identify underachieving groups.' (Demie 2014, p 14)

Others also commented that:

'The school profile and key stage contextual reports are extremely useful, incredibly insightful and give me the ability to ask more questions on specific issues.' (Governor)

'The School profile, FSP, KS1 and KS2 contextual reports are extremely useful and well used and distributed throughout the school community. It is really helpful having it as hard copy, as parts of it are lifted to support my HT's report to governors and parents.' (Headteacher)

Recent HMI observations and reports also confirm that the Research and Statistics service provides data that is used by schools effectively to raise achievement and states:

'The LA provides a comprehensive range of performance data, including data about the local performance of different pupil groups and local benchmarking and comparative data. Schools and other providers have high regard for this which is influential in helping them to identify school based performance priorities. Highly effectively presented and accessible to governors, teachers and support staff.' (Ofsted 2013)

'Research documents produced by the Research and Statistics Service are unique and well used by schools.' (Ofsted 2013)

As part of this research in transforming education in Lambeth we also used a survey form to collect the views of Lambeth headteachers, teachers, former Directors of Education and

Children's Services, governors, school improvement advisers and council staff on what they perceived as being the reasons behind the transformational shift in educational outcomes in Lambeth between 1997 and 2013. Almost all respondents who completed the survey form rated as agreed or strongly agreed that the Research and Statistics service and use of data had a major impact on the educational transformation of Lambeth. This service is ranked as one of the top Lambeth services and a number of respondents gave the following comments:

'The local authority knows its schools well in terms of school improvement or other aspects of the service. The support and challenge is grounded in direct professional relationships with schools backed by data provided by Research and Statistics service that pinpoint the strength and weaknesses of the schools.' (Former Education Adviser)

'Schools' use of data provided by Research and Statistics service has had a huge impact on improved educational performance.' (Former school improvement adviser)

'The quality and accessibility of data available to schools including the School profile, the training for senior leaders and governors, the emphasis on national and local comparisons and on benchmarking has contributed to improved results.' (Former school improvement adviser)

'LA data and research support to schools enabled targeted support at school level and drilling down to individual pupil attainment. Supported robust conversations at all levels-including support and challenge.' (Former teaching and learning consultant)

'Good support and training in the use of data for governors.' (Chair of Governors)

'Data was used as a driving force for raising standards and was one of the key drivers of change and improvement between 1997 and 2013 in LA and schools.' (Headteacher)

'Embedded use of data to address school improvement.' (Former education adviser)

Overall evidence from Ofsted, survey and our feedback survey confirms that the service is highly regarded and well used by schools.

6.4 Effective use of local research into what works in raising achievement

‘The LA has comprehensive knowledge of good practice research evidence within and beyond the LA which is routinely shared with schools.’ (Ofsted 2013)

Underpinning the LA’s strategic approach to raising achievement is the recognition of the need to use educational research evidence to identify what works in schools, thus supporting them in their own improvement. The LA Research and Statistics Unit has established a strong tradition of carrying out this research and disseminating the findings to schools locally and nationally. In fulfilling this objective the Research and Statistics Unit has carried out a decade of research into what works in raising achievement, including Black Caribbean Achievement (McKenley et al 2002, Demie 2006), Pupil Mobility (Demie and Lewis 2004), Black African Achievement (Demie, Lewis and McLean 2006, Demie 2013), Somali Pupils Achievement (Demie and McLean 2008), Portuguese pupils Achievement (Demie and Lewis 2008), White Working Class Achievement (Demie and Lewis 2010, 2014), Outstanding schools (Demie and Lewis 2010, Demie and McLean 2013), and promoting achievement for pupils with English as additional language (Demie and Gay 2013, Demie and Belsham-Revell 2013), Use of Data to Raise achievement (Demie 2013). The following good practice research projects were completed between 2002 and 2013:-

1. Raising Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Schools - 2003
2. The Achievement of African Heritage Pupils: Good Practice in Schools - 2006
3. Raising Achievement of Somali Pupils: Good Practice in Lambeth Schools - 2007
4. Raising Achievement of Somali Pupils: Good Practice in London Schools - 2008
5. Raising Achievement of Portuguese Pupils: Good Practice in Schools - 2008
6. Outstanding Secondary Schools: A Study of Good Practice - 2010
7. Raising Achievement of White Working Class Pupils: Barriers to Learning - 2010
8. Raising Achievement of White Working Class Pupils: School Strategies - 2010
9. English as an Additional Language: Good Practice in Secondary Schools - 2013
10. English as an Additional Language: Good Practice in Primary Schools - 2013
11. Using Data to Raise Achievement: Good Practice in Schools - 2013
12. Raising Achievement of Black African Pupils: Good Practice in Schools - 2013
13. Outstanding Primary Schools: A Study of Successful Practice - 2013
14. Outstanding Secondary Schools: A Study of Successful Practice - 2013
15. Language Diversity and Attainment in Schools - 2013
16. Raising Achievement of White Working Class Pupils: An Ethnographic Study of Barriers and School Strategies – 2014

The key challenge of all the research was to find out what successful schools were doing and why these strategies proved to be effective in raising the achievement of all pupils. Policy makers and schools need more evidence of what works and consequently the emphasis was on what has previously worked.

The LA's intention was that research should be a catalyst for influencing the culture of the LA and getting schools to talk about their own practices in relation to pupils' achievement. These 'raising achievement research projects' have identified reasons for schools bucking national trends.

While the case study schools are different in their contexts and histories, there are important common features in their approach to raising achievement. All the research findings confirm that strong leadership, effective use of data, good parental support, strong links with the community and a strong commitment to equal opportunities are key common characteristics of successful schools. There is strong evidence from case study schools to suggest these approaches have a positive impact on achievement levels of all groups of pupils. However, the research also shows differences in success factors that are particularly critical for ethnic minority' pupils and between groups of pupils in schools. We would argue that even though on the whole, schools that are effective in one respect tend also to be effective in others, the factors that lead to successful outcomes may not be the same. In the case of EAL pupils, White Working Class, Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Somali and Portuguese pupils the studies suggest, in addition to the above common success factors, the importance of a diversified school workforce, celebration of cultural diversity, use of an innovative curriculum which meets the needs of the community and effective targeted support through extensive use of teaching assistants, EAL teachers, learning mentors and community language classes to raise achievement. Schools which build close links with the community, give extra support to underachieving groups and have a curriculum which reflects their cultural diversity have proved highly successful in raising achievement of ethnic minorities' pupils. What is particularly special about these schools is that local communities are represented in the school with staff members who are able to speak many of the community languages. Headteachers make deliberate efforts to recruit a multi-ethnic workforce often from the immediate community. As a result children feel that they can relate to a member of staff from their own cultural background and thus feel well supported and highly motivated.

The overall conclusion of this study is that the local authority's schools have bucked the national trend through the use of a wide range of innovative strategies. The research findings also contain a number of important messages for policymakers. The study argues that there is no 'pick and mix' option. An effective school will seek to develop all these

characteristics underpinned with the practical use of data to monitor the achievement of particular groups to pinpoint and tackle underperformance. The study further identifies that these schools put into daily practice core principles of respect, fairness and social justice and there is an open debate in schools with parents and the wider community about barriers to achievement. Above all, these are confident schools which take risks and trust their instincts. They are innovative because they are focussed on the moral purpose of raising the achievement of inner London pupils and through the accumulated experience of the past turbulent decade of educational change, they have emerged as strong advanced practitioners in raising the achievement of Black Caribbean, Black African, White Working Class and Portuguese pupils.

The importance of this study lies in the richness of a series of case studies which highlight factors that make for success in schools. Based on this study it is argued policy makers should sustain research, design strategies and programmes to raise achievement in schools.

Impact

The raising achievement into 'what works' research has improved the LA's capacity to share good practice with other schools and LAs locally and nationally. A key feature of the LA's support in the effective use of research evidence and the provision of different kinds of research reports. Good practice was disseminated in a variety of ways, including through insets, training, conferences, seminars during Black History Month, and guidance produced by the LA to its schools and through the DfE and the Local Authorities Education Network (TEN) at national level, annual British Educational Research conference (BERA) and the the European Research Conference. The LA Research and Statistics Service supports schools by organising at least one conference every year to share good practice in raising achievement. Each conference brings together some of the leading experts and practitioners and this has been highly valued by the delegates.

All the raising achievement conferences over the years have been well regarded and have attracted huge numbers of delegates including teachers, headteachers, governors, LA school improvement heads, advisers and university colleagues. Typically, between 250 and 350 delegates have attended these popular conferences.

Since the publication of the good practice research reports a significant number of governors, headteachers and teachers have attended training programmes, which have highlighted issues of underachieving groups of pupils in their own schools and the reports have provided strategies to raise achievement.

National Conferences: What Works in Lambeth Schools	Conference Date
1. Educational Underachievement of White Working Class Children: Good Practice in Schools	27/06/2014
2. Raising Achievement: What Works in Schools	29/11/2013
3. Raising Achievement of Pupils with English as an Additional Language: Good Practice	13/03/2013
4. Raising Achievement: Using Data and Good Practice in Schools	03/11/2011
5. Making Use of EAL Data to Raise Achievement	17/06/2011
6. Raising Achievement of White Working Class Pupils: Barriers and school strategies	27/01/2010
7. Raising Achievement of Somali Pupils: Good Practice in London Schools	12/06/2008
8. Raising Achievement of Somali Pupils in Schools	16/10/2007
9. School Self-evaluation: Making Data Work	16/10/2007
10. Using Language and EAL Data to Raise Achievement	04/12/2006
11. Making Use of Data for School Improvement	24/02/2006
12. Raising Achievement of Ethnic Minority Children: Good Practice in Schools	27/02/2005
13. Using Assessment Data to Raise Standards	08/05/2004
14. Raising Achievement in Lambeth Schools: Success and Challenges in narrowing the gap	06/06/2003
15. Using Value-Added Data for School Self-Evaluation	05/06/2002
16. School Improvement: Making Data Work	22/05/2001
17. Use of data to Raise the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils	24/03/2000

This type of training has also led to a greater focus on issues that impact on school improvement and target setting. Governors and teachers were asked how they rated the support the conferences and training programmes and the good practice reports. 'Almost all the respondents felt that the service and the information provided by the LA were either very useful or useful. General comments were positive and schools felt that all the reports were useful for their school improvement and self-evaluation and helped them to draw action plans and identify underachieving groups.' Delegates commented:

'All very thought provoking.' (Headteacher)

'Absolutely excellent - Thank you.' (Headteacher)

'A fascinating and inspiring day -Thank you!' (Headteacher)

'Reassuring to know that we are doing something right.' (Assistant Headteacher)

'Great that other schools could share strategies.' (Headteacher)

'A huge amount of travelling to get here but so worth it.' (Headteacher)

‘Very interesting conference + range of speakers, thank you.’ (Headteacher)

‘There were lots of creative and practical strategies which have been tried and tested. Feel very inspired.’ (Headteacher)

‘Fantastic conference - highlighted some really important messages.’ (Assistant Principal)

‘This was an excellent conference- Thank you.’ (Headteacher)

‘Thank you - good to have time to reflect on what we do in our school and gather ideas for future development.’ (Headteacher)

Overall teachers and others involved in education are now better able to meet the needs of all groups of pupils.

6.5 Maintaining strong partnerships and trust

The LA has established excellent partnership work with schools. Since 2010 Lambeth has aided the establishment of a new infrastructure of school improvement support, focusing on encouraging mutual development in clusters of schools, federations and Teaching Schools. Promotion of school to school improvement is also a key underpinning factor. This is backed up by a strong core school improvement offer with LA advisers who know Lambeth’s schools and education settings well.

School to school collaboration is not a new concept in Lambeth. As far back as 1998/9 a number of Lambeth schools were awarded ‘Beacon Status’ and the LA used information about the strengths of these schools to broker support for other schools needing to improve. Many benefits arose from these links with Beacon schools, as Ofsted noted in May 2004:

‘The Beacon schools are used well and there is also a useful register of good practice in the schools. This serves as an index of sources of support for schools which want to improve some particular part of their provision... The reduction in the number of schools causing concern and the dissemination of good practice demonstrate that support is being provided where it is necessary.’

The Beacon school initiative offered exciting and innovative opportunities for the headteachers of Beacon Schools to provide assistance to other schools, or to mentor new headteachers. Headteachers from Beacon Schools were seconded for various periods to work as consultant headteachers in other schools causing the LA concern. Sometimes they were called upon to become interim headteachers. When this successful project came to an end, the excellent relationships and collegiality which had been established between schools and the LA continued to develop.

During Summer 1998 the Lambeth LA's Education Committee instigated a Primary Development Strategy task group with a priority to address surplus places in schools. A series of reorganisation proposals were made which included a preference for two-form entry primary schools, the need to raise standards and financial factors. A number of schools perceived the changes to be impractical and the rumour and uncertainty associated with the development proposals to remove surplus places were reported to have led to staffing difficulties in some schools and the loss of pupils as their parents sought more secure places.

Between 1999 and 2003 there were a number of school closures, and the opening of a new, architecturally innovative and award-winning primary school with specific provision for pupils with visual and hearing impairment. There were amalgamations of former infant and junior schools and the fresh-start of a newly amalgamated primary school. These changes necessitated changes in leadership and often changes of governing bodies. They also heralded a different relationship between schools and the Local Authority.

Over the next decade, the boundaries began to change for patterns of school organisation and there were many examples of strong collaboration between the LA and Lambeth schools. Schools released heads, deputies, and middle leaders to support other schools, with the LA playing a key role because of its detailed knowledge of schools' strengths and weaknesses in brokering these arrangements. A key LA initiative from 2006 to 2010 was the 'Best for All Our Children' programme which focussed on school to school support for schools below national targets where children faced multiple disadvantages. This programme was developed by the LA, funded by London Challenge and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) which the LA tailored to meet local needs. The Best for All programme was very effective in building leadership and management capacity in the 10 primary and 3 secondary schools that participated in it and improved KS2 results by 12% and GCSE by 19% between 2006 and 2010. There was also success in the outcome of improving the quality of teaching and learning in the schools by 100% (Ofsted Inspection reports of the schools).

Since 2002 LA maintained schools have been free to collaborate with other schools, which, in Lambeth's experience, has been a key driver for school improvement. Nevertheless, the current coalition government's focus on the academies programme has led to federation in LA maintained schools taking somewhat of a backseat in education policy. Despite this, there is evidence that federation confers significant benefits. For example, Ofsted's 2011 study 'Leadership of More Than One School' made clear the advantages to pupils' attainment, cost efficiency and governance. Aspects of provision and outcomes were

found to be improving in all of the federations visited by inspectors. The reasons for federating generally influenced the areas of greatest improvement. For example, where a successful school was federated with a weaker school, the greatest improvement was always in teaching and learning, achievement, behaviour, and often attendance. Shared arrangements also strengthened governance, particularly in the weaker school.

In 2007 the first 'soft' federation emerged, between a large community school and a small Church of England school. The federation model provided a very effective solution to the difficulty of appointing a headteacher to a small, Church of England primary school in a very challenging area in Lambeth. The increased leadership capacity of the large, successful primary school provided the subject expertise, the modelling of high quality teaching and learning, and support for the overall management of the school, which enabled it to rise from a position of failure to improvement over a period of several years to a secure position. The federation model developed on the back of trust built up between schools and the LA, and also the Diocese which were initially sceptical about a community school working with a voluntary aided school. Lambeth used the capacity of neighbouring schools to enhance capacity when schools were struggling, on occasion using statutory powers to require collaboration with neighbouring schools.

The Children's Act 2004 facilitated more structural change by encouraging schools to become lateral instead of vertical organisations. A Director of Education and Children's Service reflected:

'They took on childcare for 42 weeks a year and much younger children with Children's Centres which were attached to primary schools in large measure. So school leaders, instead of focussing just on education from 9am to 3.30pm focussed on the whole community, running outreach for adults and having Children's Centre managers on their senior leadership teams. This new model of school structure/leadership became the norm and has grown despite the loss of funding for extended services. The community work continues with outreach funded jointly by clusters of schools, e.g. SHINE on Saturdays.'

Lambeth has successfully developed and adapted its role in relation to its schools over the years, such that collaborations and excellent partnership working are the norm. Consequently schools have not found it necessary or attractive to detach themselves from the LA, but have found the opportunities presented to be involved in system leadership (offered by the LA) to be both developmental and supportive of local accountability.

One of the outcomes of the continued focus on school to school support was the development of a very high quality pool of headteachers who were very committed to Lambeth and who took responsibility for outcomes beyond their own schools. They were willing to join a range of LA boards, lead headteachers groups and step in at short notice to support other schools.

A school improvement adviser (SIA) recognises the strength and calibre of Lambeth's school leaders:

'Headteachers are strategically strong and able to manage more than one school.'

Federations became a significant factor in ensuring the sustainability of improvement. The strongest heads were encouraged to stay because they had a career path beyond the headship of a single, often very small, school and good teachers and support staff were encouraged to come to work in Lambeth Federations because of the opportunities afforded to work across more than one school.

Single small schools had survived or declined because of the strengths of individual leaders. When they declined the school became immediately dependent on the LA, a larger federation has a greater capacity to bear staff changes and did not become dependent on outside support. The emerging role of the LA is that of broker, facilitator, and mediator and has the function of challenging schools to perform across and within a cluster as well as crucially ensuring that individual schools do not slip through the net.

The LA's partnership with schools also extends through close working with the Headteachers' Council which has developed as a key body over the last decade of improvement. It has successfully progressed from leading a somewhat adversarial group of headteachers to being a key part of the system leadership process. Annual headteacher conferences are held and have been a barometer of the health of the borough's schools and the relationships between LA and headteachers. The programme development is organised by the Headteachers' Council Executive in collaboration with senior LA officers. The role of Chair of the Headteachers' Council is key as is the effective structure of the Executive, as it encourages collaboration and joint working across the partnership. The management team of Lambeth's Children and Young Peoples Service regularly met with Headteachers' Council Executive between 2007 and 2011. To better reflect the devolvement of services to local clusters' the Headteachers' Council Executive now has

representation from each cluster. Headteachers are well represented on key Council Boards such as the Children's Trust Board and the Local Safeguarding Board.

Other features of Lambeth's partnership working include both the community and voluntary sectors. In its desire to ensure that all young people have the tools and opportunities they need to fulfil their potential, regardless of background or life circumstances, Lambeth has provided access to local and national opportunities to develop skills for life and work and to create a more responsible, engaged and cohesive society. In its desire to strengthen community relations and engagement, has worked closely with faith-based organisations and the fruit of this has seen the inclusion of former independently run Muslim primary schools, gaining voluntary aided status and joining federation partnerships with other community primary schools. Such community investment has paid dividends in both the performance and the quality of education now provided by these schools.

The Local Authority remains committed to supporting succession planning at all leadership levels towards headship and beyond and sharing expertise. One headteacher praised the LA for:

'Strategic support for schools to improve leadership'.... 'strong support from Education HR to make necessary staffing changes'....'good quality support and training for middle leaders.'

Over the last few years school to school and peer to peer support roles that can lead to staff retention have been formalised through the National Leaders of Education (NLE) and Local Leaders of Education (LLE) programmes which provide leadership support. Teaching Schools are able to designate the Specialist Leader in Education (SLE) role for middle and senior leaders, this and the National Leader of Governance (NLG) role builds on the government's strategy to further facilitate school-to-school support. Lambeth actively engaged with these national programmes ensuring that some local leaders were nominated for these roles and their expertise used locally where possible.

Lambeth has had a focus on developing future leaders for schools at all stages of their careers. For example talent spotting for future headteachers started when teachers were only four years into their careers, but careful recruitment of NQTs and a thoughtfully devised induction programme, brokered and developed by the LA, identified potential leaders. The Director of Education, Learning and Skills commented:

'We developed shadowing and apprenticeship programmes for aspiring Heads and encouragement and facilitation of brokered secondments, consultancies etc. This has led to the innovative Teaching Schools Alliance which now takes on much more of this work and local school clusters which run much middle and subject leader training. A strong HR team has been very important in supporting the careers of school leaders in Lambeth.'

During 2011-13 the Lambeth Teaching Schools' Alliance (LTSA) was developed with the support of the LA. Its main activity was to focus on developing excellence in leadership and teaching. The model is one of partnership with a 'for schools by schools' approach. The work of David H Hargreaves informs this in terms of culture, collective moral purpose and partnership working.

In 2012 Lambeth schools were also encouraged to form cluster partnerships, in recognition of reduced LA capacity to provide support and the need for schools to belong to strong partnerships that could commission services, provide a secure base from which to operate and to be accountable for the quality of education and the standards achieved across a partnership. These cluster partnerships, based mainly on existing extended services model of locality clusters, were encouraged to support schools in purchasing and retaining good quality and experienced educational support services, including existing services from the LA brokered through School Improvement Advisers and Multi-Agency Team leads. Ten cluster partnerships were set up, involving all schools that wished to be included, and each partnership was allocated a senior lead and a School Improvement Adviser to facilitate LA links with each partnership.

In addition, many schools worked together in other ways and with a variety of levels of formality: from ad-hoc meetings of two or more governing bodies to discuss matters of common interest to agreements to share facilities, staffing expertise or governors, to more formal partnerships and clusters for specific purposes.

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills sums up the changes that have taken place over the last decade or more:

'The LA through its school improvement and children's services teams, particularly has nurtured exceptionally good relationships with schools; similarly schools nurture very good relationships between each other. The level of commitment to education in the Borough has been that there are high numbers of very long serving, innovative, relentlessly aspirational school leaders and teachers. The structural changes to schools and groups of

schools mean that there are excellent career paths in the Borough and many schools' staff make their whole career in the Borough. We have many longstanding and successful headteachers. This is particularly important in a fast changing population and one that faces great deprivation. None of the above applied 13 years ago. Schools worked in cliques and silos. Headteachers were defensive and critical of LA services and staff. Performance in many schools was very poor indeed and a great deal of money and support was poured into those schools essentially propping up that poor performance.'

6.6 A resilient approach to government policies and national initiatives

Historically, LAs have had to learn new ways of working in accordance with the government's definition of their role in supporting school improvement. Expectations of LAs increased dramatically over the years as they delivered many of the government's school improvement initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies and supporting the Excellence in Cities initiatives. LAs were given the duty of ensuring that they promoted high standards of education and were obliged to set strategic objectives, negotiate targets, allocate resources in proportion to needs, and monitor, challenge, support and intervene in schools as necessary, while leaving the actual management of education to the schools themselves. The LA and school leaders adopted a resilient approach to external government policies recognising what might work nationally might not work in the Lambeth context in relation to culture, language, and demography and community cohesion. As one of the former National Strategies teaching and learning consultants remarked:

'The LA responded to the national agenda by taking the best of what was on offer and made them bespoke to meet LA needs.'

A Lambeth headteacher supposed that the literacy and numeracy strategies gave:

'A more cohesive approach to teaching as did the National Curriculum.' However... 'the downside has been that it became prescriptive and prevented some teachers from accessing a creative curriculum that encompassed the learning styles to engage all pupils.' (Headteacher)

Nevertheless, there was recognition by officers that they needed to make government policies work for them, and get the best out of them, for example, the National Strategies and London Challenge. During this period, many partnerships were established to support

children and young peoples' learning and the LA was successful in attracting partners to work in Lambeth and schools made very good use of these contacts.

One of the key partnerships was the Education Action Zone (EAZ) which ran from 1998-2003 and had a significant impact on the 23 schools involved in the northern part of Lambeth. The Zone was a partnership between public, not for profit and private organisations. Major partners of the organisation were Centre for British Teacher (CfBT) education services and Lambeth LEA. It established contacts with Lambeth based businesses to support its work through expertise and financial sponsorship. These included Shell Services International Ltd, IBM and South Bank Arts organisations.

The LA drew heavily upon the work of the EAZ in planning its work in schools, providing highly effective support in literacy and numeracy from zone consultants. As a consequence, standards rose considerably in numeracy and literacy with a notable increase in attainment at Key stage 2, with the proportion of 11 year olds reaching level 4 or above in national tests. Attainment in numeracy rose from 41% in 1997 to 61% in 2001.

The LA through its Education Business Partnership (EBP), also played a key role in promoting links and liaison with other regeneration strategies, with other public sector agencies and authorities and with the Health Action Zone which included the area covered by the EAZ. Courses offered by the EBP included family literacy, family numeracy, health and parenting and computing courses for parents and children. It was estimated that by the end of 2002 over a hundred families would have benefitted from family learning initiatives.

The Education Action Zone (EAZ) encouraged joint working between schools and partnerships with local arts organisations to develop an imaginative curriculum. Lambeth's enviable location in relation to the South Bank, gave opportunities for its pupils to perform at the Royal Festival Hall and take part in cultural and creative events at the Hayward Gallery, the British Film Institute, IMAX cinema and the Young Vic. In 2001 over 200 children from eight Lambeth primary school choirs performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall. Zone schools were among the first to offer 'breakfast clubs' as part of the Out of Hours Learning Projects.

Whilst EAZ activities afforded schools in the North of Lambeth the opportunities to broaden the curriculum, the challenge to raise standards in literacy and numeracy was addressed through local and national projects. The support for literacy, through the National Literacy Strategy was led by the Literacy Adviser who managed both

EAZ resources (literacy consultants) and strategy consultants. This resulted in a 'joined up' approach with considerable impact on the gains made in raised standards in literacy. Relationships between the literacy team and schools were excellent and their training and support was highly valued. Information sharing between the literacy team and schools' advisory service was well co-ordinated and advisers' visits to schools focused on monitoring the impact of consultants' CPD on improvements in teaching learning. Ofsted recognised these improvements in their report:

'In all the schools visited there was evidence of satisfactory or better teaching including, for example, improved planning, confident delivery, an increased range of work, an appropriate focus on spelling and punctuation, the use of a wider vocabulary and the appropriate use of phonics. Staff have generally welcomed the NLS training and have found it useful. Consultants have been supportive with well-targeted advice.' (Ofsted 1999)

The LA instigated other successful literacy initiatives, for example summer literacy schools which in 1998/9 produced very promising improvements in pupils' results in NFER tests. The Family Literacy programme was reported to show excellent outcomes for individual parents and children in terms of progress, developing confidence, recruitment and attendance. The National Year of Reading was widely promoted by a range of events in schools and libraries and the LA started to actively encourage schools to apply for the Primary Quality Mark for their work in literacy and numeracy.

The numeracy strategy adviser and two mathematics consultants led the strategy to raise standards in mathematics in Lambeth schools in a similar manner, working collaboratively with EAZ consultants to achieve considerable success.

Excellence in Cities (EiC) had a slow start in Lambeth for a range of reasons not least because the DfE was seeking a greater emphasis on collaborative activity between schools when the plan was first submitted in 1999. When resubmitted the plan was approved in 2000 and the hiatus caused by the delay, resulted in an impetus for improved working relationships between schools and the LA. Whilst there were still tensions evident in aspects of this collaboration, the LA successfully assisted schools in understanding the benefits of pooling expertise and resources. All but one secondary school engaged fully with the initiative.

The LA was also effective in ensuring that the partnership's plans matched the EDP and the co-ordination of the LA, EAZ and other regeneration initiatives. This enabled schools to utilise the EiC in line with their own priorities.

6.7 Effective use of local initiatives

Best for All Our Children Programme (2006-2010)

Wrestling with the complexities of local context has also led to innovative and highly successful local initiatives such as the Best for All Our Children Programme (BFOAC) devised by Cathy Twist in her role as Assistant Director Standards. It was jointly funded by Lambeth LA, London Challenge and NRF in 2006 and it succeeded in dramatically reducing the number of low attaining / underperforming primary schools (see Table 6.1 and 6.2). In total it supported ten primary schools and three secondary schools to raise standards and sustain this for the future. The focus of the LA programme was twelve primary schools where less than 65% of children achieved level 4 across English, mathematics and science in the 2007 KS2 national tests. 65% was the government's floor target for KS2 achievement in primary schools. It also included three secondary schools where results at GCSE 5+ A*-C including English and maths had been below the floor target of 30%.

The majority of these schools were situated in wards where children faced multiple disadvantages. There were high levels of mobility (e.g. 37%) high FSM (74%) EAL (59%) and SEN (27%) – figures in brackets indicate the highest levels in the targeted schools. All of these schools had been part of a variety of 'intensified' support in the past and had made some progress. Six of the schools had been amalgamated or newly formed after assimilation/closure programmes at some point in their histories. Two of the schools had acting heads after the departure of the substantive headteachers and two were part of successful loose 'collaboratives'. In one school the substantive headteacher was on maternity leave. Two of the schools experienced particularly high pupil mobility due to nearby hostel accommodation of various types.

The Best for All Our Children programme had four main strands: building leadership and management capacity in the targeted schools; improving the quality of teaching and learning; early reading and numeracy leading to higher standards at the end of the Foundation Stage, KS1 and KS2, KS3 and GCSE; creating sustainable improvement in parental and carer involvement with a specific focus on vulnerable children, improving attitudes to learning for all groups of children. Schools were offered training in developing leadership that could be adapted for use with senior and middle managers. Dedicated teaching and learning consultants coached teachers in assessing children's work and lesson planning and delivery in order to enhance the learning potential for all children. A range of CPD was offered to school staff, for example for teachers working towards Chartered London Teacher Status and for teaching assistants to enhance their literacy and numeracy

skills in order to better support teaching and learning in classes. The programme also gave schools access to initiatives, i.e. Communication, Language, and Literacy Development (CLLD), Every Child a Reader, Intensifying Support Programme, JUMP Maths, Talking Partners and Lambeth Pupil Parent Award (LPPA).

- Each of the ten schools was matched with a successful partner school where good practice was shared and the headteacher and leadership team acted as consultants.
- A detailed audit of staffing and leadership capacity was carried out jointly by the lead adviser, consultant HT and HT.
- An audit of curriculum, assessment and planning systems was carried out jointly by the lead adviser, consultant HT and teaching and learning consultant in preparation for implementing or embedding the Primary National Strategy's Intensifying Support Programme and the Secondary National Strategy APP programme across the school. This audit was to ensure that was capacity to take on the additional proposed programmes of: 'Every Child a Reader' in Year 1, 'Talking Partners' in Nursery and Reception, and mathematics enhancement programme across the school, Mathematics, revision and booster activities at KS2, 3 and GCSE.
- An audit of behaviour for learning, emotional well-being and attendance was carried out by the lead adviser, the consultant SENCO and outreach officer prior to focused support being planned. This involved liaison with the EP, EWO and Behaviour Improvement Services (BIP).
- Additional support was put in to strengthen leadership (at all levels) from partner school and additional teaching staff deployed if necessary.
- Each school had access to 'Every Child a Reader' programme in Year 1 to boost Literacy Skills and dedicated mathematics programme across KS1/2; accelerated reading programme and catch up mathematics programmes for KS3 and GCSE.
- An action plan focusing on key strategic areas for development including Raising Achievement Plan was jointly led by the assigned adviser and the Teaching and Learning consultant.
- An action group including the Headteacher and Chair of Governors was set up by the Adviser to monitor progress of the project. It was attended by the partner school and LA personnel, who could support key areas for development and meeting half-termly or more often if necessary.
- Each school was given access to enhancement activities through the national strategies and gifted and talented programmes.

Table 6.1 GCSE performance in Best for All Schools

GCSE	Name	Best for All	Lambeth	National
2006	5+ A*-C	29%	55%	59%
	5+ A*C inc E+M*	31%	42%	46%
2007	5+ A*-C	25%	56%	62%
	5+ A*-C inc E+M	37%	41%	47%
2008	5+ A*-C	49%	62%	65%
	5+ A*C inc E+M*	31%	47%	48%
2009	5+ A*-C	70%	73%	70%
	5+ A*-C inc E+M*	44%	54%	50%
2010	5+ A*-C	73%	74%	75%
	5+ A*-C inc E+M	49%	53%	54%
Change 2006-2010	5+ A*-C	44%	19%	16%
	5+ A*-C inc E+M	18%	11%	8%

* 5+A*-C including English and Maths

The ‘Best for all our Children’ Programme had rigorous monitoring systems to track the progress of individual pupils towards performance targets; the progress of teaching and learning in each school and the status of leadership and management capacity. Outreach workers supported schools to embed systems and policies around attendance and punctuality as well as parental engagement. For example, the introduction of attendance panels with targeted families. The main findings from the evaluation of the local initiatives of ‘Best for All Our Children’ confirmed that the programme had a huge impact and the outcome of building leadership and management capacity in Schools. ‘Good or Better’ Ofsted grade was achieved with 50% of schools by 2008 and 100% in 2010. There was also success in the outcome of improving the quality of Teaching and Learning in Schools. Overall, teaching and learning improved by 100% from 2006-8 (See Ofsted 2010).

There was also an improvement in KS1, KS2 and GCSE results as a result of local initiatives. Table 6.1 and 6.2 shows that overall:

- The KS1 results improved by 9% from 50% level 2B or above to 59%.
- The KS2 results improved by 12% from 58% level 4 or above to 70%.
- The GCSE results improved by 18% from 31% level 5+A*-C to 49%.

Table 6.2: KS1 and KS2 Performance in Best for All Schools

	Key Stage (2B+)				Key Stage 2 (4+)			
		Best for All	Lambeth	National		Best for All	Lambeth	National
2006	Writing	43%	54%	60%	English	62%	78%	79%
	Reading	51%	63%	71%	Maths	49%	70%	76%
	Maths	56%	65%	73%	Science	65%	83%	87%
	Average	50%	61%	68%	Average	58%	77%	81%
2007	Writing	39%	53%	59%	English	66%	77%	80%
	Reading	52%	65%	71%	Maths	58%	71%	77%
	Maths	58%	66%	74%	Science	78%	85%	87%
	Average	49%	62%	68%	Average	67%	78%	81%
2008	Writing	37%	54%	59%	English	64%	80%	81%
	Reading	50%	65%	71%	Maths	58%	74%	78%
	Maths	51%	67%	74%	Science	73%	86%	88%
	Average	46%	62%	68%	Average	65%	80%	82%
2009	Writing	43%	57%	60%	English	61%	79%	80%
	Reading	56%	67%	72%	Maths	59%	78%	79%
	Maths	55%	68%	74%	Science	68%	86%	88%
	Average	51%	64%	69%	Average	63%	81%	82%
2010	Writing	52%	61%	60%	English	70%	82%	81%
	Reading	61%	69%	72%	Maths	71%	81%	80%
	Maths	63%	70%	73%	Science	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average	59%	67%	68%	Average	70%	81%	81%
Change 2006-2010	Writing	+9%	+7%	0%	English	+8%	+4%	+2%
	Reading	+10%	+6%	+1%	Maths	+22%	+11%	+4%
	Maths	+7%	+5%	0%	Science	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average	+9%	+6%	0%	Average	+12%	+4%	0%

Effective support for schools causing concern

The local authority's statutory responsibilities for educational excellence are set out in the Education Act 1996 and how it should intervene early where the performance of a maintained school is declining, ensuring that schools secure the support needed to improve to at least 'good.' The LA must continue to exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards but now within the context of increasing autonomy and changing accountability for schools, alongside an expectation that improvement should be led by schools themselves. The Act sets out the importance of early intervention and of swift and robust action to tackle failure, including the use of Warning Notices and Interim Executive Boards (IEB) in maintained schools.

Despite the 1996 Education Act outlining the LA's statutory responsibilities regarding schools causing concern, one of the challenges faced by assigned advisers on their arrival in the summer term 1998 was that a significant minority of schools with shortcomings identified in their Section 9 and 10 reports had not had these shortcomings acknowledged in any formal way in the 18 months following inspection. Many did not have the resources to secure improvement and had not had their requests for support answered in any systematic way. Up until that point, schools in difficulties felt isolated and unsupported, coinciding as it did with the radical restructuring of the Education Department and the advisory service in particular.

One of the priorities for the newly established school improvement service was to establish the School Improvement Monitoring Group (SIMG) with the remit to monitor the standards and progress of all Lambeth schools, not just those which had been placed in an Ofsted category of concern. The LA has continued to vigilantly exercise its statutory and strategic roles and responsibilities with regard to schools causing concern. In terms of standards in academies (and holding sponsors to account for this), the lead responsibility sits with the DfE and the Schools Commissioner. LAs do not have direct responsibility for the performance of successful academies, but despite this, under the 1996 Education Act, LAs retain a legal responsibility for performance in the area as a whole. Lambeth has a considerable pool of expertise available that can help academies to drive up standards and it actively seeks and works in partnership with its academies and free schools. Therefore if any are struggling to achieve the expected level of performance the LA offers its support to help raise standards. Cathy Twist, Director of Education, Learning and Skills, explains why she believes it is important to keep a close eye on schools in Lambeth:

'You cannot stop because inner London schools are always vulnerable. All schools are given at least three visits from a School Improvement Adviser per year, even if they are outstanding. It has to continue – you cannot get to a point where it is all rosy.'

The SIMG classifies schools causing concern and views a range of hard and soft intelligence to ensure accurate and timely intervention. There is an intolerance of failure and poor performance and concerns are promptly shared in a formal letter to the headteacher and Chair of Governors explaining the areas of concern and the timeframe expected for improvement. In addition a termly update letter will be sent giving the outcome from the latest SIMG.

Meetings of SIMG are held termly i.e. three times per year. In addition, at the beginning of each academic year there is a meeting to review the work of the previous year (SIMEG) this includes the success of actions and interventions made by LA officers.

Schools are categorised by SIMG following specific criteria:

Category A: good/outstanding schools with capacity to sustain or move up to the next Ofsted category. These schools are not in the SIMG process.

Category B1: LA or Ofsted Requiring improvement with good capacity to improve to the next category or 'good' with limited capacity to improve to the next category.

Category B2: LA or Ofsted Requiring Improvement with limited capacity to improve to next category.

Category C: LA or Ofsted judged Inadequate. Ofsted Serious Weaknesses or Special Measures.

SIMG meetings are chaired by the Director of Education, Learning and Skills with the following LA officers attending: senior SIA, secondary, primary and early years SIAs, Head of Research and Statistics, Head of Schools' Human Resources, Head of Finance, Head of SEN, Education Strategy Lead, Co-ordinator of Governor Services, Assistant Director Early Years and Community Services, 14-19 Co-ordinator and Senior Safeguarding Officers who painstakingly go through the strengths and weaknesses of each school causing concern.

SIAs recommend the movement of schools between the various categories, based on specific criteria, and when a school successfully moves out of a category, a letter of congratulations is sent to the headteacher and Chair of Governors. Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of schools judged as 'Requiring Improvement' or those with results below national floor standards, may be invited to discuss these results with the Director of Education, Learning and Skills. This meeting will focus on the provision of support aimed at recognising progress and achieving or improving above floor standard results and educational achievement.

This thorough monitoring process by SIMG covers a wide range of factors which impact on the performance of schools in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities not only in terms of standards but also, for example, safeguarding, finance, health and safety, proposed federations, attendance and exclusions, governor support, HR and premises issues. Extra support for headteachers who are new in post is arranged so that outcomes for children can be maintained and/or improved as quickly as possible.

For schools that fall into categories B2 and C a programme of support and monitoring is developed and negotiated with the headteacher and formalised into an action plan. A multi-disciplinary action group is set up to facilitate the support plan and is co-ordinated and chaired by the school's assigned adviser. Action groups may comprise the headteacher and Chair of Governors as a minimum, but might also include diocesan representatives (where appropriate) and other LA officers. The role of the adviser is to identify, broker and co-ordinate the support for the school and to evaluate the impact at each subsequent action group meeting.

The process of identifying, challenging and supporting schools causing concern has been a key factor in the successful transformation of Lambeth schools. For example several schools that had been in special measures in 2001 went on to be graded by Ofsted as 'outstanding' in subsequent inspections. To improve from a position where in 1996 there were 14 schools in special measures and many others causing serious concern, to one where by 2008 there were no schools in any Ofsted category of requiring improvement is remarkable. This successful record in school improvement is based, in part, on the development of trusting relationships between schools and the LA. The former Divisional Director Inclusion & Standards also believe that:

'the relentless focus on raising standards by the LA, within a supportive and holistic approach to the work of schools, made a significant difference to the education culture in Lambeth. Once a culture of excellence was established most schools were keen to ensure that the children attending the school did as well as they could.'

His view was supported in the following quote:

‘The coherent and ambitious shared vision for educational outcomes in the borough, backed up by rigorous challenge and support for every school by high quality education advisers.... ‘The vision was developed carefully and crucially depended on good and mutually respectful relationships between the LA and schools.’ (Former Director of Education and Children’s Services)

A decade ago, Ofsted acknowledged the transformation which had taken place in the improved relationship between the LA and schools and gave its seal of approval to the LA’s strategy for supporting and challenging schools causing concern:

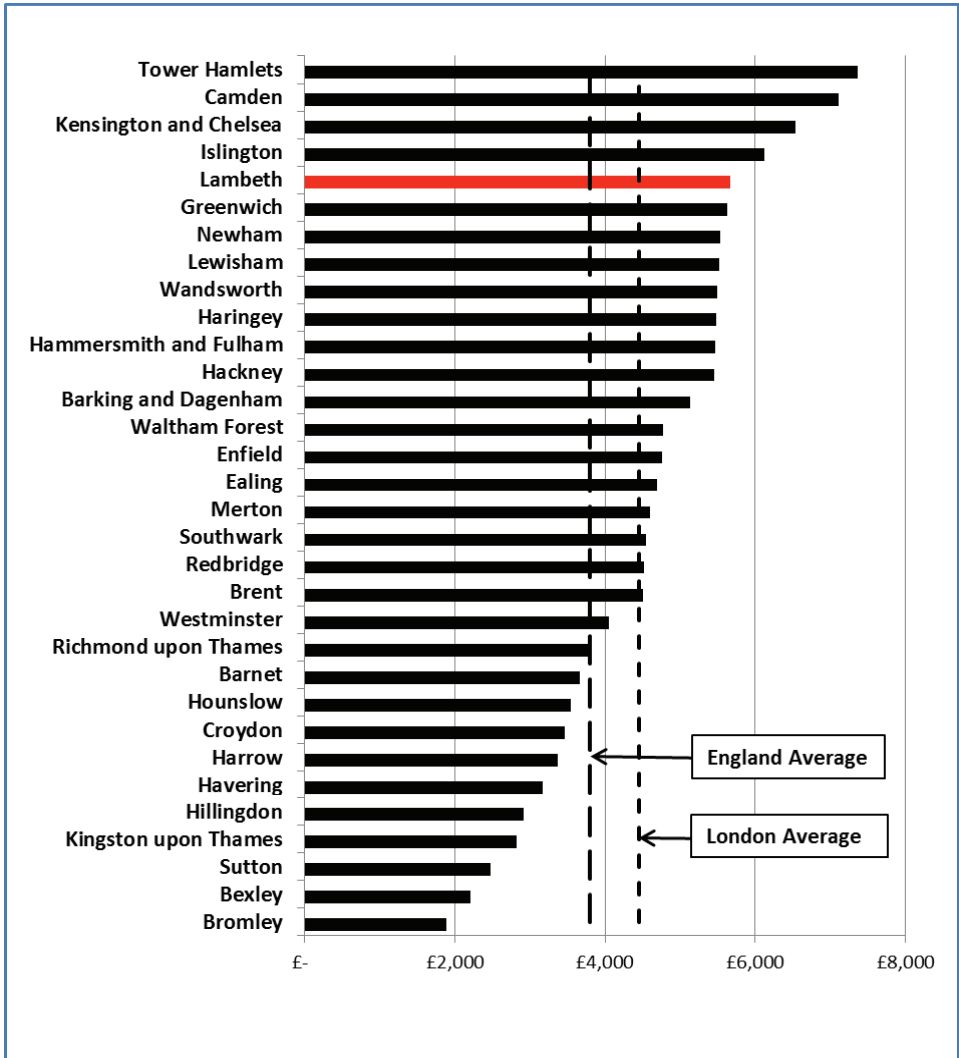
‘The LEA has had some success in implementing its plans. This is evident in the transformed relationships with the schools. Nearly all of them have a new confidence in the leadership of the LEA and the services it provides. Improved relationships are one sign of growing success in the implementation of plans and of improved communications, improvement in performance is the other, and more important sign. It is evident in pupils’ attainment, in their attendance at school, in declining exclusion and, most striking of all, in the reduction of the number of schools causing concern.’ (Ofsted 2004)

6.8 High levels of funding

As in many London LAs, Lambeth has been a well-funded local authority (see Figure 6.1). The overall DSG funding in 2012/13 in Lambeth amounts - £202,897,000 based on 35,891 pupils at a single rate of £5,664. This is further supplemented by additional funding through pupil premium (see Figure 6.2). The funding of schools takes account of six pupil characteristics that the LA believes matters most in the attainment of pupils. These are:

- A basic per pupil amount (‘age weighted pupil unit’)
- Pupils who are from deprived backgrounds
- Pupils who have been looked after
- Pupils with low attainment before starting at their primary or secondary school
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and
- Pupil mobility

Figure 6.1: Spend per Pupil Headcount by Total Expenditure 2013



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-financial-year-2012-to-2013>

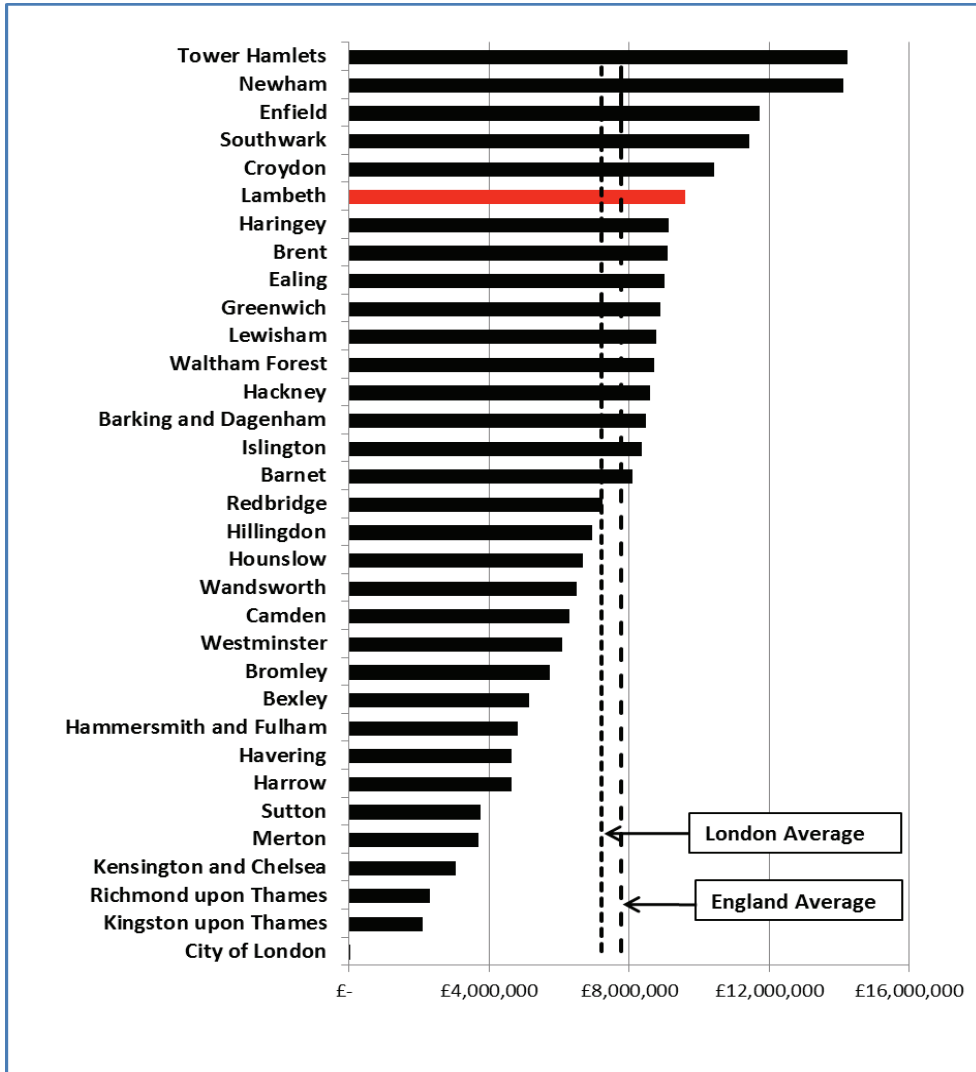
One could argue that one of the key factors for the educational transformation in Lambeth was related to funding. One headteacher in our survey commented that:

‘Schools have been well funded and well-resourced over time and LA has maintained an arms-length approach which has developed an effective working relationship over time to the benefit of students.’ (Headteacher)

This is further supported by a school governor who maintained that

'Additional funding has been used effectively for targeted interventions and support. This helped in raising achievement.' (Governor)

Figure 6.2: Total Pupil Premium Spend 2013



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014>

There is a wide variation in funding between the 150 English local authorities ranging from £1,268 in Darlington, £1,893 in Bromley LA to £7,358 in Tower Hamlets. The London and national average is £4,456 and £3,804 respectively.

This variation arises largely because schools differ in their characteristics. The most deprived pupils in each school attract more funding.

This higher level of funding cannot of itself explain the improvement in Lambeth schools. Lambeth schools, as in all London schools, have always been funded at a higher level than other regions (Figure 6.1 and 6.2). Of course costs have been higher in the capital than elsewhere so it would be wrong to assume a mechanistic relationship between funding and London schools' performance. However many of the people we interviewed commented on resourcing. They noted the strengths of Lambeth in getting more money to challenge poverty and inner cities issues. The LA has effectively used this funding for targeted interventions.

'Good school funding; with additional grants to support initiatives help everyone work on programmes e.g. national strategies.' (Director of Education)

'Higher level of school funding for Lambeth schools when compared to the national funding levels. Evidence of London School' performance shows that a higher level of funding per pupil, has delivered better outcomes.' (Assistant Director-Education)

'Targeted Central Government funding for school improvement e.g. Standards Funds, dedicated school grant (DSG) facilitated capacity building in local authority for provision of specialist teaching staff and ability to intervene.' (Assistant Director-Education)

'High level of funding for schools compared with other LAs.' (Headteacher)

6.9 Tackling disadvantage

Lambeth LA has made a significant difference to the lives of children and families over the years by tackling disadvantage in schools and beyond the school gates. Research shows the link between poverty and achievement (See NCE 1996; Demie 2002 and Cassen and Kingdon 2007). As noted by Mortimore and Whitty (1997):

'Probably the single most significant factor that currently distinguishes the low achieving schools in urban areas from that of the more academically successful schools is that only a small proportion of pupils in academically successful schools come from disadvantaged homes.'

Cassen and Kingdon (2007) and NCE (1996) research also suggests that eligibility for free school meals is strongly associated with low achievement. LA research into disadvantage and educational achievement has also highlighted that schools in the authority experience extreme levels of social disadvantage relative to national norms (Demie 2002 and Demie et al 2014). In Lambeth, school level data demonstrates a clear relationship between the concentration of poverty levels in schools and tests and examination results. For schools, the indicator most often used to compare the contexts in which they operate is eligibility for free school meals. The proportion of pupils taking KS2 statutory tests in 2013 that were eligible for free school meals (FSM) was 34%, and for the GCSE cohort it was 33%. The number of pupils entitled to a free school meal in Lambeth primary and secondary schools is double the national average (DfE 2013). Despite this challenge, the LA and its schools have focussed considerable time and resources to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. As a result there has been a noticeable improvement in the performance of disadvantaged pupils over the last fifteen years in the LA.

Table 6.3. KS2 Average Performance by FSM in Lambeth and England (Level 4+)

	Lambeth – Disadvantaged	National - Disadvantaged	Gap	Lambeth - Not disadvantaged	National - Not disadvantaged	Gap
2003	63%	59%	4	79%	76%	3
2004	68%	60%	8	79%	77%	2
2005	67%	62%	5	81%	79%	2
2006	69%	63%	6	82%	80%	2
2007	72%	66%	6	83%	84%	-1
2008	72%	68%	4	84%	85%	-1
2009	73%	68%	5	85%	85%	0
2010	76%	66%	10	88%	84%	4
2011	78%	67%	11	88%	84%	4
2012	85%	75%	10	92%	88%	4
2013	86%	75%	11	93%	88%	5

**Disadvantaged is defined as those children in receipt of free school meals*

Source: Raising Achievement in Lambeth Schools, Research and Statistics Unit

Tables 6.3 indicates that there is a marked difference in KS2 performance between pupils eligible for free meals and the most economically advantaged groups in schools. At the end of primary education in 2013, 86% of eligible pupils achieved level 4+, whereas 93% of pupils who were not eligible achieved at this level. The GCSE data in Table 6.4 also shows a significant gap, with pupils on free school meals gaining only 60% 5+ A*-C including English and maths in 2013,

compared to 69% for those not eligible. Overall, the findings from the LA data confirm that pupils eligible for school meals did considerably less well than their more affluent peers in Lambeth.

Table 6.4. GCSE Performance by FSM in Lambeth and England (5+A*-C incl. English and Maths)

	Lambeth - Disadvantaged	National - Disadvantaged	Gap	Lambeth - Not disadvantaged	National - Not disadvantaged	Gap
2006	29%	20%	9%	49%	48%	1%
2007	34%	21%	13%	46%	49%	-3%
2008	40%	24%	16%	52%	52%	0%
2009	48%	27%	21%	56%	54%	2%
2010	50%	31%	19%	55%	59%	-4%
2011	54%	35%	19%	64%	62%	2%
2012	56%	36%	20%	66%	63%	3%
2013	60%	38%	22%	69%	65%	4%

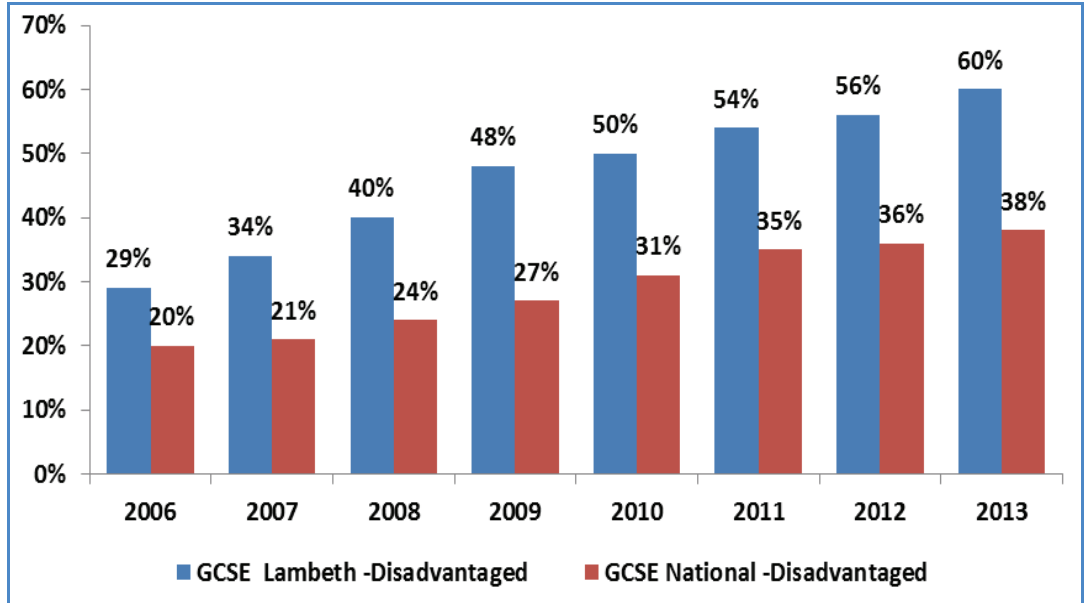
**Disadvantaged is defined as those children in receipt of free school meals*

Source: Raising Achievement in Lambeth Schools, Research and Statistics Unit

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 also show a compelling picture of the educational success of disadvantaged pupils when compared to the national average. It confirms that pupils in Lambeth do better at KS2 and GCSE than they do in England. For example in 2013, 86% of Lambeth pupils eligible for free school meals at the end of KS2 attained level 4 or above in both English and mathematics compared to 75% in England. Similarly at GCSE 60% of pupils eligible for free school meals gained 5+A*-C including English and mathematics compared with 38% for all FSM pupils in England. What is particularly remarkable about Lambeth’s performance is that the LA pupils achieved 11 and 22 percentage points better than the national average at KS2 and GCSE. (See Table 6.3 and Figure 6.3).

The exemplary performance of Lambeth’s more disadvantaged pupils is also borne out by statistics when compared to other local authorities in England. Figure 6.4 also shows the difference in attainment of FSM pupils’ performance compared by local authority. Looking more broadly at the 20 top performing local authorities in terms of GCSE attainment for local low income pupils, the data confirms that disadvantaged pupils in Lambeth do better when compared to their peers at national level and in other local authorities.

Figure 6.3: GCSE Performance by FSM in Lambeth and England (5+A*-C incl. English and Maths)



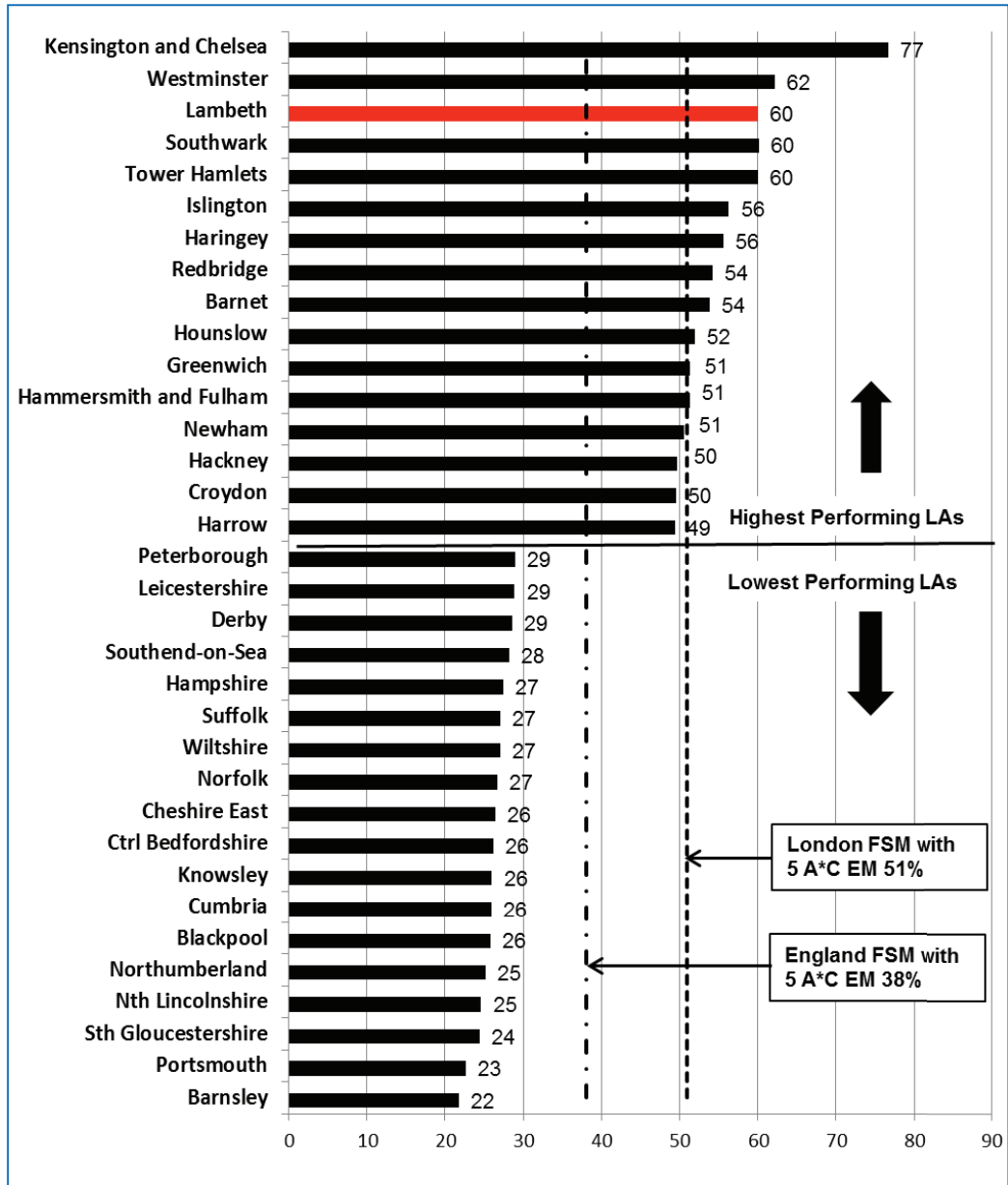
In Lambeth the percentage of pupils on free school meals achieving 5+A*-C including English and maths is 60% compared to Barnsley (22%), Portsmouth (23%), Norfolk (27%), Hampshire (27%), Peterborough (29%) and the England average of 38% (See Figure 6.4). The five strongest performing authorities, in rank order, are Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Lambeth, Southwark and Tower Hamlets, all inner London boroughs.

There are a number of reasons for the vast improvement in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Lambeth compared nationally in England. The LA firmly believes that disadvantage has multiple causes and the many challenges faced by young people in the most deprived areas, cannot be ignored or left at the school gates. The London Borough of Lambeth has therefore taken a wide range of approaches to provide additional support to schools in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

Key features of the LA's strategy which have contributed to its success are:

- Providing interventions targeted specially to those who are underachieving. For example, as argued in other sections of this research report, since early 2000 the LA tackled disadvantaged in the authority
- Effective use of local and national initiatives such as Best For All Our Children, Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), Education Action Zone, Excellence in Cities, National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies and Sure Start all of which have impacted on the raising achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the local authority. These initiatives and programmes were crucial and created much needed targeted support and greater accountability at LA level for the performance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Forensic use of data to track the performance of disadvantaged pupils and good practice research into what works to channel targeted support to raise achievement. The targeted intervention and tailored programmes run by each school are closely monitored by the local authority and have been key to driving up standards and narrowing the achievement gaps of disadvantaged young people.
- Extra funding: The LA recognises that schools with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils need extra support. As a result it has used disadvantage factors to allocate funding to its schools through its funding allocation formula. Schools that score high on the disadvantaged index which is calculated on the basis of free school meals, pupil mobility and levels of fluency in English, receive more money.
- Effective use of pupil premium (since 2011) funding to target individual schools and to support the work they do with disadvantaged pupils to close the gaps in attainment. The LA closely targeted those schools facing the most challenging circumstances and the most disadvantaged pupils.
- Important features of LA initiatives included teams of dedicated school improvement advisers, teaching and learning consultants, learning mentors, teaching assistants and EAL professionals.

Figure 6.4: Percentage of pupils with FSM achieving 5+A* to C incl. English and Mathematics in 2013 by Local Authorities



Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300172/SFR05_2014_National_and_LA_tables_updated_BF_v2.xls

The above success factors are further supported by a recent DfE case study into good practice in the effective use of pupil premium funding to tackle disadvantage in Lambeth. The study identified the following key reasons for success:

- ‘The LA provides an effective school improvement service with the credibility to support and challenge. Since 2010 the LA has focused more on facilitating, convening and leading to support schools in becoming more sustainable.
- The LA has built a strong data and research base on which to build effective practice and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- The LA gives a strong and consistent message to its schools on the performance of disadvantaged pupils.
- The LA has encouraged federation, teaching schools (there are 2 in the LA) and sharing of good practice.
- There is a strong cluster structure with families of schools. The focus of the clusters is to narrow the gap for all underachieving groups and to accelerate high achievers. The clusters involve a number of different networks such as those for head teachers, business managers and outreach workers. These are all school-led.
- The lead head in each cluster attends a head teacher council executive meeting which meets with senior officers 6 times a year and gives schools direct access to the Director of Education, Learning and Skills.
- At the beginning of the autumn term the LA distributes a thorough data pack to all its schools which is used by schools and their school improvement advisers (SIA) This gives a detailed profile for each institution and compares each school with other schools in the LA and those nationally.
- The LA used Ofsted’s February 2013 report on the pupil premium to develop a series of questions for schools to ask themselves about improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The LA takes a strategic look at the performance of all its pupils every term, using the schools’ data across all year groups not just those at the end of key stages.
- The LA encourages all their teachers to know who their disadvantaged pupils are and suggests evaluation of specific classroom interventions.
- SIAs look at the quality of teaching on each termly visit and work with schools to carry out a detailed evaluation of their strategies and interventions.’ (DfE, 2014)



CHAPTER 7: THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOLS IN EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

7.1 Strong school leadership

School leaders in Lambeth have a lot to be proud of. They have led the implementation of a series of major national and local initiatives at various stages over the last two and a half decades, during which time the level of pupil performance has continued to improve and is currently at an all-time high. Seeing children achieve, is the single most important aspect of the job that gives school leaders the greatest satisfaction.

Nonetheless, just as the leadership of the LA went through a process of transformation between 1990 to the present time, so also did the landscape of school leadership. It is not surprising then that over this period, there have been huge changes in leadership in Lambeth's schools.

Inevitably after the first round of school inspections by Ofsted in 1996, when 14 schools went into 'special measures', headteachers were challenged by the LA to raise standards. Targets were set for improvement and where these were not met, school leaders were held to account in open and robust discussions with the Executive Director of Education and the Assistant Director of School Improvement. No excuses were accepted for poor performance. The evidence provided by data in the 'School Profile' which gave, even in those early days, comparisons with outcomes of similar schools, supported the need for greater ambition.

From 1998 Lambeth invested heavily in promoting development programmes. The continuing professional development of headteachers, deputies and middle leaders was a key focus of the school improvement service. Heads were encouraged to attend the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH), deputies for the NPQH (all run in partnership with the Leadership Centre at the Institute of Education). Various courses for newly appointed headteachers, subject leaders and NQTs were tailor-made and led by advisers and external consultants and were held in the LA's Professional Development Centre. A comprehensive range of courses on various aspects of school management were available to schools, many funded through Government initiatives, with supply cover allocated. Ofsted acknowledged that the impact of these courses was positive:

'Lambeth now provides a comprehensive programme of training and development for senior and middle managers. Headteachers and deputy heads are supported and encouraged to participate in the national programmes for experienced and aspiring

heads and the interest in these opportunities is growing. Targeted management development for deputy heads has been reinstated by the LEA this year and the training is reported to be very good and highly relevant to staff needs in primary, secondary and special schools. A core programme for the induction of new headteachers is in its third year course evaluations indicate high levels of satisfaction. Training needs are identified through the headteachers' council and the professional development compact with schools is a helpful way of encouraging senior staff to ensure that the benefits of training have an impact in the school.' (Ofsted December 2000).

When the LEA was re-inspected in May 2004 Ofsted identified the progress that had been made:

'The LEA's support to improve education in schools' continues to be highly satisfactory. Schools value the advice and guidance of the LEA.... Improving leadership and management has high priority.... Officers encourage headteachers and middle managers to use the national training programmes. They also make good use of headteachers to support others by facilitating networking and setting up more formal collaboration. There has been decisive action to attract, develop and retain teachers. Inspection shows that the quality of teaching and learning in schools is above the national average and rising.' (Ofsted 2004)

The appointment of new headteachers was a key element of the work of School Improvement Advisers and human resources officers who guided school governors to stimulate demand for high quality professionals to be appointed to lead Lambeth schools. The LA endeavoured to provide the right information, advice and guidance to schools, and to explicitly identify and address any gaps or lack of skills in applications, during the shortlisting and interview process. Higher than average salaries were offered to excellent leaders who had the necessary skills and experience to meet the challenge of raising standards from very low levels.

School leadership is vital to school improvement. As Leithwood and Seashore Louis note:

'To date we have not found a single documented case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.' (2012:3)

From reading a selection of recent Ofsted inspection reports of Lambeth schools, the judgements on leadership and management have a common thread which illustrates this point:

- ‘Inspirational leaders and managers are determined to ensure pupils receive a ‘World Class Education.’ They are highly ambitious for each child to acquire the particular skills they need to receive their potential and lead successful lives.’
- ‘The headteacher, together with senior leaders and managers provide outstanding leadership. They are very well supported by leaders and managers at all levels and by members of the cohesive staff team. An ambitious vision and accurate evaluation have resulted in rapid and sustained improvements in achievement, attendance, teaching behaviour and the curriculum.’
- ‘The headteacher is determined and relentless in his focus on improvement. This is driven by his passionate belief that all students, irrespective of their circumstances, are entitled to the best possible education.’
- ‘The skilful and highly effective executive headteacher has used the expertise in the federation and built a strong senior leadership team to sustain improvement. They have extremely high expectations. These are communicated clearly to all staff and pupils, who share their aspirations.’
- ‘The headteacher has created a very strong team of staff who share her high expectations and aspirations. Together with governors, they have established a vibrant learning community in which all pupils thrive and flourish, academically and personally.’
- ‘Leadership and management are outstanding because leaders have accurately analysed pupils’ assessment information and put effective strategies in place to ensure that pupils’ progress is accelerated at every key stage.’
- ‘Evaluation of the school is rigorous and accurate. They monitor teaching regularly and accurately, and there are many training opportunities for teachers to improve their expertise.’

Harris and Chapman (2001) also argued that leadership in schools is critical and has a powerful influence on the achievement of students and effectiveness in school. Leaders adapt different styles to suit their circumstances.

For Lambeth, this can be seen from Ofsted performance data for 2005 to 2013, which suggests that there is a relationship between the effectiveness of schools and the effectiveness of leadership and the impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The inspection data shows that over time there has been a steady improvement in the grading awarded for leadership and of teaching and learning. No schools were in special measures in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013. (See Ofsted school inspection reports).

In addition, Lambeth's high achieving schools demonstrate 'good and outstanding' leadership through headteacher and senior management teams as well as governing bodies. Each is supported by a committed team of teachers. This bears testimony to the rigour with which LA officers have advised and supported governors on the appointment of top quality school leaders and trained them to become ambitious for the schools they serve. Leaders are described as 'inspirational' and 'visionary'. Each has a strong moral drive for pupils to succeed whatever their background. One headteacher stated:

'What a great and noble thing it is to be around children and change society. Anybody who says children from round here can't achieve is badly letting down local children and communities. We challenge stereotypes about the area served by school by asking questions such as why can't a school in Brixton be a good school where achievement is outstanding? Why cannot children in the area have their dream? We have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently.'

The headteachers are excellent role models and have clear visions for raising standards and effective monitoring of the curriculum at all levels.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities in leadership teams are evident at every level in each school. One school attributes its dramatic improvement over the last decade to the promotion of a dynamic and decentralised approach to leadership which has given staff genuine authority but supported them in developing the best possible way of going forward. A Deputy Principal characterises her leadership team as:

'Cohesive...it is not negatively competitive, it is cohesive.'

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

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

The extent, to which school leaders have embraced the ambitious vision formulated two decades ago by Heather Du Quesnay et al, is reflected in the following quote by one headteacher:

'The attitude that any child can thrive irrespective of background has spread virally through Lambeth. New influxes of teachers who hold this vision have been attracted into Lambeth schools. Schools once considered to be poor are now thriving. Parental confidence in Lambeth schools means that children are coming to school with very positive and optimistic expectations.'

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

'We are constantly reviewing ourselves, reflecting on why we are here, our vision, our ethos. Our spiritual connections are strong- the belief in the agenda goes beyond the contract, there is a moral obligation to get this right.'

Despite the regular reviews and restructures, the fundamentals don't change. Such fundamentals are summarised by one headteacher:

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

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

Governance in the schools is strong. Governors share the school's aspirations for the students. They are involved in the life of each school through 'regular meetings and fact finding visits' and its strategic direction. They are well informed, due to the regular LA briefings they receive and the high quality training that has been offered over the years, about development plans and increasingly effective in the balance between support and challenge. One headteacher states that:

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

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

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

The views of pupils, parents and students are sought regularly, are much valued and used to inform worthwhile changes in the schools. Headteachers are keen for children to have a greater say in the way the schools are run and a greater involvement in their learning, to get the culture of learning right. A member of staff in the English department of one school states, 'If we are doing it for them we need to know what we can do better for them. We need to know what they want from us.'

A headteacher stated:

'We want pupil voice to be credible to the children. Pupils do feel that they have an input into policies etc. As school leaders we have to be flexible, to look at our population- know who is in the population- connect with the community. If the kids won't buy into the agenda they won't do it. We constantly reflect with the children.'

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

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

Pupil views are sought through School's Council meetings with Senior Management Teams (SMT), pupil questionnaires, target setting days, student committees and through a range of action groups.

Lambeth's schools pride themselves in the diversity of their workforces. They have recruited good quality teaching and support staff who reflect the languages, cultures, ethnic background and faiths of the pupils. The schools recruit from their local communities, which sends a strong message to the communities that they are valued. This has helped the schools to become the central point of the wider community and has built trust. Teaching assistants, often from the local communities, are greatly valued in the schools. They play key roles in communicating with parents and supporting pupils.

Leaders also appeared to be very much focused upon rigorous monitoring and evaluation as a basis for improvement, for example 'there are very strong systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of provision so that leaders and managers are fully aware of strengths and weaknesses and can plan better for improvement' and 'priorities are driven by what the data suggests – sustained effort is then placed upon these priorities.' (Ofsted 2009). From review of a selection of LA research reports related to leadership and management in primary and secondary schools (Demie and Lewis 2010, 2013), it would appear that they share some common characteristics:

- 'They constantly demonstrate that disadvantage need not be a barrier to achievement.'
- 'They have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently and never relaxed.'
- 'They focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning with very effective professional development of all staff.'
- 'They are expert at assessment and the tracking of pupil progress with appropriate support and intervention based upon a detailed knowledge of individual pupils.'
- 'They cultivate a range of partnerships particularly with parents, business and the community to support pupil learning and progress.'
- 'They are robust and rigorous in terms of self-evaluation and data analysis with clear strategies for improvement.'
- 'They put pupils first, invest in their staff and nurture their communities.'
- 'They fulfil individual potential through providing outstanding teaching, rich opportunities for learning, and encouragement and support for each pupil.'
- 'They are highly inclusive, having complete regard for the educational progress, personal development and well-being of every pupil.'

7.2 High quality teaching and learning

Another factor for success in raising achievement is high quality teaching and learning in LA schools. Lambeth faced an immense teacher shortage in the late 1990s, with the result that many teachers had to be recruited from abroad. Successfully addressing that issue and recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is a major factor in Lambeth's success.

Lambeth's School Human Resource department and advisers established links with London University's Institute of Education (IOE) to address the issue of teacher recruitment and a bespoke NQT induction programme, led by an IOE consultant and an adviser was the outcome. Much effort went into developing this excellent NQT induction programme and, together with the high quality recruitment packs and professionally run interview panels (which included headteachers, advisers and HR officers) sent out strong messages about Lambeth's high ambition.

Lambeth's leading NQT induction training and support programme was established to enable NQTs to meet the national standards for induction and help to raise standards in the classroom. NQTs are still supported well and early intervention is provided, where appropriate. The Lambeth NQT website provides a wealth of materials, support and guidance and is very well received and used by the NQTs.

Schools have implemented their own recruitment and retention packages which in some cases include support from Lambeth LA for housing for teachers, professional development, encouraging and supporting local people into education and maximising work-based routes to qualified teacher status.

Lambeth has seen over one hundred Overseas Trained Teachers (OTTs) gain QTS between 2003 and 2012, and has worked closely with London South Bank University and other providers.

The Lambeth Schools Supply Service operates in many schools, providing great cost savings to schools on both day to day and longer term contracts, due to there being no charge for transferring staff onto permanent contracts. This, in turn, has helped to decrease vacancy rates and turnover. The system has been praised for its stringent safeguarding measures.

As a result, schools have no difficulty in recruiting and retaining the best teachers. With its strong links with university providers, teachers have come to see that Lambeth is a great place to start their career. A school improvement adviser comments on this aspect of Lambeth's transformation:

'There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning across all schools. High performing schools means that teachers choose to work in the LA. Teacher quality is driven upwards as a result of competition from high performing graduates in London. Pupils now have higher expectations of themselves due to the healthy mix of pupils from different ethnicities and incomes.'

Another SIA observes: *'Lambeth has teachers with passion and energy and a belief that they can make a difference. They have a 'no excuses' approach.*

Ofsted data and reports comment on high quality teaching and learning across Lambeth's schools. This reflects the considerable efforts, expertise and high expectations of teachers and support staff. Typical comments in inspection reports refer to:

'High quality teaching has had a significant impact on the impressive rise in pupils' achievements over the last three years. Teachers create well-ordered and stimulating classrooms in which purposeful learning takes place. They have a calm and consistent approach to managing behaviour, which all pupils respond to well, including those who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Pupils are in no doubt what is expected of them...' (Primary school Ofsted inspection report 2012)

Teachers in Lambeth have benefitted from specific training and now have considerable expertise in raising attainment for specific groups of pupils, particularly for those with English as an Additional Language, Special Educational Needs and Ethnic Minorities.

All of our case study schools share many of the characteristics of successful schools nationally and demonstrate exemplary practice in teaching and learning that encourages good pupil motivation. Nevertheless, the challenges presented to teachers in Lambeth which is one of the most ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse boroughs in Britain, require extraordinary teaching skills.

Ofsted praised the quality of teaching at one primary, which they judged to be outstanding because:

'It leads to above average outcomes and fosters determination to succeed. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, very high expectations and plan a range of activities that inspire and enthuse pupils in lessons... teachers make excellent links across subjects providing practical experiences to make learning more relevant to pupils and to develop curiosity.' (Ofsted 2013)

At another primary, which also achieved an outstanding grade from Ofsted for teaching and learning in 2013:

'Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with striking impact on the quality of learning. The teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and is kept at this level because of the high quality professional development they receive.'

In a Lambeth secondary school the heads of maths and English explained how teachers use data extensively for lesson planning and targeting support:

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

One of the headteachers stressed:

'We hold our departments accountable. In September they come to see me with the line managers with their department analysis, and then at mid-year. We give them an Ofsted grade. In our classrooms there is a feeling that we want to get our work done and achieve, this spreads from the majority, many African children, to the minority. Most girls want to go to University and study for a profession.' (Headteacher)

Overall there is an active focus on learning in the schools with a sustained focus on ensuring access to the curriculum for every pupil, whatever their background. Curriculum planning focuses on the individual. Teachers have an excellent understanding of where pupils are at in their learning; they know the learning

profiles of each child and what interventions pupils might need. Pupil progression is very much an area of discussion and staff teams in schools are keen to bring a discussion of learning not only in the core subjects but to have a ‘microscopic view into the foundation subjects too.’ Through weekly targets teachers focus on pupil learning and constantly review what they do in the classroom.

7.3 Effective use of data

One of the core elements of the schools’ success in raising achievement is a robust focus on tracking and monitoring individual student’s progress and achievement in the widest sense of the term. Schools and the LA are data rich, with a wide range of data including KS2, KS3 and optional assessments/tests for monitoring performance. GCSE examination data is rigorously analysed to identify areas for improvement and to identify support needs and organise the deployment of resources appropriately. Schools have good systems for assessing and mapping the progress of all pupils, including ethnicity and bilingual pupils at individual and group level. High quality assessment and pupil tracking are therefore features of the school. Schools see ‘the use of data as an essential part of school improvement and self-evaluation and is used as one of the levers of change.’ (Deputy Headteacher)

There is good practice in the use of data in all schools. Evidence provided from case study research confirms that:

- Key stage data is gathered as early as possible and analysed carefully by gender, ethnicity, and mobility, supplemented by other tests such as in English, mathematics or verbal reasoning tests.
- The schools extensively use KS1 to KS2 and 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 KS2 point score or GCSE point score. The value-added charts offer the opportunity to probe the strengths and weaknesses within the group.
- Data is used as a baseline to monitor and review individual pupil’s progress, especially to identify signs of underachievement or unusual potential and to help set targets for pupils and subject departments. Subject teachers and tutors use data and other assessment information to review the performance and expectations of pupils. Test results and teacher assessments are analysed to illuminate aspects of pupils’ performance.

- Schools also use a range of other comprehensive benchmarking, contextual and value-added reports provided by the local authority, Fisher Family Trust (FFT) and national data from RAISEonline. Data is made available across the school and is used to help review the pupils' progress and set targets.
- Teachers make effective use of data to evaluate the quality of provision and to identify and provide support for differentiated groups of pupils. At classroom or pupil level, effective use of data enables the school to highlight specific weaknesses of individual pupils, identify weaknesses in topics for the class as a whole, inform accurate curricular targets for individual pupils and provide evidence to support decisions as to where to focus resources and teaching. Heads of departments use data to identify and target specific areas of improvement in their development plan.

The most common type of intervention employed in schools, (where data analysis had highlighted issues to be addressed), was providing additional support (including one to one support or booster groups) and making changes to the teaching programme or curriculum such as more personalised or differentiated teaching to meet the needs of EAL pupils, SEN pupils or pupils in targeted initiatives to improve performance. Data was also used in the school effectively to review pupils' setting and teaching groups and this helped in raising achievement.

In the words of deputy headteachers and a data manager:

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

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

'Teachers use the data to review pupil performance, to have reflections and good conversations and to produce class profiles. This has been useful for assessment for learning and tracking individual pupils' performance. You cannot do without data.' (Assistant headteacher)

‘Data is critical for raising standards. It is useful to track pupil progress and identify strengths and weaknesses.’ (Deputy Principal)

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

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

‘Use of data raised the expectation of staff and pupils and makes you focus on what children are actually learning.’

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

‘The data provided by school helps you to target groups of children for specific types of help.’ This is further supported by another assistant headteacher who commented that data provided to teachers has been extremely useful ‘to highlight specific weaknesses for individual pupils, identify weaknesses in topics for the class as a whole, inform accurate curricular targets for individual pupils and tailor teaching to the needs of targeted groups.’

‘The school is very successful in identifying and tackling barriers to learning for students from different cultural backgrounds and providing well targeted guidance and support.’

To conclude, one common feature of the strategies for raising achievement in all schools is intelligent use of assessment data, progress tracking, target setting and support for students slipping behind with targeted interventions. Every pupil is expected and encouraged to achieve their full potential by teachers in all schools. These high expectations are underpinned by the effective use of data to pinpoint underachievement and target additional support. Data is used effectively by senior managers, teachers and teaching assistants to pose and answer questions about current standards, trends over time, progress made by individual pupils, to track pupils’ progress and to set high expectations in case study schools.

7.4 Effective governing body

Over the last twenty years, the role of governing bodies and the part they play in school improvement and the raising standards has been of ongoing interest. Research has shown that there is a clear association between effective schools and effective governing bodies and that considerable benefits are derived to a school, and in particular its headteacher from having an effective governing body.

Strong governance has been a feature of Lambeth schools for some years, yet we cannot minimise the efforts that the LA has made to recruit, retain and train governors in their key role of supporting and challenging headteachers to ensure that pupils receive the best possible education.

In one primary school, the Chair of Governors believes that the single most important aspect of the governing body's work in terms of raising achievement is their focus on data. She is highly skilled at interpreting data and was concerned when it appeared that only she and the leadership team had a good understanding:

'I wanted a wider group of people on the governing body to have an understanding of data. Now there are five governors who have this. We have built capacity.'

At another primary school, governors spoke appreciatively about the close knit community and how the cultural capital brought by members of the governing body, can impact on the curriculum offer:

'Families know each other very well. We are like the United Nations here... at the same time we have been able to exploit where we are located – right next to the South Bank, where through governors' connections the school can take advantage of visits... not many schools can perform at the Royal Festival Hall and the Young Vic.'

The very effective support which governors receive in Lambeth has been acknowledged by schools and Ofsted alike. Over the years they have played a key role in improving governance by sometimes having to take sweeping decisions to remove ineffective governing bodies or replacing chairs of governors in governors in schools causing concern.

School governors surveyed expressed their appreciation for the support they received from the LA:

'As a governor I've been very aware of Lambeth's desire to support us through School Improvement Advisory services, training etc. Also I appreciate the termly meetings and other getting together for chairs and governors, keeping us in touch and giving us the chance to network. Governors know that they are an important part of the education business.' (School governor)

'In our school we have managed to recruit excellent governors who have been rigorous in demanding higher standards. There is a relentless focus on school improvement by the LA which has been the stand-out element of success.' (School governor).

In recognition of the increasingly important role in the leadership and management of schools that governors play, the LA for many years has offered a central training programme, informed by discussion with the training link governors group, focusing on governing body statutory duties and responsibilities and national and local issues and needs. The Governor Services web page provides easily accessible information and documentation, including the current training offer, a termly model agenda, and model terms of reference for committees. The Governor Services team provide support and advice to both maintained schools and academies. Personalised advice and support is offered by telephone and email from the named Governor Support Officer for the school. The team also administers elections for the two Parent Governor Representatives on the Council's education-related Scrutiny Committees and is also responsible for setting school term and holiday dates for community and voluntary controlled schools.

There is a well-established and effective recruitment programme for local authority governors. Appointments to vacancies are now made following consultation with schools and all prospective governors are interviewed by a panel of experienced governors.

7.5 Effective support for English as an additional language (EAL)

As all schools in Lambeth serve a linguistically diverse community, support for EAL is a strength. 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 schools to support students in learning English as an additional language is outstanding. EAL Departments are very small but EAL coordinators are well qualified, experienced, knowledgeable and very committed to the profession. Specialist staff, for

example those who assist students with EAL, provide effective support during lessons and elsewhere. As a result, there effective provision for pupils with EAL. This starts with a detailed assessment on admission to school in order to identify individual needs and inform teachers. 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 teachers' knowledge and understanding of EAL pedagogy and strategies that have been developed as a result. This ensures that the teaching of pupils with EAL is class-based, 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) 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 opportunitywe 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 home 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

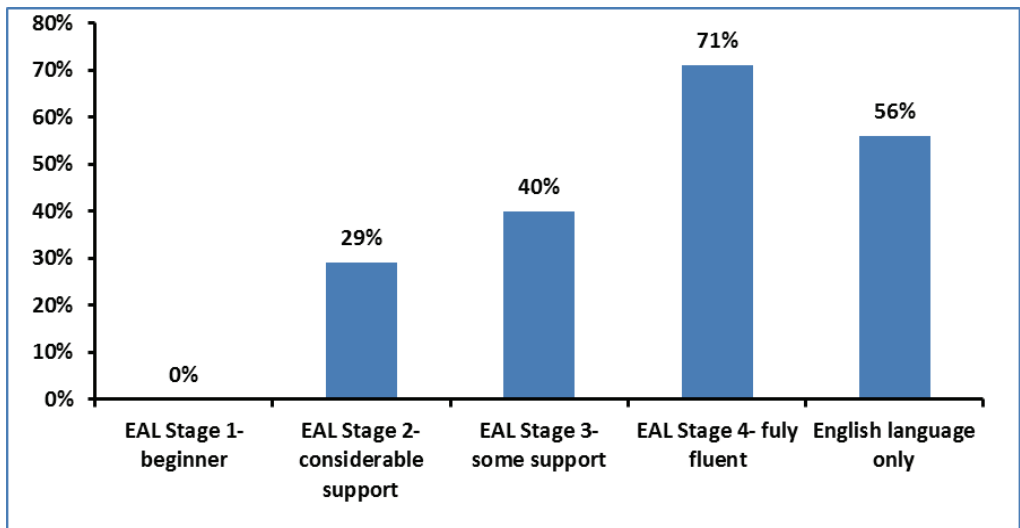
All staff talked about effective EAL practice being 'automatic' and senior managers considered it to be an integral part of high quality teaching. There is no one key strategy, but rather a holistic approach which incorporates a range of teaching strategies known to be effective for EAL learners. This 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 schools to make sure no student with EAL 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 schools are 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 7.1: GCSE performance of EAL pupils by fluency in English (5+ A*-C including English and Maths) 2013



Source: *Raising Achievement in Lambeth Schools, Research and Statistics Unit*

The extent to which EAL pupils make progress in the LA schools are shown in Figure 7.1 and samples of case studies are outlined below. This evidence shows that pupils make rapid progress and achieve outstanding results.

Case Study A: Student A came from Angola in 1999 and attended primary school in 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 is one of the top nationally 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 progress between KS2 and GCSE was also excellent.

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: Child D came from Poland in 2006 and speaks Polish at home. He had no English on arrival in the school and was assessed as a stage 1 beginner. His records for KS1 suggest that he was assessed as W for reading and writing and 2C in maths. At the beginning of Year 6, his level of fluency in English was 3, suggesting that he needed some support to develop the more academic language. With additional EAL support from the teachers and TAs he achieved level 4 in English and level 5 in maths in the KS2 test results. This is indeed an excellent achievement for a pupil who arrived with no English.

Case Study E: Child E speaks Portuguese at home and no English at the time she joined the school. She was given full support from the beginner stage and had moved to a stage 3 level of fluency by the time she took the KS2 tests. At KS1 she was assessed as Level 1 in reading and writing and 2C for maths, but with the EAL support provided she managed to achieve level 4 in English and maths. This again is a remarkable achievement for a child who could not speak English at the time she started in the school.

Case Study F: Child F came from Lithuania, speaking Lithuanian, but with no English and was assessed as Stage 1 fluency at the end of KS1. Her results show she achieved 'W' in reading and writing and 1 in mathematics. But with support and differentiated work she has made good progress. By 2011 she had progressed to level 3 stage of fluency in English suggesting she needed some support to develop more academic language. Her KS2 results confirmed that she attained level 4 in English and level 5 in maths.

Overall there are excellent systems for monitoring the work of the pupils, identifying those who need additional help or extra challenge and then providing them with appropriate additional support. 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.



CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of local authorities to school improvement is the least well researched area in Britain. With the exception of a recent study of Tower Hamlets (Woods et al 2013); there has been little attention to local authorities' perspectives. Building on past research, which suggested LAs and Districts can and do make a difference in school improvement (Zadvadsky 2009, Boyle and Humphreys 2012, Woods et al 2013), this study extends the current literature by exploring the role of the LA in transforming education in the area it serves. It explores the factors behind the outstanding success story of the transformation of schools in the London Borough of Lambeth.

Lambeth became a Local Education Authority in 1990 after the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority and is one of the poorest boroughs in England. It serves a diverse multi-ethnic community in the heart of Inner London. Lambeth is therefore an important case study and will offer evidence of area based educational transformation and improvement. This study tells the remarkable story of how one of the worst local authorities in England transformed its schools and therefore the life chances of young people.

Before 1998 many schools in Lambeth were judged to be performing unfavourably against national figures for standards of achievement at KS2 and GCSE. Ofsted ranked Lambeth as the worst performing LA and in 1996, 14 schools were put into special measures. However, by 2008 the position was transformed, Lambeth, although still one of the poorest boroughs in England, returned KS2 and GCSE results above the national average, and none of its schools were in special measures.

The transformation of Lambeth has continued apace such that in the last decade attainment at GCSE has risen much faster in Lambeth than nationally, and the LA has closed the gap and is six percentage points above the national average for 5+A*-C including English and Maths in 2013. A similar level of improvement is also evident at KS2. 90% of schools were judged 'good' or better by Ofsted. A number of reasons have emerged as to how this transformation and the bucking of the national trends were possible. Drawing on empirical data, case studies and focus group evidence, this study identifies a number of key factors which appear to underpin the transformation of Lambeth, with huge improvement between 1997 and 2013.

Highly effective and ambitious leadership at all levels: Political leadership has been very important and education has for many years been the highest priority of the Council. It has allocated high levels of funding to back up its determination to achieve success against all the odds and to demonstrate that ‘deprivation is not destiny’. Since 1995 Lambeth Council appointed high calibre and effective Directors of Education who have provided clear strategic direction, put in place skilled professionals who had the ability to deliver a coherent approach to school improvement. A key feature of their leadership has been the development of effective working partnerships with schools but based on tough decisions. These exceptional Directors of Education have all contributed to Lambeth’s outstanding success. They were very ably assisted by a core of highly professional and long serving school improvement advisers and officers who have driven the education improvement agenda forward at a pace. Lambeth has been successful in recruiting and retaining many exceptional school leaders who, together their staff and governors, have fostered a climate of high expectations and delivered such impressive outcomes. Outstanding leadership at all levels within schools and the local authority workforce have led to high levels of morale in a climate of mutual trust and strong respect for colleagues.

High quality teaching and learning: One key factor of the high achievement of pupils is the good and outstanding teaching in Lambeth’s schools. Features include very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, stimulating and enthusiastic teaching which interests, excites and motivates pupils and accelerates their learning, well planned lessons which provide for the differing needs of pupils, well trained and highly skilled teaching assistants and a close check on learning with effective marking and assessment. Teachers are continually encouraged to take responsibility for improving their teaching through high quality professional development. The on-going investment in teachers’ CPD has paid huge dividends, as seen in the outcomes of judgements on the quality of teaching as observed by Ofsted. Teachers capture the pupils’ enthusiasm and make them want to succeed because they show how much they enjoy their teaching.

Effective school improvement service: One of the key reasons for improvement has been a highly effective approach to school improvement by the local authority. The Council knows its schools well and has strong relationships with them. It takes its statutory role of monitoring, challenging and supporting its schools very seriously and intervenes where necessary to ensure rapid improvement. The Council supports its schools through a high calibre advisory service, and schools are very positive and complimentary about senior officers who lead school improvement. Schools in urban settings face unique challenges. They need external challenge and support and to be held to account. Therefore Lambeth has continued to invest in a small cadre of high calibre school improvement advisers who know all schools well. These advisers are key to the intelligent brokering of challenge and support and they lead local accountability.

Effective use of data and research evidence: Another important part of the Lambeth success story has been a robust approach to school improvement driven by the forensic use of data. The LA has established a strong tradition of providing a comprehensive analysis of performance data for local schools through its Research and Statistics service. Initially it was used by advisers to challenge schools to improve and then to support school self-evaluation and improvement. The LA systematically and rigorously uses a wide range of data and other information to identify schools which are underperforming. It uses this information consistently to channel its support to areas of greatest need, resulting in interventions and challenge that lead to improved outcomes in schools. In addition, the LA has a comprehensive portfolio of good practice research evidence into strategies to raise achievement which is routinely shared with schools. It uses effectively its research evidence to support school improvement. Ofsted confirms that ‘The Research reports produced by LA Research and Statistics Service are unique and well used by the schools.’ (Ofsted 2013)

Effective use of local and national initiatives: There is a resilient approach to external government policies by both the LA and school leaders. They have engaged fully with a range of government initiatives and challenges from the early days of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and London Challenge programmes whilst ensuring that they are tailored to local needs. They have also maintained LA priorities and promoted local initiatives.

Maintaining strong partnerships and trust: Lambeth has a strong history of successful federations and partnership working. The LA has established excellent partnership work with schools. The Council has supported the development of a new infrastructure of school improvement support, focussed on encouraging mutual support in clusters of schools, federations and Teaching Schools. Support for school-to-school improvement is a key underpinning factor. The Council also effectively supported school leaders to become system leaders as executive headteachers and cluster leads. This is backed up by a strong core school improvement offer with advisers who know all schools and education settings well. What is most significant in our study is that there are high levels of trust which prevail between school professionals, the community and the LA. When problems emerge they are resolved together. There is no doubt that the LA actively built trust with its schools and developed a personal knowledge and insight of what was happening more so than could be gleaned simply from data spreadsheets. The Council fulfils, within the partnership framework, its statutory role of monitoring, challenging and supporting schools and intervenes when necessary to ensure improvement.

Effective school place planning and school organisation: In 1998 an atomised school structure was in place with many individual small nurseries, infant schools, junior schools and special schools. The LA embarked on a reorganisation programme to create large and more sustainable two form entry all through primary schools. By 2005 the LA was looking to create bigger units of federations and partnerships to encourage the best leaders to stay in Lambeth and to develop economies of scale and opportunities for the most ambitious teachers and support staff across more than one school. In 2010 in response to government changes to school improvement funding the LA encouraged schools to form 'clusters' which shared professional development, outreach and some staff.

Overall the evidence presented into the educational transformation of Lambeth enables certain conclusions to be drawn. The study findings identify several factors as crucial to this transformation including: strong and ambitious leadership at all levels; a systematic focus by the LA on creating sustainable schools that attract the best leaders; outstanding teaching and learning backed by high levels of professional development; an effective school improvement service; effective use of data to track pupils' performance, monitor different strategies and identify under-performing groups. The achievements within the LA and schools after 1998 were exceptional. Across the LA all schools have improved and outcomes for all groups of pupils have been substantially improved. By any measure this achievement is remarkable. It did not happen by chance, but by reflective, carefully planned and implemented strategies which have served schools well, enabling them to address the many challenges which might otherwise obstruct their paths to success.



CHAPTER 9: THE LESSONS FROM LAMBETH AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The lessons from Lambeth

This research tells the remarkable story of how one of the worst local authority in England transformed its schools through passion, leadership and commitment by putting learning at the centre of its priorities and by engaging with the community it serves. Commitment to the principle of a local authority in education is paramount. Our findings show that where schools needed to be challenged to improve, this was successfully mediated through an effective local authority. The lessons learnt from Lambeth emphasise that it is possible to drive education transformation through well managed and well run local authorities. The overall conclusion of this study is that the local authority has bucked national trends through the use of a range of effective strategies to raise educational attainment at KS2 and GCSE. The research findings also contain a number of important messages for policymakers. The study contends that there is no ‘pick and mix’ option. An effective LA will seek to develop all these characteristics, underpinned by the practical use of data to monitor the achievement of particular groups to pinpoint and tackle underperformance. The study argues that the LA is innovative because it has focussed on a strong moral purpose and belief that it is possible to improve the life chances of the most deprived pupils in inner London by creating an environment in which they are able to achieve above average standards. The accumulated experience of the past turbulent decades of educational change in Britain has enabled the LA and its schools to emerge as strong advanced practitioners in raising achievement and transforming education in an urban setting.

Key messages for policy makers have emerged from the Lambeth experience. As concluding remarks we reflect on the lessons that can be derived from Lambeth’s improvement story.

Firstly, the transformation of the LA’s schools has been a great success story which illustrates how, with strong leadership, a well-managed local authority can and does make a remarkable difference. The successes in Lambeth have been hard won. They are the result of successful partnerships between schools and the LA, and reflect the extraordinary efforts of students, parents, headteachers, school staff, council officers, LA school improvement professionals and democratically elected politicians.

Secondly, the transformation of education in Lambeth did not happen overnight. It took over ten years of concerted efforts to close the gap to bring it in line with the national average.

Thirdly, the lessons from Lambeth go beyond school self-improvement. Schools needed strong professional leadership from outside the LA to challenge, monitor, and support them. Lambeth LA invested in a determined, well-focused school improvement service. It provided schools with top quality advisory support from its high calibre advisers all of whom had a proven track record of successful headship in London schools and experience of leading Ofsted Inspections. This contributed significantly to the improvement in schools from 1998.

Fourthly, one of the core elements of the LA and schools' success in raising achievement has been the robust focus on tracking and monitoring individual student's progress and achievement through the effective use of data and good practice research. The LA established a dedicated Research and Statistics Unit to provide educational research and statistical information to schools to support them in their efforts to raise educational standards. It provided both the Education Department and schools with a comprehensive range of performance data. Data circulated to schools helped to raise questions that pinpointed strengths and weaknesses precisely. Schools and other providers have high regard for the data which is influential in helping them to identify school based performance priorities.

Fifthly, many of the individuals who were appointed as Directors of Education over the period from 1995 to date, and who contributed to the Lambeth story were considered to be exceptional leaders. Heather Du Quesnay, Phyllis Dunipace and Cathy Twist attracted the greatest number of comments in our survey from governors, headteachers and school improvement advisers. They were praised in our survey for:

- ensuring first-rate leadership of the school improvement service
- a tough approach to the performance management of headteachers
- a strong emphasis on the use of data by establishing an effective research and data service
- effective professional development both for leaders and class teachers
- a co-ordinated approach to school organisation.

The evidence from Lambeth suggests that exceptional education leaders at all levels are critical to the success of local and national initiatives and to the transformation of education in local areas.

Finally, rather than ignoring the issues of disadvantage and community cohesion, tackling them needs to be at the heart of any solution. They should not be left at

the school gates and are best tackled at local authority level. The Lambeth experience suggests the LAs can and do make a significant contribution to the provision of effective learning experiences for all their pupils by tackling poverty and taking a lead in community cohesion.

9.2 Policy implications for central government

Over the past three decades successive governments have seized the powers and functions of local education authorities and have weakened the English local government and democracy (Benn 2011, Lane 2013, Mortimore 2014). As a result, education has suffered consistently from this approach of undermining local authorities and local democracy by central government.

Despite this challenge, a major change in transforming education in Lambeth began in 1997 following an accelerated Ofsted inspection programme and the resulting damning report, which heralded a determination to improve outcomes in the borough's schools. The LA and its schools developed comparative knowledge of what works in the local context. They know well local context including culture, language, ethnicity and community cohesion. Until relatively recently local authorities have been the 'middle tier' between school and central government in the English education system. However there are new challenges for LAs in terms of central government's academies and free schools' programmes, which have taken some schools out of local authority control. At present academy chains and free schools do not represent local accountability nor do they act as a voice of the local community. They are not responsible for allocating school funding, planning school places or ensuring special educational needs are met across an area; neither do they have local responsibility for community cohesion and safeguarding of children within an area. Parents need access to a single, local body responsible for holding their children's schools to account, however it is governed. Some of these functions need to be performed by area based and democratically legitimate bodies. This, we believe, will end the confusing and muddled structure of the current English school system. We would argue that school improvement or area based school systems cannot be driven successfully from central government for a number of reasons. Central government lack local knowledge and capacity to provide oversight to make schools accountable to meet local needs and to monitor performance, identify early problems to support schools (Muir 2014, Mortimore 2014 and LGA 2014). This is best carried out by democratically elected bodies that serve the local areas.

In this respect Lambeth LA's determination to hold schools in a local 'family' of education providers in the face of the fragmentation of the education system in England, is a success

story. Lambeth has always fostered collaboration between its schools including academies. It has ensured that the needs of all local children are met by providing an effective school improvement and data service to its schools in the area it serves, regulating fair access, providing sufficient school places, managing services for children with special educational needs and safeguarding, maintaining strong partnerships and school to school support and supporting community cohesion. More importantly, as in all successful systems, it has used public authority to push its school improvement agenda to challenge complacency and intervene when schools fail or underachieve. As a result, it is not unreasonable to argue that the LA has provided a good education for its pupils and standards have risen much faster in Lambeth than nationally.

The lessons from Lambeth suggest that a well-managed and effective LA can make a real difference in raising achievement and narrowing gaps in the area they serve. The overall conclusion of this study is that the local authority has bucked the national trend through the use of a range of strategies to raise educational attainment at KS2 and GCSE and have transformed education in the borough's schools. The study argues that improvement in the LA's schools in the last decade is an exceptional achievement and an outstanding example of a success story that is worth learning from by central government.

There are also additional lessons for central government. There is a need to end the confusing and muddled structure of the English school system. The current government policy strategies of replacing local democratic accountability to either central government, academy chains, academy school commissioners or local Directors of School Standards (Blunkett, 2014), have created a serious confusion in the English education system. Parents need access to a single, local body responsible for holding their children's schools to account. Every successful school system in the world has a middle tier of governance between school and central government. In Ontario, for example, *'school districts conduct regular data monitoring and use local intelligence to inform them of any emerging issues. They initially intervene in a 'non-judgmental' manner to help the school address these problems, before resorting to tougher external interventions'* (Muir 2014,p.21). Similarly in Finland, Canada, USA, Australia, and Germany Districts, or States, act as middle tiers. In these countries education is decentralised down to state, region, district or municipalities' levels (Benn 2011, Mortimore 2014 and Zadvadskey 2009). England should not ignore the lessons from the successful school systems in the world and should draw lesson from countries such as Finland and Canada. As argued by Mortimore (2014:119) *'the existence of a middle tier of local authorities with local knowledge and the power to monitor the work of schools and the power to step in and support troubled schools, is essential for a well-functioning system.'* Our research identifies a need to strengthen local education authorities' role as the middle tier in the English school system as a means of making the

increasingly fragmented schools system better coordinated and more accountable to those it serves for the standards attained by schools. Local authorities are uniquely placed to play this role and to provide a number of key school improvement services including:

- monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervening in schools to ensure they meet statutory requirements
- engaging all schools in the local children's agenda
- performance categorisation for all schools through a School Improvement Monitoring Group (SIMG)
- providing performance data to support school improvement, to identify under achieving pupils and prioritise areas for development
- direct provision of local, high quality traded services

A number of successful local authorities are developing this education service in a variety of different ways by strengthening and re-focusing its school improvement service or by creating 'education trusts' or 'learning trusts' as an autonomous department of the local authority. Such approaches should be considered positively by central government as it provides local democratic oversight of the school system, while enabling the Director of Education to act swiftly and flexibly, no matter how schools are governed, when concerns are identified. It also keeps schools in the driving seat to raise achievement and ensures that the LA will be able to engage with all schools in the area, including academies, to improve community cohesion and to tackle disadvantage beyond the school gates.

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