What Works in School Improvement

Examples of Good Practice

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Christabel Mclean is Education Adviser and a former headteacher. Shas worked with HMI/Ofsted at national level and has worked extensively on the inspection, improvement and management of educational establishments. Christabel started her teaching career in Camden and Westminster in inner London and went on to become headteacher of Sacred Heart School in Hammersmith. Christabel's unshakeable belief that all children can achieve their best, no matter what their background, language or circumstance, also led to a successful period as a full time Ofsted inspector. From this she was specifically recruited as a key member of a school improvement team of Advisers by a new Director of Education, to deal with a large number of schools in special measures in Lambeth. Then as an Adviser in Lambeth she took part in an extensive range of school improvement activities linked to schools facing very challenging circumstances and led a number of very successful school improvement projects. More recently she has been involved in a number of research projects and contributed to books advising parents on education.

What Works in School Improvement: Examples of Good Practice

Executive Summary

The main purpose of this research is to examine the success factors behind driving school improvement and raising achievement for all groups of pupils. It is similar to other studies that have looked at examples of schools which provide an environment where underachieving groups can flourish, but also reflects the perspective of pupils, using detailed case studies to illustrate how policy and practice help to raise the achievement of pupils, with a strong emphasis on what works. Three overarching research questions guided this research:

- What does the data tell us about raising achievement?
- What are the success factors in driving school improvement?
- What are the implications for policy and practice?

Three complementary methodological approaches were used. Firstly, Key Stage 2 (KS2), General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE) attainment data and Ofsted judgments were analysed to explore changes. Secondly, 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. 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 are bucking the national trend. The research identified the following success factors that proved successful in school improvement and raising achievement in schools. These include

1. Strong school leadership team
2. High quality teaching and learning
3. Effective governing bodies
4. Parental aspiration
5. Effective community engagement
6. Celebration of cultural diversity
7. Targeted interventions and support through use of best teachers to teach intervention groups, tailored support for individuals in the classroom, one to one support, and booster classes delivered by the pupils' class teacher
8. Effective use of data to monitor performance and to identify underachieving groups
9. Effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language
10. Providing an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils
11. Effective use of pupil voice and feedback

Each of the above success factors were explored in detail in the research report to reveal exactly what schools are doing to ensure they provide the very highest quality of education for all students. The lessons from the case study schools suggest that schools can make a difference, albeit within certain limits, in raising achievement and narrowing gaps in the localities they serve. The overall conclusion of this study is that the case study schools have bucked the national trend through the use of a range of strategies to raise educational attainment at KS2 and GCSE. The study argues that improvement in the case study schools in the last decade is an exceptional achievement and offers a worthwhile example of a success story that is worth learning by schools and central government.

Why School Improvement Matters?

School improvement research and practice is concerned with making schools 'better places for pupils, teachers and the wider community', and practice has tended to rely on the engagement of teachers through continuing professional development. This approach has often drawn on the principles of inquiry, reflection and self-review as a spur to improvement. The term 'school improvement' is commonly used in two ways. It can be used as a common-sense term to describe efforts made to make schools better places for students; alternatively, it can be used in a more technical sense to describe the processes that contribute to raising student achievement. Definitions relating to school improvement have evolved to reflect an increased focus on student achievement and capacity building. For example, an early definition from the 1980s International School Improvement Project (ISIP) defined school improvement as:

> *'a systemic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions, and other related internal conditions, in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.' (Van Velzen et al, 1985:48)*

By the mid-1990s a tighter definition focusing on the school's capacity to manage change and enhance student outcomes emerged:

> *…'a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. In this sense school improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching and learning processes and the conditions that support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change, rather than blindly accepting the edicts of centralised policies and striving to implement these directives uncritically.' (Hopkins, Ainscow and West 1994:3)*

The school improvement movement has argued that improvement and the capacity to improve come from within rather than beyond organisations. Therefore, proponents of school improvement have tended to view improvement as a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to change, thus putting pupils and teachers at the core of improvement efforts and teachers and school leaders as the key agents of change.

Since the Government's White Paper 2010, the aim has been to develop the self-improving school-led system where the best schools are at the heart of teacher training, school improvement, the development of new leaders and continuous professional development.

What does Research Tell us About the Role of School in Raising Achievement?

There is a long standing debate about the role of the school in raising achievement in England. Although schools are continually expected to 'raise standards', such evidence would appear to replicate Bernstein's (1970) concerns to some degree, that education cannot compensate for society. Thrupp (1999) has also argued that research in the school effectiveness and improvement field has taken insufficient account of socio-economic context and has contributed to schools and teachers being the focus of blame for education failure and underachievement. Researchers have now accepted that much of the differences in pupil outcomes are due to school intake characteristics and the family social background, neighbourhood where pupils live and the types of schools attended can have a detrimental impact on their educational achievement and progress (Mortimer & Whitty 1997, Sammons 1999, Gorard 2000).

At both a national policy and school level, research can identify what makes the most difference to pupil outcomes and help define priorities, focus and investment. For example, as a school based influence on outcomes, leadership has been shown to be second only in significance to classroom teaching (Qian & Walker, 2012). Leithwood (2007), for instance, notes that while leadership explains 5-7 per cent of the variation in student learning between schools, it actually accounts for one-quarter of all school based variation after factors such as student background are excluded. Such findings have had considerable influence on strategies intended to improve the performance of struggling schools and have focussed attention on leadership development. Other school effectiveness research has also consistently shown that only about 8-15% of the attainment difference between schools is accounted for by what they actually do and the rest is attributed to intake variations including home background(Reynolds et al 1996, Sammons 1999, Strand 2015). A study by Rasbash et al (2010) explored the role that schools can play in tackling the general link between educational achievement and family income and noted that academic studies generally had found that about 20% of variability in pupils' achievement is attributed to school factors, with around 80% attributed to pupil-level factors such as the wider family environment, the neighbourhood where they live and the school attended. Ofsted also pointed out that '*these factors are beyond the school gates and the communities where pupils live can have a detrimental impact on their achievement. Schools can do much to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils but only so much'* (Ofsted 2014, p32). The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL 2014, p32) also suggested that '*the problem was not of schools making… they cannot solve it by themselves.'* They pointed out that the factors influencing low attainment are beyond the control of individual schools and it is impossible for them to overcome the wider problem of poverty and disadvantage. Clifton and Cook (2012:5) also argued that '*While many of the factors driving low achievement lie beyond the direct control of schools, it is a mistake to assume that schools cannot be part of a solution.'* The reasons for underachievement of disadvantaged pupils are indeed complex, but a body of research is beginning to show that schools can make a difference, albeit within certain limits (see Demie and Mclean 2015; Demie and McLean 2014; Demie and Lewis 2010; Demie and Gay 2013; Demie and Bellesham 2013; Demie 2013; Demie and Lewis 2010; Mongon and Chapman 2008; Ofsted 2009; Cassen and Kingdon 2007).

There are now a number of schools serving disadvantaged communities that can demonstrate poverty should not be an excuse for low attainment. (Demie and McLean 2014; Demie and Lewis 2010; Mongon and Chapman 2008). These studies show that high-quality education can transform lives and compensate for shortcomings in society. Recent national research and data (see Ofsted 2014; Sutton Trust 2014, 2015) have also revealed how the pupil premium (PP) is helping to close the gaps in attainment through targeted support and interventions. The key challenge then is to find out what strategies schools can use to make a difference to the achievement of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils with low-income backgrounds. In recent years, a need for detailed case studies of schools that are successful in raising the achievement of underachieving groups of pupils has become apparent, as a means of increasing our understanding of the ways in which schools can enhance pupils' academic achievement. For example, Mongon and Chapman's (2008) study records encouraging signs of improvement in the way schools are addressing the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils. Key findings in this study show that these are schools with strong leadership and strong systems where Headteachers do not accept poverty as a reason for failure. Nevertheless, Headteachers whose schools draw their pupils from highly challenging socio-economically disadvantaged communities face a greater range of challenges in terms of staff commitment and retention and student behaviour, motivation and achievement than those in more advantaged communities.

Other research into good practice in schools by Ofsted (2009) 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).

Sharples et al (2011) review of international evidence also reported classroom strategies that are effective for raising achievement and narrowing the gap of pupils from disadvantaged background including school leadership, quality of teaching, effective use of data to identify underperforming groups, initiative to raise aspirations and parental engagement. In addition they argued that the quality of teaching as one of the factors with most potential to make a difference.

Overall previous research shows that, whatever the limitations related to the social factors, schools can and do make a difference to the life chances of young people. However, although a review of literature shows there is a recent growth in school effectiveness research, there is still little research carried out to study good practice in schools to drive school improvement. Schools and policy makers need more evidence on 'what works' and there is a need to look more closely at why these outstanding schools do well against the odds. An increase in research of this type which focuses on what works in schools challenges perceived notions of underachievement in schools and provides positive examples and messages for schools and policy makers.

Research Aims and Methods

This research is a qualitative study of schools in an inner London Local Authority (LA), and examines the success factors behind driving school improvement and raising achievement for all groups of pupils. It is similar to other studies that have looked at examples of schools who provide an environment in which underachieving groups flourish, but reflects the perspective of the pupils, using detailed case studies to illustrate how policy and practice help to raise achievement of pupils with a strong emphasis on what works (Demie and Mclean 2007, 2014; Demie and Lewis 2010; Mongon and Chapman 2008, Ofsted 2009). Three overarching research questions guided this research:

- What does the data tell us about raising achievement?
- What are the success factors in driving school improvement?
- What are the implications for policy and practice?

It provides evidence based answers to these questions, drawing on the practice, experience and ambitions of schools in challenging circumstances. The case study schools in this research, which serve disadvantaged communities in Lambeth were all at some point in their past, identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures or had serious weaknesses. However, they have all been graded as 'outstanding' in recent inspections, and have consistently high levels of achievement. They were selected according to the following criteria:

- an above-average proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals (FSM)

- outstanding grades in their most recent Ofsted inspection
- exceptionally good results, high standards and sustained KS2 and GCSE improvement

The case study schools in this report defy the association of poverty and low outcomes and they enable children from such families to succeed against the odds. They refuse to use a child's background as an excuse for underachievement. Overall the case study schools' data shows that from their generally low starting points, pupils reach exceptionally high standards.

The case study Local Authority is also one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse boroughs in Britain. African pupils form the largest ethnic group with 24%, followed by Black Caribbean 17%, White British 15%, White Other 8%, Mixed Race 13% and Portuguese 6%. Overall, 85% of pupils in the Local Authority schools belong to Black and other ethnic minority communities. Across the Authority over 150 languages are spoken, reflecting the different cultures, experiences and identities of the members of the community. The latest disadvantage data also shows that 34% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals.

The methodological approach of the research comprised case studies of selected schools and focus group interviews. The case studies were supported by a qualitative study of the school strategies used to raise achievement. Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

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

Case studies: A detailed case study research was carried out to study the strategies used to raise achievement and narrow the gap. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils to gather evidence on what worked in raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education. Five primary and four secondary schools were selected for case studies to study strategies to narrow the achievement gap.

The schools were chosen to reflect schools of different types in the Local Authority which have relatively high numbers of pupils on free school meals. The key criteria for the selection of schools were those with a very high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and good KS2 and GCSE results and Ofsted outstanding inspection reports .

As part of the research a variety of members of school staff and parents were interviewed in order to get a range of perspectives on the main practices in schools over a four-year period. These included headteachers and deputy headteachers; class teachers; EAL (English as an additional language) teachers and special educational needs co-ordinators; teaching assistants and learning support teachers; family support workers', governors and pupils. Each of the case study schools were visited every year as part of the research between 2010 and 2014.

Finally, by triangulating case study and focus group data and linking these to outcomes, we were able to identify examples of good practice.

2   Achievement in the Case Study Schools

This section explores the achievement in the case study schools. The case study schools studied in this research defy the association of poverty and low outcomes and they enable pupils to succeed against the odds. All but one case study school have a free school meal cohort much higher than the

national average. Table 1 shows that the attainment of all pupils has been exceptionally high. Of the pupils in the case study schools 98% achieved level 4 or above at KS2 in 2015. From 2011, the case study schools are consistently scoring above 90% at KS2. The improvement rate of pupils in the case study schools is similar to the national and LA average, however the starting position of the case study schools is much higher. Between 2011 and 2015 pupils in the case study schools improved from 92.8% to 98%. This is an improvement rate of 5% compared to 7% in all schools at national level.

Table 1. KS2 attainment in the case study schools

Case Study Primary Schools	School FSM	All Pupils- KS2 Level 4+ *					All Pupils- KS2 two levels of progress 2015	
		2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**Reading**	**Maths**
School A	26	95	88	98	91	98	92	95
School B	26	98	100	98	100	99	98	99
School C	21	92	100	98	100	100	100	100
School D	50	100	100	95	100	100	100	100
School E	14	85	96	94	97	95	98	93
Case Study	25	93	97	97	97	98	97	97
LA	27	84	88	91	90	92	95	94
National	16	81	85	86	88	88	91	90

*Average of English and maths 2011, 2012, from 2013 average of reading and maths

At Key Stage 4 it is a little more difficult to read a trend because of the 'Wolf Report' changes to GCSEs nationally in 2014. Case study schools were on an upward trend from 2010 to 2013, but in 2014 fell in a similar fashion to GCSE overall within the LA and nationally. GCSEs in 2015 once again rose in the case study schools and the gap with Lambeth LA is 10 percentage points compared to 13 percentage points with the national average. For the progress measure of three levels from KS2 to GCSE in English, the case study schools are 9 percentage points above the LA and 14 percentage points above the national figure (see Table 2). The difference for progress in maths is 7 percentage points above the LA and 6 percentage points above national.

Table 2. GCSE attainment in the case study schools

Case Study Secondary Schools	School FSM	All Pupils 5 A*-C including English and Maths (%)						All Pupils- GCSE Three levels of Progress 2015	
		2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**English**	**Maths**
School F	17	62	73	72	75	60	71	90	73
School G	13	72	74	87	78	80	84	85	85
School H	32	70	64	61	63	68	57	84	68
School I	23	64	68	80	75	57	56	78	65
Case Study	22	67	70	74	73	66	67	85	73
LA	27	54	61	63	66	57	57	76	66
National	14	53	59	59	59	53	54	71	67

3.   What works in School Improvement - Good Practice?

The above section covered the attainment in the case study schools. All schools achieved remarkable results for all their pupils, far exceeding national average benchmarks at the end of Key Stage 2 and GCSE. There are a number of reasons for the vast improvement in the achievement in the case study schools compared to the Local Authority and nationally in England. Therefore the key question for research is, '*what is the reason for such successful achievement in the case study schools*? As part of the interviews headteachers and teachers were asked, '*what strategies does your school use to raise achievement?*' The research identified the following success factors in raising achievement including strong school leadership team, high quality teaching and learning, effective governing bodies, parental aspiration, effective community engagement, celebration of cultural diversity, targeted interventions and support, effective use of data, effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and effective use of pupil voice. These good practices are discussed below:-

A strong leadership team.

There is general recognition of the central role of leadership in improving schools (Day et al, 2009). The literature on effective 'turnarounds' repeatedly points to the importance of effective leadership and there is evidence that talented leadership is one of the strongest explanations for the success of schools performing beyond expectations in high poverty settings (Harris & Chapman, 2002). Day et al (2009) describe the core practices of leaders in successful schools. They actively set direction, develop people, and engage in organisational redesign. They create the conditions that allow improvement to be sustainable and they are able to develop and adjust their leadership practices to align with the needs of the organisation.

The past 15 years have witnessed a remarkably consistent, worldwide effort by educational policymakers to reform schools by holding them publicly accountable for improving student performance in national tests. For school leaders the main consequence of this policy shift has been considerable pressure to demonstrate the contribution that their work makes to such improvement. This pressure has not actually emerged from a widespread scepticism about the value of leadership; quite the opposite. Indeed, it would be more accurate to characterise this as a demand to 'prove' the widely-held assumption that leadership matters a great deal.

A feature of the outstanding leadership in the case study schools is their ability to set clear direction and create a positive school culture. This includes a proactive school mind-set, supporting and enhancing the staff motivation and commitment needed to foster school improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances. This style of leadership empowers staff and supports them in fulfilling the aims and goals of the school. These school leaders use a range of actions to take account of the particular context in which their schools are working and they understand the importance of culture and building behavioural norms that exemplify the best that a school can stand for. They have built institutions in which people believe strongly and with which they can personally identify and to which they are loyal. All of this gives significance to what they do and gives it meaning which is highly motivating.

In most of the case study schools, these outstanding school leaders are National Leaders of Education, who identify, train, designate and deploy specialist leaders of education, providing a school-led workforce of middle and senior leaders to provide school-to-school support.   Common characteristics of the leadership of these school leaders are:

- Highly ambitious for each child to acquire the particular skills they need to reach their potential and lead successful lives

- Able to remove barriers to pupils' learning and provide a culture of achievement with a positive can do attitude. Central to their work are high expectations and the provision of intensive support so that pupils meet them.
- The diversity of pupils' backgrounds and circumstances are celebrated. Whatever their background, schools ensure that they succeed.
- They monitor pupils' progress by ethnicity and social background. They also monitor the details of learning, pupils' work, marking, record keeping, teacher assessment, quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by individual pupils and collectively by the whole class. Pupil tracking is rigorous. The data enables senior staff to have the confidence to challenge assumptions about and attitudes to pupils' performance.
- Regard parental engagement as vital to the school's drive to raise achievement. They have developed genuine partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities.

Evidence suggests that the dimension of leadership which matters most for pupil outcomes is leaders' professional development of their staff. The case study Headteachers are also attentive to their own learning: *'Shaping one's own professional vision and providing the leadership necessary to enrol others in the pursuit of a shared educational vision requires informed thought.'* (Stoll & Fink 1996). Leaders need to stay current in order to have credibility with their staff and to build up networks. The Cluster arrangements in which these schools are working offer many opportunities for school leaders at all levels to further their leadership roles. A review carried out by Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) identified eight dimensions of leadership practices and activities linked to student outcomes. Of all the activities identified, Headteachers leading and actively participating in professional learning and development had the largest impact on student outcomes: an effect size twice that of the next most important contributory factor - planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.

Many of the case study school leaders have successfully turned around schools deemed to be inadequate or requiring 'special measures' and then later judged by Ofsted as 'outstanding'. Some have gone on to replicate this success across schools within a federation and as National Support Schools they support, challenge, coach and direct, leaving partners stronger, more vibrant and more sustainable by delivering bespoke solutions. Other case study schools, whilst always being recognised as 'good' schools have been continuously improving to become outstanding in all areas.

One such school is '**School F (an all through school)**, where the Principal has developed a clear vision that every individual student can achieve and a culture in which individuals at all levels enjoy a degree of autonomy in relation to their own work. The possibility of bringing knowledge, skills and creativity to bear in resolving problems and pursuing opportunities, is extended to students as well as staff.

The Principal is passionate about every child's sense of 'being known' by the school and of being valued as an individual, he affirmed:

> *'Overwhelmingly our children know that they are known and their needs are secure. That's the basis that liberates them to be good learners, more confident and optimistic. Outcomes follow from getting these things right. Increasingly it's about the whole child. If we can give this to our children regardless of their background then we are doing a good job.'*

One of the reasons for the school's dramatic improvements over the last decade is the promotion of a dynamic and decentralised approach to leadership. Giving staff genuine authority but supporting them in developing the best possible way of going forward is a feature of the distributed leadership at School F. Clarity of roles and responsibilities are evident at every level. The Deputy Principal characterised the leadership team as:

> *'cohesive…it is not negatively competitive, it is cohesive.'* Moving on to the next tier of leadership, she commented:

> *'progress with middle leaders has improved capacity considerably, and subject and year leaders became Directors of Learning. We changed the name three years ago because both groups focus on learning and progress'. We wanted to give them more autonomy. It is about staff taking responsibility for outcomes… everyone is clear about their roles and everyone is supported!'* **(School F)**

There is also a shared vision for each child to acquire the particular skills they need to reach their full potential and lead successful lives at **School G**. The ethos of the school is centred on achievement and the quality of students' learning experiences. There are high expectations for all students and the staff will not accept social deprivation or English as an additional language as excuses for underachievement. The approach is one of consistently challenging students to do well. There is a strong Behaviour Management policy, led by a deputy head, which supports learning and consistency in behaviour management.

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

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

Ofsted judged the school to be outstanding in all areas and reported as follows:

> *'The work of this outstanding school is underpinned by an atmosphere of high expectations and care for the individual. The new Headteacher has built well upon the high achievement evident when the school was previously inspected to raise students' GCSE and A-level attainment further.' ………'There is a relentless pursuit of excellence by the Headteacher, senior leaders and governors. Leadership is outstanding at all levels and has established a climate where staff readily share expertise and monitor the impact of their work.'* **(Ofsted 2013, School G)**

Staff and students benefit from the Headteacher's inspirational leadership. His commitment to ensuring all students excel is underpinned by a strong sense of moral purpose which is shared by all the teaching and associate staff. Staff and students interviewed are fulsome in their praise of the school's leadership.

Innovatory leadership is a feature of **School C,** although recognised as an outstanding National Support School, and consistently a high achieving school, the Headteacher is not complacent and is constantly looking at ways of ensuring that every child reaches his/her full potential. He has a strong belief that all pupils, despite their starting points, can achieve. The school monitors pupils' progress by ethnicity and social background and the details of learning, pupils' work, marking, recordkeeping, teacher assessment, quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by individual pupils. Pupil tracking is rigorous. Consequently the leadership has taken a courageous decision to use skilled and experienced teachers to teach groups of underachieving children across the school, in order to accelerate their progress. He explains his strategy as follows:

> *'I took my stongest teachers out of class in each of the phase teams EYFS, Year 1/2 , Year 3/4 AND 5/6 and each is picking up intervention groups. I have spent quite a lot of money upgrading small rooms, making them enticing for children by decorating, putting in*

*spotlights, whiteboards – these rooms are even more enticing than the classrooms. Our children are not seen as second class citizens being shunted off … they also have some of the most popular teachers and therefore are envied rather than looked down on. Despite our best intentions most children know why some children are taken out of class, but now they are with a special teacher who is universally loved and they are going into an attractive environment.' (**Headteacher,** School C)*

By an expert teacher taking out groups of pupils who need more help, it frees the class teacher to accelerate the learning of the other pupils, including those of higher capability.

Such decisions come at a cost, but the Headteacher has some creative ways of using available funding and resources to make it sustainable by incorporating some well-specified, well-supported programmes of extensive professional development of volunteers, teaching assistants and School Direct staff to address this, he explains:

'*We have got two School Direct students that we have trained to our specification. We train them in the 'School C Way'. We tell them how we would like them to teach using our Teaching Toobox and they observe exemplar quality first teaching. We then observe them and ensure that they are up to our standard. Our current School Direct staff are virtually as good as any classteacher. This further frees up class teachers to teach groups of six or seven pupils.' (**Headteacher,** School C)*

Accepting the leadership of a school in very challenging circumstances and deemed by Ofsted to require special measures requires extraordinary leadership abilities. The Headteacher who took up post in 2000 at **School H)**, signalled the start of an impressive journey of improvement, which saw the school's achievement at GCSE rise from 11% in 2000 to 73% in 2009.

The Headteacher is uncompromising in her view that the focus of the school is to ensure achievement for all. There is zero tolerance of poor behaviour and an unremitting belief articulated with staff that '*disruptive behaviour should not be allowed to damage the education of our pupils.*' The school has clear sanctions in the event of inappropriate behaviour. Her first priority on arrival was to tackle persistent underachievement in the school and to support the teachers by establishing and maintaining good discipline. Alongside discipline runs a strong care and encouragement for pupils and staff, supported by extensive staff CPD and training programmes. It comes as no surprise to see that expectations and academic standards have risen and the upward trends at GCSE continue.

This transformation has been due to outstanding and inspirational leadership, as recognised in the Ofsted inspection report:

'*The outstanding leadership of the Headteacher and her leadership team has been instrumental in continuing the very successful drive for improvements in achievement, quality of teaching and the behaviour and safety of students since becoming an academy. All staff are highly ambitious for the students. As a result, all students make exceptional progress in their personal development and academic achievement.*' **(Ofsted 2014, School H)**

The key to maintaining the school's excellence is a powerful culture and ethos of high expectations, based on a strong, shared commitment to meeting pupils' often complex needs. The tone is set by the school's excellent Headteacher and governing body. Staff are trusted and valued, expectations of all pupils' social and academic achievement are high and the school is deeply embedded in the life of the area it serves.

The Headteacher is well regarded, both by the local community and by national policymakers, for her success in raising achievement in the face of extraordinarily challenging circumstances. In this school, poverty is not an excuse for poor performance and teachers are very effective and challenge

all children to achieve to the best of their abilities. It is seen as an opportunity for change and not an excuse for underachievement. In the view of the Headteacher 'anybody who says children from around here cannot achieve is badly letting down local children and communities. We challenge stereotypes about the area served by the school by asking questions such as why can't a school behind Brixton be a good school? Why not let children in the area have their dream? We have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently.'

The Headteacher stated that:

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

Ofsted concurred with the school's evaluation processes:

> 'The school's view about its own performance is robust and accurate. It is well informed by an excellent improvement plan that has clearly measurable outcomes. The plans for improvement are monitored regularly, progress is carefully reviewed and any required changes implemented quickly. The management of teaching and its impact on learning are outstanding. School leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are very accurate, informed by extremely rigorous checks by senior and middle leaders….. Middle leaders have a very well-grounded understanding of how to improve the learning opportunities for students. They very effectively review the performance of their subject areas to ensure that the quality of provision remains high for all students. Training for all staff is highly personalised and based on an accurate analysis of need. All staff speak very highly of the quality of the training provided by the school, which is tailored to the stage that individual staff have reached in their career development. Systems for managing staff performance are extremely rigorous and salary progression only occurs when merited by good performance. Senior leaders have taken very robust action to challenge student underperformance. This is in line with the high aspirations set for the students, summarised in the school motto 'Attitude Determines Altitude'. This approach has been very successful in ensuring that where progress has faltered; underachieving students quickly catch up with their peers' diversity. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school. The school monitors very effectively the performance and well-being of the small number of students who receive aspects of their education in other settings. School leaders are robust in addressing any instances of bad behaviour. The effectiveness of this action is seen in the continued decline in the number of exclusions, which is significantly below the national average.'

An Assistant Headteacher gave us an overview of why she thinks it is an outstanding school.

> 'This is the best case of a school that has improved and has sustained this improvement that I have been involved in.'

School A is another example of a school which was 'causing serious concern' to the local authority for many years prior to the appointment of the current Executive Headteacher. It was her exemplary leadership which led the way to it becoming outstanding in all areas.   The leadership has been able to remove barriers to pupils' learning and provide a culture of achievement with a positive 'can do' attitude. Central to their work are high expectations and the provision of intensive support so that pupils are enabled to achieve to the best of their abilities.
The following quote sums up Ofsted inspectors' views of the school:

> 'This is an outstanding school. Achievement is outstanding because the motivational leadership of the Executive Headteacher and senior leaders and managers has secured

outstanding teaching. Parents and carers highly value the progress that their children are making. Pupils enjoy lessons and make outstanding progress because they are inspired by the interesting variety of activities offered to them.' **(Ofsted 2012, School A)**

The Executive Headteacher recalls that with many issues to address and the enormity of the challenge presented to her when, as deputy Headteacher of another Primary School, she became acting Headteacher of School A in 2007, she decided to tackle the physical environment first, as a signal to all that improvement was on its way:

> '*We applied to NatWest for funding. We persuaded them to come and see our playground and they awarded us £100,000 saying it was the worst they had seen in the country!! Parents were asked to help design the best playground for their children. The parents and children formed a working party with the governors. We all visited school with really good playgrounds and this focussed us on what was possible. The children felt valued and the parents felt that something was being done about the school.'*

The Headteacher then embarked on an intensive programme of monitoring teaching and learning:

> *'The programme involved classroom observation, work scrutiny and drop-ins'. 80% of lessons were graded inadequate. We recruited some new teachers from Stockwell including an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) and we started the process of change. I modelled lessons together with the AST to share good practice with the teachers.'* (**Executive Headteacher, School A)**

This practice of rigorously monitoring teaching and learning continues, with even the most competent teachers receiving pointers on how they can improve their teaching:

> '*When we observe lessons we always give teachers steps to improve, even if they are outstanding. We still observe all our outstanding teachers.'* (**Executive Headteacher**, **School A)**

Despite there being several newly qualified classroom teachers at School A, the leadership have no qualms about the school's capacity to sustain its outstanding provision. All Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are observed at interview and if successful they are appointed to the school and paired with outstanding teachers:

> *'I have seen the potential in our NQTs who have to be at least 'good' first of all and then we build on that'. (**Executive Headteacher, School A)***

The rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that everyone is clear about the school's high expectations for the achievement of all its pupils, as the Head of school explained:

> '*Each term staff are given a monitoring schedule so they are well aware of what the focus for monitoring will be each term, i.e. lesson observations for teachers and TAs, planning, monitoring of children's workbooks, including the 'effective marking' system.'* (**Head of School**, **School A)**

The senior management team includes a business manager, premises manager, three assistant Headteachers, the Head of school and the Executive Headteacher of another primary and a National Leader of Education. Rigorous performance management and high quality professional development of staff, including coaching and whole school training have contributed to the school gaining a CPD Award from the Institute of Education.   The Executive Headteacher believes that this has empowered staff to 'step up' when she is not in the school, she says: '*they can operate without me being here. They are confident in doing so*.'

When asked why the school has succeeded against the odds, the Executive Headteacher replies:

'I just believe that every child is good at something and it is our job to tap into this and extend it. Our belief is every child can achieve but it is up to us to find out how to bring it about. Some achieve through music, sport, reading or maths, wherever their interests lie.' **(School A)**

Ofsted inspectors recognised the excellence of the distributed leadership and management at **School A** in the following extract from the report:

'The Executive 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 since the previous inspection and demonstrate the school's secure capacity to improve further.' (**Ofsted 2012, School A)**

Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and an ambitious vision for every child to succeed has been the key to the dramatic improvement of **School B** which was described as a 'sink school' when the Headteacher took up post two weeks before it was inspected by Ofsted in 2002. It was removed from special measures after only four terms having made good progress in addressing all the key issues. The Headteacher was described as providing 'excellent leadership'. He said he knew the school was going to be a challenge when he accepted the post of Headteacher:

'Pupils looked neglected and needy, not materially, but in terms of their self-esteem, their confidence and their self-worth, they had poor attitudes to learning and poor behaviour, attendance levels were very low and there was inadequate provision for pupils with EAL and SEN. Staff were bruised and battered and had been neglected, morale was low, teachers expectations of pupils achievement and behaviour were low; there was no deputy Headteacher and an ineffectual leadership team, the overall quality of teaching was poor and there was a high rate of staff absence and long-term sick leave.'

The Headteacher's main priorities were to:

'deal with restructuring the leadership team and appoint a deputy and to be tight and highly prescriptive and put in place structures and systems to establish a climate for learning, e.g. behaviour management strategies, staff communication, set the highest expectations, curriculum planning, monitoring and the checking and relentless evaluation that what we had put in place was being implemented and impacting on the children. I had to crack the culture of dependency on the Headteacher and ensure that there was collective responsibility. It was also vital to improve the learning environment.' (**Headteacher**, **School B**)

The Headteacher rigorously monitored learning by examining children's workbooks weekly. He and his deputy modelled excellent teaching strategies and demonstrated to staff how to manage pupils' behaviour. Tough decisions were taken as they tackled issues of poor performance and the long term absence of some members of staff. The Headteacher confronted all hindrances to the achievement of his vision for the school in an honest and forthright manner. He modelled a professional approach for staff and developed leadership roles at all levels by providing a bespoke professional development programme.

The motivation to improve the life chances of some of the most deprived children in the country stemmed from the Headteacher's own 'working class' background, as he explained:

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

The Headteacher is a strong and persuasive role model for pupils. He has played a key role in raising the aspiration of the many disadvantaged communities he serves. Back in June 2008 the school was recognised as an organisation of outstanding strength and capacity and was selected to become a National Support School by the National College for School Leadership. Through its work as a National Support School, highly skilled members of staff from across the Federation provide outreach support, coaching and mentoring to schools experiencing serious difficulties. They have retained this status for a number of years now and continue to provide expert advice and intervention to other schools experiencing difficulties, demonstrating significant impact. The Executive Headteacher has delegated the operational leadership to 'heads of schools' within the federation of five schools and two children's centres. He recognises the needs and mutual benefits of collaborative working in driving and securing school improvement. The Executive Headteacher's style described by a colleague as 'brave and community focused' is what makes him an outstanding leader: *'He revels in it, he doesn't shy away from the early conflict and he is straightforward in a no-nonsense, impassioned way.'* **(Head of School, School B)**

The leadership of the school was described by Ofsted as follows:

> *'Highly qualified, exceptionally talented, inspirational leaders and managers at all levels are extremely ambitious for the pupils, and uncompromising in their drive to improve this school and others in the federation. They are determined that education in the school should be first rate, 'World Class'. Whilst supporting other schools, and growing at a rapid rate, the school has improved its outstanding practice and raised further pupils' achievements since the previous inspection. Faculty, year group and inclusion teams include staff from schools across the federation. They have high levels of responsibility and are held to account for pupils' progress. Together with senior leaders, they are innovative and share and develop their considerable leadership expertise through robust self-evaluation and frequent checks on the quality of teaching.'* (**Ofsted 2013**, **School B**)

School D provides yet another example of outstanding leadership which has taken the school from twice being subject to special measures to becoming outstanding in all areas. Leaders, staff and governors are fully committed in supporting the drive for the highest levels of achievement and personal development for every pupil. Teamwork is extremely strong. Everyone's contribution is valued and morale is high. The Executive Headteacher and the head of school have set out a clear agenda for the development of the school. They are very positive role models, leading by example. Support for teaching is very effective, with excellent systems in place to monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. Able middle leaders contribute very effectively to the process through lesson observations, regular analysis of pupils' work and by sharing best practice with colleagues. All of this has ensured that teaching is outstanding.

School D is in a federation partnership with members sharing the common vision of 'Achievement for All', whilst retaining the individual character of each school. The Executive Headteacher, has had a long association with **School D** having led the school out of special measures for the first time in 2002. He was invited to develop a federation with School D when it was put into special measures a second time in 2009. As the experienced and highly regarded Headteacher of another primary school and a National Leader of Education (NLE) he used his prior knowledge of **School D** to identify some talented key members of staff to form a new leadership team. He stated:

> *'The leadership structure might look top heavy with a head of school and three assistant Headteachers, but they all have clearly identified roles and make a strong supportive team'. To further strengthen the leadership and build capacity at School D he moved a SENCo and a Key Stage 2 manager from another primary school in the federation. Clearly the hard federation has had a bearing on School D's capacity to sustain improvement, not least because of the availability of additional financial and human resources. The retention of staff has also been secured as opportunities for promotion are increased via the federation.'* **(School D)**

The leadership's initial task at **School D** following the federation was to bring clarity for everyone with regard to the school's priorities As the school was still being monitored by HMI, the Executive Headteacher used Ofsted evaluation criteria and the key issues to establish priorities for improvement. The staff bought in to the need for change recalls the Executive Headteacher:

> *'it drove the momentum for change…. A combination of new projects brought in and certain things that were not contributing to achievement were lost or pushed out. Some of the existing good practice, such as pupil progress meetings which are an embedded part of the practice here and the very strong English and maths leadership just needed the space to put their plans in place.'* **(School D)**

It is widely known that one of the greatest challenges for leadership teams is to find ways of bringing the staff on board and getting them committed to and prepared to become involved in change. Without it, long lasting improvement will not occur. There is no doubt that a critical factor in School D's current success is the exemplary leadership skills of the Executive Headteacher. He made his ambitious vision for School D explicit to all those connected with the school and embedded a culture of excellence.

The current head of school was formerly the maths co-ordinator and has been pivotal in ensuring that children achieve the highest standards not only in maths but in all areas of learning. His passion for every pupil to succeed is supported by his constant efforts to improve outcomes for pupils. His goal, which has been achieved over successive years, is to ensure that by Year 2 every child is able to read, write independently and have a mastery of number appropriate to their age or beyond. Despite attainment on entry to the nursery being well below average, the implementation of rigorous phonics and number programmes ensure that no child slips through the net!

School D is now at the forefront of leading edge practice through research based learning and development. There is an ongoing commitment by the leadership to the dissemination of good practice locally, nationally and internationally and this now extends to making commercially available some of its latest 'masters' curriculum and assessment programmes. **School D** was the only primary school asked by the OECD to present its experiences on successful implementation of educational policies at a conference attended by delegates from thirty countries.

What these outstanding case study school leaders have in common, is an unshakeable belief that all children can achieve their best, no matter what their background, language or circumstance. They have created a climate of excellence that is conducive to growth and where an emphasis is laid on innovation, consultation, teamwork and participation.

High quality teaching and learning

In just over a decade, London schools have been transformed from being the worst place for children from low-income communities to go to school, to being a leading example across the world of improving outcomes for pupils from low-income backgrounds. At the heart of London's many educational problems was its inability to attract and retain high-quality teachers. Evidence is clear that teacher quality is the most important school-based factor for pupil learning and attainment

(Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Slater, Davies & Burgess, 2009; Day et al, 2006). Meta-analyses indicate that whilst fifty per cent of the variation in student achievement is attributable to their prior cognitive abilities, around thirty per cent is attributable to teaching variables. What teachers do in the classroom matters more than non-teacher factors such as class size and school organisation (Atherton, 2011; Hattie, 2009). If research use can be shown to impact positively on teaching, it then demonstrably contributes to school improvement.

In the case study schools, attainment on entry is below typical national average. The level of home support that the schools can expect is low not because of lack of parental aspiration, but because many parents do not have the ability to help. Therefore the schools put a focus on the development of basic skills and in providing an enriched curriculum to enhance pupils' social and cultural capital.

Knowing the challenge of raising standards in inner city schools, Headteachers are rigorous in the appointment of their teaching staff and they ensure that their staff receives, high quality continuing professional development (CPD). Many Headteachers prefer to 'grow their own' teachers as is the case at **School C** where the Headteacher is skilled at spotting potential teaching talent and explains his approach when recruiting new staff:

> *'Some of our teaching assistants are on one year contracts. Every time we get a new TA vacancy we advisertise in the Guardian, inviting people to apply for a TA post for a year. The people we are seeking would not want to stay longer because they are looking to become teachers. We have some high quality people who apply and some of them we put through the School Direct route. I will talk with new staff and explain and demonstrate how it is done and take them through the Toolbox. This applies to TA's as well as teachers. We show them how to use whiteboards, talk partners and targeted questioning etc. They also have opportunities to observe each other…. They are fast learners – that's why I have chosen them.' (Headteacher, School C)*

The deputy Headteacher added her own perspectives on how the school is adept at using 'volunteers' – people aspiring to become teachers, to the benefit of the school:

> *'They often become TAs and we get to 'grow our own'. They absorb good practice and we get to see aptitude so we would look over eighteen months, to see someone progress from volunteer to TA to a School Direct candidate.' (Deputy Headteacher, School C)*

The Headteacher is passionate about coaching teachers (and those aspiring to become teachers) in new teaching strategies as the means whereby outcomes for children can be advanced:

> *'It's about humility – are you prepared to improve your teaching practice? If you are then we will give you the strategies to improve your teaching. Teaching is not rocket science if you are prepared to improve then we can help you.' (Headteacher, School C)*

Clarity about his expectations of staff and the support which will be available to those who take up the challenge of teaching at School C, is a feature of the Headteacher's strong and visionary leadership:

> *'A major issue I think nationally is professional neglect. I recently did an Ofsted inspection outside London and the deputy said she only monitors teaching three times a year because the Unions might object. I think that if you are clear about what you want and you are prepared to put in the resources, there shouldn't be a problem. I do no take any risks with staff, especially new teachers. I warn them at interview what they are going to get and the promise is that by the time it is over they will be a cracking teacher. Recruitment is where you get quality first teaching you are minimising risk.' (Headteacher, School C)*

The same process of carefully recruiting new teaching staff and then developing their professional skills which is then extended to teaching assistants is in place at **School A,** as the Executive Headteacher explained:

> '*We employ graduates as Teaching Assistants (TAs) as much as possible and adults with a competent level of numeracy and literacy. We set targets for our TAs, linked to teachers' targets and to the pupils' targets. We observe them working with groups. We have the highest expectations of teaching assistants and they are valuable members of the school team. Our TAs attend a weekly whole school INSET along with teachers. Many of our TAs go on to become teachers and when they have trained we ask them to come back.'*
> **(Headteacher, School A)**

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

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

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

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

Ofsted inspectors noted:

> '*Teachers know their students and their abilities very well because their progress is tracked and monitored regularly. They use this information to plan work which challenges students and is matched closely to their earlier achievements, so that all groups of students make rapid progress. Students who speak English as an additional language make particularly strong progress in English and their other subjects. This is because of the closely matched individual support they are given beyond lessons and teachers' understanding of how to build steadily on their existing knowledge to take learning forward quickly.'* **(Ofsted 2013, School G)**

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

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

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

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

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

> 'The staff are aware that the key success for all pupils is ensuring that all the day to day teaching meets the needs of each learner rather than simply relying on interventions to compensate for teaching that is less good. Where more support is needed the school allocates the best teachers to teach intervention groups (for example all assistant Headteachers support GCSE English). All teaching staff are aware of who is eligible for the pupil premium and this informs their planning. The school makes sure that support and the use of regular robust assessments which allow teachers to give students effective and termly feedback.' **(School G)**

School F's talented and committed teaching staff are willing to share their expertise and have developed a culture and learning environment where there is skilled and deep questioning which draws out and promotes pupils' understanding. Pupils frequently lead parts of lessons, present their work and question each other and their teachers, as inspectors observed:

> 'School leaders have placed a strong emphasis on raising the quality of teaching in all areas of the school and are passionate about involving the pupils in their learning. This is one of the main reasons why the quality of teaching has improved and is now outstanding.' *(Ofsted 2014, School F)*

Teachers and other adults working with pupils encourage, support and express very high expectations for every pupil, and the pupils correspondingly expect the very best of themselves. Excellent support for pupils who have special educational needs is provided in class and within the resource base.

> 'Classrooms provide a safe and secure place where pupils are not afraid to speak out, or to learn by getting it wrong before they get it right. They check their ideas with a mark scheme, before their own work is returned and self-reviewed with increased skill and proficiency.' *(Ofsted 2014, School F)*

Teachers use their outstanding expertise to support pupils with learning English as an additional language; they are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. As a consequence, these learners' needs are met in lessons and targets for their literacy needs are regularly set. They make excellent progress during their time in school. When a new EAL pupil arrives at the school an assessment is immediately carried out and they are carefully tracked to monitor their progress and their levels of English. Pupils of higher capability are challenged by the pitch of work in the accelerated sets which is matched to their needs, as Ofsted noted:

> *'Teachers plan and adapt their lessons to incorporate a sharp match of tasks and interesting activities for all groups of pupils and are adept at stimulating interest about their subjects through the use of varied and different resources.'* (**Ofsted 2014, School F)**

Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding during lessons and they urge pupils to question and check their own and each other's understanding.   Written and verbal feedback on how well pupils are learning is sharp and helps them to improve even further.

> *'Excellent teaching and tailored support for pupils enable them to learn exceptionally well in all subjects.'* (**Ofsted 2014, School F)**

An innovative online homework system which enables schools to easily and effectively track and monitor pupils' homework is used. The system makes it simple for teachers to set homework tasks and a transparent and thorough reporting means that any teacher or staff member can see at a glance the quantity and quality of work being set by individual teachers, departments or year groups. Students access their homework via an internet account. To help students who might not have ICT/internet access available at home, the school library is open after school with a suite of computers available for students to log on and to check their homework. Parents too can check and extend pupils' thinking beyond the lessons.

The teaching at **School H** continues to provide outstanding outcomes for students.

> *'Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of all students. This leads to teachers planning learning activities which ensure students are enthusiastic about their learning. Teachers gauge the quality of students' work very well and set appropriate, but challenging academic targets.' **(Ofsted 2014, School H)***

According to Ofsted inspectors, the school has gone from strength to strength over the recent past:

> *'The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the school became an academy. A significant feature of the outstanding teaching in the school is the excellent relationship that has been established between staff and students. Students collaborate exceptionally well in lessons to improve their learning. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students were encouraged to support each other when comparing solutions to mathematical problems. This ensured they were not reliant on the teacher for their learning, and led to excellent progress in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers make very clear the standard of work and behaviour expected from all students. As a result, students participate very willingly in all their learning tasks and make outstanding progress. Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge very effectively to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Strong subject knowledge enables teachers to use a wide range of techniques to probe students' own subject knowledge, as seen in a chemistry lesson about electroplating where students' knowledge of electrodes was tested very thoroughly. Support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is extremely good. Teaching assistants are used very well in lessons to support students in their learning. They work closely with the class teachers in agreeing how they will support students. This was seen in a Year 10 art lesson where both the teacher and teaching assistant worked very effectively to challenge all students. The teaching assistant was focused on ensuring that the more able students were stretched to achieve their best work. The school has a highly effective reading and literacy programme. The numeracy programme is developing rapidly. Students whose literacy and numeracy are below expected standards are very ably supported through specialised lessons and one-to-one mentoring, and make very rapid improvement.' **(Ofsted 2014, School H)***

In all the case study schools, teachers are effectively in an environment of diverse learners and they facilitate the learning process of pupils with a variety of backgrounds and needs. They treat all students as individuals with unique strengths, weaknesses, and needs rather than as generalised representatives of particular racial, ethnic or cultural groups. They employ a variety of teaching styles to respond to the needs of diverse learners and create an open classroom that values the experiences and perspectives of all students.

Teachers view the diversity of their pupils as a real strength at **School A:**

> *'The diversity of pupils is what makes this school special – they come from all over the world. They feel welcomed from the start and settle straight away because they feel valued. It's such a community school – parents are involved and they want to be part of the school. We celebrate diversity here, in class assemblies, the language of the month and international day. Children learn from eaach other and we make use of other teachers who might follow that religion or have the same language as our children. We draw on that and our pupils to support our teaching. We celebrate festivals so children and parents feel included.'* ***(Teacher, School A)***

The school's 'values' programme is another feature which teachers identify as something that is 'special' about School A. It is now in its third year and promotes friendship, appreciation, joy, hope, peace, love, unity, respect, humility, caring and co-operation. Teachers believe that the values programme has improved behaviour significantly. Each value is introduced by the Headteacher or head of school at assemblies, reinforced in circle times, SEAL and through homework.

Ofsted inspectors judged the teaching and learning at **School A** 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. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are well taught and pupils say that teaching is good. As one parent said, School A is a fun, safe school where children come first and really learn. Teachers make excellent links across subjects providing practical experiences to make learning more relevant to pupils and to develop curiosity. For example, a nature walk for Year 1 linked mathematical work on shapes with the identification of parts of a flower in science and with a story they were reading about an enormous turnip. Every opportunity is taken to promote learning, develop reflective thinking and independent skills and to teach collaborative skills. Very effective use of resources, including information and communication technology, along with excellent pace in lessons, ensures that learning is enjoyable.'* ***(Ofsted 2012, School A)***

Teachers work extremely well together, sharing ideas on approaches to teaching topics and resources. Guidance is provided for staff in various ways, a comprehensive induction programme which includes: EAL strategies, behaviour management strategies, child protection and supporting pupils with SEN. Newly qualified teachers receive excellent support for planning for differentiation from the inclusion manager who monitors their plans. Weekly staff meetings focus on developing aspects of the curriculum, teaching and assessment. The impact of this professional development is evidenced by the outstanding teaching pupils receive.

Teamwork is also a feature of the Federation of schools, **School B** teachers join with colleagues from federation schools to develop consistently high quality planning for a wide range of abilities. Teachers plan in teams with a team leader and 9-11 colleagues in equivalent year groups. A morning is set aside to meet and plan and teachers are positive about the advantages of these planning meetings:

> *'We value that teamwork because we know that people bring in different skills, securing quality first teaching. We ensure we match up people in planning sessions in terms of strengths and weaknesses.'* **(Yr 6 team leader, School B)**

Teamwork also extends to assessing pupils' work and teachers value the opportunities afforded to them when moderating pupils' work across the federation schools:

> *'We look at each other's books and anyone who is having difficulty challenging say, more able pupils, can learn from what colleagues have done. We do the same thing with peer-observations and give each other feedback. Motivation is very high and people want to get children to succeed – this comes from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).'*

Ofsted inspectors noted:

> *'Inspirational teaching methods and high expectations motivate pupils to achieve as well as they can. For example, Year 6 pupils responded extremely well to the challenge to apply their literacy skills by taking on the role of the 'Big Bad Wolf' and writing in defence of his actions towards the 'Three Little Pigs'. Thorough lesson plans set out what pupils are to learn and how they are to learn it. This is made very clear to pupils so that they know exactly what they need to do to achieve well. Activities are amended so that they are matched closely to pupils' interests and abilities. Through the evaluation of these plans teachers make sure that lessons over time build very effectively on what pupils have learned before and that all pupils have equal opportunities to excel.'* **(Ofsted 2013, School B).**

Ever conscious to provide additional challenge for gifted and able children in Year 6, links have been established with Other Secondary School as the Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) in Year 6 explained:

> *'We have a strong link with the local secondary; it's almost like having another member of the faculty. In Year 6 we have an English session on Monday and maths on Tuesday and secondary teachers come in to take lessons with our higher ability pupils working at Level 6. This also helps transition to Key Stage 3.'*

A commitment to ensuring that children develop the skills and acquire the knowledge to meet and surpass curriculum requirements **School C** sets high standards and teachers are focused in their efforts to help children meet these standards. They are sensitive to the needs and learning patterns of different children and try to inspire them to recognise their own potential and work towards achieving. There is a belief that the most vulnerable pupils need the strongest teachers, which runs counter to the practice of taking children with behavioural issues, low self-esteem and SEN out of the class to work with a teaching assistant. An experienced, outstanding teacher who is now a non-class based Phase Leader and maths specialist, and teaches small groups of pupils explained why this practice works well at School C:

> *'It just doesn't work with a TA. It's the experience of teachers and their knowledge of how to motivate a wide range of pupils with a wide range of needs that makes a difference. The TAs are extremely strong but they are not trained teachers. Teachers know how to break things down and how to change tack if it's not working, having a host of strategies and experience of what works. These children need to feel they are on a par with their friends. I make them know they are doing hard stuff – as hard as what is going on in the classes. It makes them feel equal which is what we want.'* **(Phase Leader, School C)**

We asked whether this approach would work with inexperienced teachers, and she responded:

> *'If you started taking people out of class after only one or two years teaching they may not feel they have the range of teaching strategies to be able to carry out the interventions. You*

*have to choose the people wisely and you need experienced teachers – you also need to have the right space to use as an attractive teaching base.' (**School C Phase Leader, School C**)*

We observed this outstanding teacher with a group of seven Year 6 pupils. There was an air of excitement during the lesson, which moved at a rapid place with the teacher drawing on pupils' responses to gauge their understanding. This was assessed by the teacher who displayed their work on the whiteboard via a camera and she invited them to explain how they had arrived at their answers, marking any errors which were then used as teaching points. The school is using 'Learning Lines' which facilitates pupils' evaluation of their own learning, as they place themselves at some point on a line and identify any difficulties or 'pit experiences'. The teacher encourages pupils to reflect on the strategies they could use to get out of the pit. Trust between teacher and pupils, and between pupils has been built up to the extent that there is no fear or shame in revealing the depth of their misunderstanding. As the lesson draws to an end the teacher encourages the pupils and makes explicit how well they are achieving, as follows:

> *'Our aim is to try and get you to Level 4. We are roughly about the same. The questions you are working on were Level 4. If I came last September and asked you this question, you never could have done it, so you are making great progress!' (**School C Phase Leader, School C**)*

Outstanding teaching at **School D** of early number, the daily phonics teaching and reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 provide a firm foundation for children in basic skills. The involvement of teaching assistants in teaching phonics and mathematics enables children in Years 1 and 2 to make excellent progress as they are taught in very small groups, with activities and resources which match their needs. Teaching assistants are well qualified and speak enthusiastically about the training they receive to teach phonics and mathematics:

> *'I had training in Jolly Phonics in another school, but not as intensive as the training I had here. Here it is a two-day course and we have constant catch-ups and updates.'*

> *'We have peer-to-peer observations which are co-ordinated by the literacy co-ordinator. We have been doing it long enough now to know who to observe... We talk about what we are doing and if you think you can learn something from the way someone else is doing it you ask if you can observe them.'*

Another teaching assistant commented on Inset days which are shared with other schools in the Cluster:

> *'There's a selection of workshops in the afternoon. Individual CPD needs are taken into account.'*

The quality of teaching and learning was judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in 2012. The inspection report stated:

> *'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…. Teaching is particularly effective when adults ask pertinent questions to develop pupils' understanding. They get pupils started on well-tailored activities quickly and assess the quality of learning that is taking place thoroughly, correcting misconception and moving pupils to their next learning steps as soon as they are ready…. The use of additional staff in lessons to support individual pupils with specific needs or groups of pupils is very effective, so all pupils are purposefully engaged in activities and learning well. Work in pupils' books is*

marked well with clear next steps identified so pupils know precisely how to improve.'
(Ofsted 2012, School D)

Parental aspiration

Goodall et al (2011) reported that parenting styles improve as a consequence of receiving support and training, and parents gain knowledge, skills, confidence and empathy. They found the most effective interventions to be those focusing both on academic outcomes and parenting skills rather than either aspect in isolation and discovered much greater evidence of the impact of parental engagement programmes on children's literacy than for any other curriculum area.

This is certainly the case at **School D** which incorporates the Children's Centre and offers a range of services that support families through child care, adult learning, parenting programmes and helping bring a range of service providers into the community. Extraordinary efforts are made by the school to enable parents to support their children's learning. This is especially important as the majority of parents are unfamiliar with the British education system. The school understands that simply passing parents information without enabling them to understand what it means in practice, is unhelpful. School D has overcome this barrier by inviting parents to come into the school and to see first-hand how a phonics lesson is taught to groups of children in Years 1 and 2. They are able to see what materials are being used and to ask questions. Many ask to buy the resources they see being used in the lesson so they can use them at home. Similar demonstration lessons are offered to parents in mathematics. The Key Stage 1 co-ordinator commented:

> *'It is very powerful for parents to see a lesson. Staff keep encouraging parents to come to the workshops; we keep remind them to come.'*

The school goes the extra mile to ensure parents feel welcome. The head of school emphasised:

> *'Parents feel proud that they are in this school and they help push the children forward. There is a tradition of involving parents and making sure they are welcome to come in and share their ideas.'*

School F takes a whole school approach to engaging parents and adopts an outward-facing strategy which makes use of information and expertise from others. The EYFS/KS1 Phase Leader explained the lengths the school goes to in making sure that every parent is engaged:

> *'Having a Schools Direct student has enabled me to be more available to meet with parents. In the case of one PPG pupil, who only sees her Dad at weekends and he can't come to the school, I email him, to make sure all the family are engaged.'….. She recalls: 'last year, the first year, we did everything we could to get parents in to school. We do have EAL children, but not beginners in English, they are less confident but they get by and are picking up.'*

The EYFS/KS1 Leader is focusing on 'narrowing the gap' as part of her NPQML programme and is putting into practice some of the effective interventions identified through research.

> *'An after-school reading club has been started and children have targets for home reading. This is building confidence and a love of reading in boys especially and has increased their motivation. In the Spring Term we ran an outdoor maths explorers club, targeting PPG children. There is speech and language support from a SALT and Chatter bugs groups for children who had low scores on the language screening check. The group helps build confidence and models good speaking and listening for children. Year 1 phonics screening check suggests that there will be a 5% gap between PP children and non-PP children, so*

phonics interventions are taking place in the summer term. We are targeting parents to engage them in phonics, reading, developing growth mind-sets, maths and computing workshops. We have also implemented FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day). We offer them tea and coffee and encourage them as much as possible. We have put in a lot of effort to engage parents; we are being proactive in ringing them, encouraging their attendance at meetings. We have also started a parent/volunteer reading group.'

Family Digital Stories which is an inspirational six week project run by the City Learning Centre has been offered to targeted families. The aims of the project are to increase parental engagement with certain families, boost children's confidence and support parenting skills. 12 parents attended each week and feedback was very positive, one parent of a child in a Reception class said: 'Getting to know other parents at school was great. Doing something together with my child makes her feel important'.

At **School A** parents and carers are pleased with how well the Headteacher and staff know their children. This mirrors the teachers' view that knowing each child and building firm foundations for the relationship with home is a key to the school's success. The pupils feel secure and greatly valued and so grow academically and socially in a warm, family atmosphere, where each is known for their individual characteristics. This generates great confidence in the pupils when facing new experiences and enables the school to very rapidly pinpoint resources and actions to meet their needs. A 'parent's forum' has long been established as the school is committed to listening and responding to the views and opinions of parents. They meet every half-term. The parents' forum is a platform for parents to make suggestions and express ideas for improvements at the school and their views are taken seriously.

A parent governor (who now has a grandchild at the school) recalled when the school was not doing well:

'Parents had stopped believing in the place, it was not a school of choice. When the new management took over a lot of teachers left.'

She went on to describe the challenge which was presented to the new leadership and some significant actions which the new Headteacher put in place to start to transform the school:

'When the headteacher took over she dealt with the nitty-gritty. When she started you could see she had a vision for where she wanted the school to go. Then because she worked so hard the teachers started to work hard – she brought in the idea of teachers learning from other teachers, she brought in reward systems which made the children aspire. She did so much. Getting the parents involved no matter how much they moaned. She came back to the next meeting and told them how she had dealt with things they had concerns about. Bit by bit it started to turn around.'

Ofsted inspectors affirmed the successful partnership that has been developed with parents:

'Engagement with parents and carers is very effective. Almost all who responded to the questionnaire say that the school helps them to support their children's learning. They attend music and mathematics workshops, parents' forums and consultation days. Parents and carers also effectively contribute to the curriculum provision. For example, they attend lessons on 'people who help us' to describe the jobs they do.' **(Ofsted 2012, School A)**

At **School B** parental engagement with the school is outstanding. However, these positive relationships didn't happen overnight. As with **School A**, it took perseverance and a genuine commitment to hear parental concerns and a commitment by the leadership to address them.

School B once had a poor reputation in the community and parents were hostile and occasionally violent towards the staff and in 2002 Ofsted judged relationships with parents to be 'poor'. At that time, the newly appointed Headteacher (Executive Headteacher as he is now) put in place some very effective strategies to improve attendance and punctuality and involve parents and the community in the process. He and his deputy would walk around the local streets before school started, encouraging parents and children to get into school before the morning bell rang. They also targeted local shops enlisting the support of shopkeepers by asking them not to serve children if they were late for school, which they agreed to do. To encourage parents into the school and make them feel welcome, he provided a designated 'parents room' with comfortable chairs. Parents were invited in for coffee mornings to meet with the Headteacher and hear what his plans were for the children and the school. He encouraged them to come along to school assemblies and concerts. Very soon parental confidence increased and the school's reputation in the community began to improve. It took genuine commitment and perseverance on the part of the school leadership to make it happen. The Headteacher reflected:

> *'We don't believe it is hard to reach parents in this school. How we engage with parents underpins pupil achievement. The way that we value people is part of our ethos, our hidden curriculum. I have to model these messages as a school leader, respecting each other, judging individuals as individuals. I have made a deliberate and conscious effort to form a relationship with these parents. I use humour, and relate to people as people. I am not frightened to talk about issues, none of my staff hide behind people; it's important to get everything out on the table. I am out there in the playground in the morning and evening. A testament to our parental engagement is the fact that parental attendance has gone up to 93% from 19%. We do make it a pleasurable experience for parents; we provide refreshments, music and a crèche. We are flexible; if people don't come, the class TA will contact the parents to arrange another time, if that doesn't work the office will ring, as a last resort I will write a letter. We do all we can to get the parents in.' (**Headteacher 2010, School B**)*

Numeracy and literacy workshops are run for targeted groups in school to make games that they take home to play with their parents.

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

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

School E is also very adept at engaging parents. One of the success factors of the school is good links with the community it serves and its good practice in developing partnerships with parents. Researchers held a focus group discussion with parents who came from Poland and Somalia.

The Polish parent interviewed felt her children's education was of great importance. She was ambitious for her sons and daughters. When asked how important a good education is, she responded:

> *'Education is very important for us. I have completed University and my husband also finished University. We both finished University in Poland. We are a bilingual family and we work hard'*
> *'I did not speak English when I came to England. The school supported me in my English language development and socially. This is a very friendly and supportive school.'*

> *'The school employed a Polish teaching assistant and she helped Polish children and family in translation and to settle in the area. It was great to have someone who speaks Polish.'*

The Somali parent interviewed was also very positive about the school. He spoke warmly of the help given to Somali children and parents. He commented:

> *'Somali parents value education highly and they have a high expectation of their children and teachers and the school meets their needs'*
> *''All children are very proud of their origins in this school.'*

The pupils interviewed also praised their schools on parental engagement and communications and argued that:

> *'The school goes the extra mile to communicate and work with our parents'*
> *'Parents are invited to get feedback about our performance and to celebrate our achievement during award ceremonies'*
> *''School is a multicultural school. It is the school that values every culture, heritage and religion'*
> *'The school is good in breaking cultural differences and outstanding in community cohesion.*

Overall the school places a high value on children's culture and home language and the pupils benefit from the active partnership with their parents and the support of their families.

At **School G** parental involvement is strong. Despite this, because many parents were educated abroad, they do not have a good understanding of the UK system and the school has to work hard to keep them informed through a variety of forms of communication. They regularly survey parents to find out their preferred means of communication and are constantly looking to improve this.

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

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

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

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

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

> *'Choosing School G is one of the best decisions we have made as parents. We have never regretted it for a moment'. This comment reflects the high level of parental support that exists for this popular and oversubscribed school. Harmonious relationships, excellent*

*behaviour and a strong desire to learn are features that make this an outstanding school where girls feel very happy and safe. They enjoy school because they know they are taught well and are supported to do their best.' **(Ofsted 2007)***

One of the success factors at **School H** is the beneficial links with the community it serves and good practice in engaging parents.

*'Parents are brought into the school with the aim of making the school the heart of the community. The purpose of their continuing education is threefold; to raise their aspirations, to support them to support their children and to bring the community together.' (**Community Education Co-ordinator**)*

School H works together with Stockwell Community Resource Centre and Morley College, offering courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), advanced ICT, Digital Photography and Mathematics, among other subjects. The new school building provides an impressive venue for this Saturday programme. Through the Business and Enterprise specialism, the school is to launch a community project which will be available to 60 participants. This will bring together a range of ethnicities, including Portuguese and Somali. Together they will decide on their focus, learn how to get funding and about working together. The school facilitates as much as possible to get people back into work. Parents and members of the local community who aspire to work in a school have the opportunity to come in for 12 weeks, shadow teachers, receive help with their CVs. 'We support parents and learning mentors to study for foundation degrees. We also have an international link with a school in Sierra Leone, we run a World Family Day, have Aids Awareness and Rights and Responsibilities.'

Another example of a school with excellent parental engagement is **School H** which is rightly proud of its positive relationships with parents and carers. The school is committed to working closely with families so that their children can succeed in school.

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

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

Parents and carers are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education, especially in relation to homework. The school exemplifies its commitment by keeping parents/carers informed through a series of progress reports and during face to face discussions with teachers during academic consultative evenings. Families are invited to share in those glorious moments when their children are singing, acting, playing an instrument or receiving an award. These events demonstrate the exceptional talents of pupils and the school is proud of all their achievements and that this can be shared with families.

One of the key success factors is the school's Christian ethos which has greatly contributed to links with the community served by the school:

> *'The school is like a family for parents and children. We are part of the community and the school has a leadership very committed to community cohesion and inclusion.'* **(School I, Chaplain)**

Effective community engagement

All the case study schools have strong links to the wider community. One school is a designated training school which allows opportunity for community engagement. There is a wide offer to the community; from work experience to training leading to degrees. Many people are referred from the local Community Resource Centre to the school for a variety of training e.g. Family Learning, ICT training, digital photography. Parents are invited into schools with a view to making schools the hub of the local community.

At **School H** the school's effective links with the business world gives pupils opportunities to meet and talk with business and professional people. Briefly, Business and Enterprise at School H is delivered through a four step plan where pupils become aware of business and enterprise through everything they do at school in all subjects and activities. Everything has a work-related dimension. They have plenty of opportunity to gain hands-on experience by putting their learning into practice and during their time at school pupils record their business and enterprise experience in a Portfolio for Life, a valuable tool which they can take with them when they leave school and which leads to an ASDAN qualification.

The Leadership Development programme affords pupils an introduction to management, developing their competence in a wide range of management-orientated tasks, building their confidence and acceptance of responsibility. Through the Business and Enterprise Status the school has developed pupil involvement to a very high standard. They enable pupils to experience Leadership Development within and beyond the curriculum.

 Presidents and Vice Presidents are elected by their peers. They have detailed job descriptions, consult their year groups and form the School Council.

The Trainee Leaders' programme in Year 10 is a development of the Presidents and Vice Presidents system in Key Stage 3. Trainee Leaders help to run the school, mentor and coach younger pupils. They lead significant programmes on higher education, college links, behaviour management and business and enterprise. Prefects and head boys/head girls in year 11 are a further development of the Trainee Leaders Programme. This layer of pupil management will often represent the school. All the above offices have detailed job descriptions, self-reviews and reviews.

> Ofsted (2014) commented: *'The school provides all students with the opportunity to visit universities and colleges including Cambridge, Imperial College and University College, London. This encourages high aspirations for their future education. Students take on leadership roles very effectively, for example as members of the anti-bullying committee, which is run by the students themselves. This helps to build a very strong school community, which thrives on its diversity.'*

School I draws on the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and circumstances and these are celebrated. They offer a number of very innovative activities that strengthen community links. These include the Gospel Choir where parents and the community play a key role in the singing.

The school has a strong link with St Martin-in-the Fields Church in Trafalgar Square and the whole school go there once every year to sing. This is an important tradition which started when the school

was first established and has been kept going. *'It is a beautiful finish to the end of the year by singing at Church.' (School Chaplain, School I)*

*T*he displays in the school celebrate pupils' achievement and acknowledge the diversity of its pupil population. One staff member commented 'displays are the reflection of our community. They are part of the community dialogue. They reflect what is going on in the school. They are part of the ethos of high expectations'. Displays celebrating events such as Christian Aid, the Triangle Project and poppy days are shown around the school. One pupil commented in a previous research project featuring the school:

> *'The pictures on the walls mean a lot to me. I am in one of the choirs and I see my face.'*
> *(McKenley et al 2003)*

Celebration of cultural diversity

At **School I** the celebration of diversity is embedded into school life through, for example, assemblies, the teaching of modern foreign languages and the curriculum.

One pupil stated:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The project continues to have a lasting impression on the school community. The link with schools in Ghana and Jamaica remains strong. One of the legacies of the 'Triangle Project' was not only developing cross curricular material for classroom use but also the creation of GHAJAM, a charity

dedicated to fund raising initiatives designed to support the partner schools and to sustain the links. To date, several fundraising initiatives were undertaken by the school including a street dance, staff barbecue, penny collection and the sale of ice lollies in support of GHAJAM. At present the charity is focusing on supporting the link schools with specialist equipment for science, sporting equipment, computer equipment and good quality used or new clothing.

> *'Staff, parents and students were all very busy last term fundraising for this project. In January 2009, staff and students spent a Saturday in Tesco Brixton packing bags for GHAJAM. They raised over £1,300. Since then numerous fund raising events have taken place including a Winter Ball.'*

Overall as commented by the school Chaplain:

> *'The school works closely with the local community to organise charity events to support people in need in Africa and the Caribbean through the Triangle programme.'*

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

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

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

School G's curriculum responds effectively to the context from which students come – widely dispersed inner city areas of mixed heritage backgrounds, Black and ethnic minorities' heritage and many with English as an additional language. It is designed to meet the needs and interests of the different groups of students as they move through the school, and offers a creative and extensive range of choices at GCSE and in the sixth form, underpinned by outstanding careers guidance, which is appreciated by students. The curriculum and extra opportunities all contribute to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which prepares students extremely well for life in modern British society.

Targeted interventions and support

There is no doubt that carefully targeted interventions and support have had a significant impact in raising achievement in the case study schools. There is a strong commitment in these schools,

shared by staff and governors, to do everything possible to remove barriers that might hinder a pupil's development. Governing bodies are well informed and hold school leaders to account for raising standards. They use data to measure how pupils are achieving in relation to their peers in similar schools. They effectively monitor funding to make sure spending priorities are having the maximum impact on pupil achievement.

One of the reasons our case study schools are so successful is because the leadership identify pupils' specific needs accurately and promptly so that low attainment can be tackled at the very earliest stage. They then track the progress of pupils meticulously and adjust the support provided as a result of their monitoring and evaluation.

At **School G** there is frequent use of achievement data to check the effectiveness of interventions. Careful monitoring of pupil performance and spending also involves a wide range of data and evidence. This includes achievement data, pupils' work, observations, the views of pupils and staff. Effective monitoring means that interventions and approaches can be changed and adapted quickly if they are not working.

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

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

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

At **School F** the carefully focused intervention and support for students in Year 7, continues, as necessary, throughout the school. For example, the highly effective and innovative support from the Learning Support Team has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and progress. A Learning Support Teacher and three Learning Support Assistants is attached to each year group, thus providing consistency and continuity in provision for pupils. Many of the concerns about transfer to Secondary Schools of vulnerable pupils, or those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, stem from the difficulties students face in dealing with the wide range of teachers they need to engage with. The benefit of School F's approach is described by a Learning Support Assistant (LSA):

> *'In this school you have an LST and three LSAs to a year group, so we know pupils well. This really helps at transition. We are a constant feature of the lessons, even when they change teachers, we are always there. Pastoral care is included. We try to balance up pupils to the adults they get on well with, because we spend all day every day with them.' **(LSA)***

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

School F's excellent, well-co-ordinated approach enables the staff to get to know students and their families very well, providing much needed stability. A LSA (who is also a qualified teacher), gave us examples of success stories for particular students she has supported:

'A statemented, autistic student, with social/communication difficulties I have been working with over the years, has achieved a GCSE in Drama and is on target to get five more GCSEs. I meet regularly with his mum and he has received additional support from the Larkhall Autistic Unit'

'We also run a club at lunchtime for the autistic children because this is a difficult time for some of these children. They can come and play Connect 4, draw etc. One child would only play with a car by himself but as a result of coming to this club he has learnt to interact and play with other children'

*'Another statemented student has completed the Duke of Edinburgh Award.' **(LSA)***

In Year 11, targeted students do fewer GCSEs and receive extra support at school where none is available from home. Thirty students were targeted to achieve a GCSE C grade and a mentoring programme was established. Mentors would meet with their students every two weeks to push them with their course work. The LST observed: 'We are like the parents… With this type of support you can push them to get over the C/D borderline… We make timetables for revision, e.g. 3 x 2 hour slots a day, eating properly, going out to play. The sorts of things you would do with your own children. The Learning Support system here is so efficient. It is such a difference from my previous schools. It takes communication between support staff and the teachers to make it work. This impacts on the children.'

Within the staff team there is focus on getting to know the whole family. There is an emphasis on the school, the family and the external agency working together to support the child and give them the same message.

'This is particularly important with behaviour interventions.'

The school has set up an Autism Support group for parents with children at the school who have autism. Parents are pleased with the progress their children are making and are keen to support the school.

Also, in Year 11, the 'Increased Flexibility' project enables students to attend local Colleges for practical/vocational training, e.g. Lambeth College. Students are able to work towards NVQ Level 1 or Certificates in Construction which feed into school qualifications. There is great enthusiasm for this project, especially among boys who have gained entry to courses at Lambeth College, following successful experience.

Case Study: By Year 10/11 some of the students want to be doing something a little more flexible, something practical within their learning. School F has links with various colleges, Lambeth, Southwark. These students go to college once a week to do e.g. car mechanics, childcare. '
'These might be students who are always struggling at school but yet are the first to change a wheel on the college course! They are always on time for college, they like it, they get treated like adults, it's a more relaxed environment. It's a bit of a carrot and stick- going to college keeps them on track at school and many of them go onto college full time at a later date. They catch up with their missed lessons in curriculum support time.'

Child A in Year 10 goes to college once a week for motorbike maintenance. He states, '*I have always been interested in fixing bikes. He expressed that he doesn't feel overwhelmed with school work anymore and that college has helped with his behaviour and attitude because he gets treated more like an adult at college. It will also help him with his future plans to join the army which his head of year found out about for him'*
'I've had a lot of support here, I didn't do anything from Year 3- Year 6 at primary school but here I've had an extra adult sat here helping me because I have dyslexia.'

A member of staff said of Child A- *'the college course has had a big impact on him. We hope he gets into the army- it will be a way out for him.'*

Child B is in Year 10. She has been to 4 primary schools including a Language Unit.
'They picked 20 of us and explained what a college course was about. We had a booklet with different courses and I chose Childcare. I go to Southwark, I like it because I'm meeting new people in a different community. We get treated like adults too, school is ok if you are in Year 7 and 8, but it's relaxed at college. I've had a lot of 1:1 support here. If I get my 5 GCSEs I want to do Sociology and Health and Social Care because I want to be a nurse or a midwife when I leave school.'

Year 11 pupils are involved in the 'Going for Gold' intervention programme. Diamond is for students targeted to achieve a minimum of 5+GCSEs at A*-C (everyone at the bottom end of the cohort). Gold is for the key marginal and platinum is for students on track to achieve a minimum of 5 GCSEs at A* including English and maths, pushing the A/A* percentage with gifted and talented pupils.

Systematic thorough monitoring of pupils' progress underpins the school's continued success in raising achievement, through their quality of teaching and pupils' involvement in their learning, to outstanding. The Principal of School F summed up his thoughts on inclusion:

'I do not think you can have a successful, high achieving school unless it's an inclusive school. In selective areas the success rates between those who just managed to pass the 11+ to get into a Grammar School and then failed to thrive and those that passed easily, varied widely. Inclusion costs, with pupil premium funding it would be disastrous. Whether we can sustain this in the future depend on the funding. Without it the most vulnerable pupils will suffer.'
(Principal)

At **School G** there is frequent use of achievement data to check the effectiveness of interventions. Careful monitoring of pupil performance and spending also involves a wide range of data and evidence. This includes achievement data, pupils' work, observations, the views of pupils and staff. Effective monitoring means that interventions and approaches can be changed and adapted quickly, if they are not working. The school report of 2013-2014 on the effectiveness of the school's strategies for supporting disadvantaged students confirmed that:

'The staff are aware that they key success for all pupils in ensuring that all the day to day teaching meets the needs of each learner rather than simply relying on interventions to compensate for teaching that is less good. Where more support is needed the school allocates the best teachers to teach intervention groups (for example, all Assistant Headteachers support GCSE English). All teaching staff are aware of who is eligible for pupil premium and this informs their planning. The school makes sure that support and the use of regular robust assessments which allow teachers to give students effective and termly feedback.' (**School G, Ofsted 2014**)

There was a general recognition at **School H** that as many pupils did not have independent learning skills that this would inevitably have a dramatic impact on KS4 and the possibility of going to University. In response to this, the school started the 'Learning to Learn' programme.

The Campaign for Learning promotes this as a process of discovery about learning and involves a set of skills that teaches pupils to be learners for life. At its heart is the belief that learning is learnable. It is based on a belief that lifelong learners are more likely to be happier, healthier, have better jobs, contribute more to society and live longer and more fulfilled lives.

There is a weekly lesson in KS3 classes which promotes the 5 attributes to becoming a lifelong independent learner. These are resilient, resourceful, responsible, reasoning, and reflective learning.

The focus in Year 7 is 'I learn…', how do I learn on my own, moving onto team learning, being a 21st century learner, communication skills. In Year 8 it is about being a peak performer- making the learning count, study skills.

The Maths and Science departments use Learning to Learn within their teaching. In Maths it is about being reflective.

> 'Our focus this year is to involve the heads of foundation subjects and see how it can be fitted into the foundation subjects and focus on which R for a particular year group. In Art for example there is a reflective log of learning.'*(Advanced Skill Teacher, School G)*

> 'This all fits in with the leading learners because the older pupils link with the younger pupils with their learning. There are reading partners, identifying ways to learn better, pupils reflecting on their CAT score- if I had done this I would have done even better. We are training leaders in learning to learn.' *(Advanced Skill Teacher, School G)*

School improvement strategies: *'In the last few years we have had an active focus on learning in school. This is consistent across the school.'* **(Deputy Headteacher, School G)**

There is a sustained focus on ensuring access to the curriculum for every pupil, whatever their background through scaffolding and differentiation. 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 in curriculum areas at the weekly team meetings where the learning of the pupils is discussed, especially in core subjects. *'We are keen to bring this microscopic view into the foundation subjects too.'*

Ofsted commented:

> 'All students make outstanding progress in a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics. Excellent achievement is based on students' quick acquisition of a wide range of valuable learning skills. These, which include the development of highly accomplished skills in literacy and numeracy, are central to the rapid progress they make in their learning.'
> (**Ofsted 2014, School G)**

Through weekly targets, teachers are focusing on pupil learning and constantly reviewing what they do in the classroom. 'Are they achieving? It might be pastoral, we have a system of referral and have a dialogue with pastoral staff about our more vulnerable pupils.'

> 'After every 6 weeks the Directors of Learning and teachers look at the eight classes of Year 7. Maybe X amount are underachieving - this is what the teacher has done, this is what we are going to do to raise achievement, these are the resources. Maybe we will give support before and after school- many pupils prefer this rather than in the lesson.' *(School H, Deputy Headteacher)*

There is now a big focus on Gifted and Talented pupils in the school. The Directors of Learning take account of children in this area and all Gifted and Talented pupils have IEPs which are monitored. Using data as a tool identifies any gaps in the learning of Gifted and Talented pupils which is discussed with the teacher, pupil and parents in order to consider interventions to raise achievement. To meet the needs of the Gifted and Talented pupils, the Mathematics department is running different programmes, such as an after school club to organise trips and to prepare pupils

for the UK Maths Challenge. One pupil was given the opportunity to attend a Maths Day, organised by UK Maths Challenge, which gave the pupil the opportunity to meet pupils from other countries.

A strong part of the school's identity is the range of academies on offer to its pupils which extend the curriculum and develop skills beyond the classroom. Examples of the academies are those for Writing, Drama, Science, Sports and Film . Pupils must apply for the academies and 'going through the interview process is part of the Business and Enterprise identity.'

Writing Academy: This new academy started well in October 2008. The standard of entry to the Academy is extremely high. So far the Academy has worked on writing reviews and analysing video clips. The Academy is now working on a school newspaper and poetry competition. Journalists from established newspapers will also visit the Academy. This Academy, like all academies is a real opportunity to develop skills beyond the classroom.' **(School H, Headteacher)**

New Science Academy projects**:** The Academy members have been doing model making and making hot air balloons. They have also constructed a volcano. Science competitions have developed through the school: the Recycling project has been a tremendous success. They have planned the Fast Track Project and a Debating Group to discuss contentious scientific issues.

The Academy has planned trips to Kings College in order to look at access to Medicine, Science and Health related careers**. (School H, Headteacher)**

Training School status: As part of its higher performing school status, the school has been developing school improvement training.

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

Some of the teachers have been doing their Masters Degrees 'in house' e.g. 'action research around the underachievement of Portuguese pupils and action research regarding the access of EAL pupils to Shakespeare in the curriculum.'

> *'We also offer foundation degrees in conjunction with Canterbury Christ Church University.'*
> *'Many TAs and HLTAs benefit from this in house training.'*

Many people are referred from the Stockwell Community Resource Centre to the school for a variety of training e.g. Family learning. 'They love coming here, it's like going to University!'

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

Staff have a clear approach to identify who are vulnerable children and they see each girl as an individual. A vulnerable pupil in the words of the Assistant Headteacher is 'one with a statement of special educational needs, English as an additional language, one on the Child Protection Register, pregnant, disabled, a serious medical condition, known gang membership or involved in criminal activity, low self-esteem and any form of mental illness. It also includes one whose family are experiencing breakdown, made homeless, involved in drug or alcohol abuse and one who is not

attending and who feels they do not want to be part of the school community or any pupil who is not happy, healthy or safe, not enjoying or achieving in school.'

For these vulnerable pupils the Assistant Headteacher highlighted the type of interventions and support that the school will offer

- provide support with transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3
- provide a pupil mentor
- help in forming friendships
- track academic progress of all vulnerable children
- help ensure entitlement to free school meals
- give access to advice on healthy eating, diet and exercise
- encourage access to homework clubs and use of the library
- encourage participation in extra-curricular activities, house events and assemblies
- carefully monitor attendance and work with Home School Liaison Officer
- support in choosing GCSE options
- arrange individual interview with Careers Officer
- provide learning mentor support in Year 11
- provide support in moving from Key Stage 4 to the next stage
- make regular communication and meetings with parents/guardians
- do whatever is necessary to access outside agencies or in school support as appropriate
- use appropriate behaviour intervention strategies, education psychology reports, internal exclusion, and parental meetings as needed. **(Assistant Headteacher, School I)**

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

At **School C**, pupils' progress is closely monitored termly at meetings led by the deputy head, with the SENCo and the class teacher. Within these meetings the views of phase leaders about how children are progressing are also considered and an evaluation is made of what has worked and what hasn't. Data on the impact of interventions is recorded and is shared with parents, staff and governors.

With regard to subject specific interventions, the Headteacher commented:

> *'What we know from our own experience of the School C context, we take into account. The Sutton Trust tool kit is used to identify key approaches that come within our resources and what would work for us. Marking of children's books is a priority. Our marking is manageable and teachers mark extremely well. Formative assessment is outstanding. Our TAs are actively involved in making observations of pupils' learning and recording them on post-its, which gives teachers' feedback within the lesson.'*

School D has achieved its ambition to have every child reading and writing independently and having a mastery of number appropriate to his/her age. Support is targeted early from EYFS and this has resulted in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check outcomes to be above national average. Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting children in small groups, individually in EYFS and in both key

stages. Roles are flexible with some TAs teaching phonics, number masters, taking story time with the whole class and carrying out administrative tasks. Others run breakfast and after school clubs.

Improving pupils' health has led the leadership to successfully bid for School D to become one of the four pilot schools with high numbers of pupils who have FSM to receive sponsorship from Nike's 'Move it' programme which provides physical activities (with sports coaches) for all pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The school's intervention and targeted support strategies are effective because they are driven by pupils' academic, emotional and social needs. As a result of high quality teaching and learning, effective tailored, individual support the school closed the attainment gap. Ofsted noted:

> *'The school is highly successful in closing any gaps in the attainment and progress of pupils. Those who are eligible for the pupil premium, for example, achieve at least as well as all other pupils in the school and better than similar pupils nationally.'* **(Ofsted 2012, School D**)

Effective use of data

One of the core elements of the case study 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 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 and a level 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, Fischer Family Trust (FFT) and national data from RAISE online. 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 is also used in the school effectively to review pupils' setting and teaching groups and this has 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.' (Teacher)*

> *'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.' (Teacher)*

> *'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.'(EAL teacher)*

The use of performance data for school improvement is a strength of **School A**. Data is used as a driver for raising achievement and central for school self-evaluation and to draw up action plans.

The school has a well-developed pupil tracking system and it has detailed phonics, FSP, KS1 and KS2 and non-statutory assessment data followed by background data such as ethnic background, language spoken at home, EAL stage of fluency, SEN, mobility rate, free school meals, class attended, attendance rate and type of support. In addition the school also uses a wide range of data including LA data, RAISE online and FFT for monitoring performance and setting challenging targets.

The successful use of data owes much to the Headteacher and head of school. They are both responsible for monitoring trends, results and analysis of how the school performed in relation to similar schools and the national average. Comparisons are made in all curriculum areas and by groups of pupils. The senior management team supports and challenges teachers to raise the performance of every pupil. Teachers are held accountable for the results and progress of every pupil and this helps to sharpen the focus to raise achievement. They are expected to identify and monitor progress of individual pupils who are underachieving. The school is particularly proud of its approach in monitoring the performance of all groups of pupils and this is widely discussed at the achievement committee and the governing body meetings. It uses the data to identify individual strengths and areas of development.   This was clearly noted during the interview with the chair of governors, the Headteacher and the head of school and in discussion with teachers, the inclusion manager and TAs:

> *'High quality assessment data, tracking and target setting procedures for individuals and groups of pupils are the key feature in our school'* **(Head of School, School A)**

> *'We look at the LA data, RAISE Online and school produced data very carefully to track individual pupil's performance and progress. Data lead us to the type of questions we need to ask. It has also helped us to set targets and plan strategies***' (chair of governors, School A)**

> *'We have high expectations. We want most of the children to achieve 3 levels of progress. We also have children who can make 4 levels of progress***' (Headteacher, School A)**

> *'Progress of groups of pupils is carefully tracked and almost all groups make outstanding progress overall in this highly inclusive school.' (Ofsted 2012, School A)*

The chair of governors also gave a detailed picture of school achievement and how the data is used in the school. She confirmed that:-

> *' The school data shows a strong picture of achievement at School A, including bucking the national trends around the achievement of boys, summer born children, FSM and pupil premium pupils and BME pupils in some years groups'*
> *'At KS2 girls do better than boys in reading and writing, all ethnic groups do well and no gap between FSM and non FSM. PP pupil do better than non-FSM.' (chair of governors, School A)*

We would suggest that this school is somewhat unique and has a chair of governors who is forensic in the use and analysis of data, with excellent knowledge of national education policy development and issues with first-hand experience working in the area. The school performance has been thoroughly discussed at the achievement committee and with the Headteacher and teachers. Our observations suggest that the governing body are excellent in challenging and supporting the Headteacher, the head of school and SMT. They carefully monitor the impact of the school's work in raising achievement and rigorously hold the school leaders and managers to account through effective use of data. The GB discuss extensively what the data tells about the school performance including the interventions strategies and the impact of the strategies the school has put in place to improve performance of particular groups listed above. The discussion has led to some new challenging targets for the school. What is remarkable in this school are the words of the chair of

governors *'the data is read and used in the context and focuses on where the school could look to make further improvements. The school endeavours to go beyond outstanding.'*

Interviews with the Headteacher, the head of school, classroom teachers, inclusion managers, and TAs and learning mentors also suggested that the school is rigorous in assessing all pupils and teachers look at the data carefully. The school uses data to track pupil progress, set targets, identify underachieving pupils for further support and inform teaching.

> *'Teachers make effective use of data to evaluate quality of provision and to identify and support for differentiated groups of pupils.'* **(School A, Head of School)**

> *'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.'* **(Inclusion manager)**

> *'Careful use of data, rigorous monitoring in lessons and regular tracking ensure that any variance in progress is tackled quickly.'* **(Ofsted 2012, School A)**

The extent to which they make progress is evident not only in the data shown above, but also in a number of discussions we had with the assistant Headteacher (inclusion), teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and the leadership team. The impact of targeted support in raising achievement can be clearly seen from the examples of outstanding practice and case study outlined below:

Child C Case Study: Child C is an EAL child arriving into School A in Year 1 with little English; Portuguese speaking. Parents also had developed little English. SATs results: maths level 5, reading level and grammar, punctuation and spelling level 4. The following targeted support was provided to the EAL child which was effective to raise achievement:

- New arrivals policy adhered to with settling in phase and learning mentor support
- In class EAL support program and resourcing, such as dual language dictionaries
- Differentiation from class teachers monitored by Senior Management Team (SMT)
- Teachers working with inclusion manager to develop differentiated resources and planning to support learning
- Visual resources to support learning
- Talk for writing
- Clear tracking of progress and monitoring via provisions mapping

Child D Case Study: Child D is a more able pupil and was at School A from reception, achieving level 5 in all areas. The child was supported with the following additional targeted support:

- Challenge area in foundation stage
- Challenge boxes in all classes
- Extension of learning via effective marking policy and Green Pen Questions
- Peer learning and sharing ideas
- Differentiation on planning and monitoring from SMT
- Master classes at linked secondary school
- Booster from deputy head for more able
- Booster from class teacher to 'close the gap'
- Additional homework targeting level 5

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.

Effective support for English as an additional language

As all the case study schools serve a linguistically diverse community, support for EAL is a significant 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 is very 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 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.

Due to the significantly high numbers of EAL pupils at **School D,** EAL teaching principles inform classroom pedagogy and are incorporated into lessons. These include the use of talk partners, sentence starters, speaking frames, collaborative working strategies etc. The impact has been that the achievement of EAL pupils is considerably better than their peers nationally.

Teaching strategies to engage EAL learners have been carefully planned in all the case study schools. It is very evident that in all schools EAL is not an 'add on', but is seen as an advantage and considered within every aspect of school life.

As one Headteacher commented:

> *'EAL is not a barrier but a bonus' and another 'as staff we don't see it as a challenge, we see it as an opportunity ….we have all these EAL children, what a wonderful opportunity to share our languages and our culture … EAL permeates everything we do.'*

Examples given were:

- using the 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.

At **School A,** all teachers are trained to know how to support pupils with EAL in the classroom. The inclusion manager explains how this works:

> *'Our termly provision mapping meetings for each child guarantees that they all have access to adequate resources to meet their learning needs. The provision maps indicate EAL stages, SEN, able and talented, vulnerable children and the support they will receive.'* (**Inclusion Manager, School A**)

In order to meet the individual needs of pupils the school has developed exceptionally strong, committed teaching assistants and learning mentors and draws on a wide range of external multi-agency professionals.

At **School B**, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) work with pupils with EAL on sentence structure, spelling and punctuation. They attend pupil progress meetings. One commented: 'We may have them for a year or just a few weeks. We start the year with a child 1:1 and then the TA comes in with them to observe what we are doing so they can support the child in the classroom. Ofsted recognised the excellent support provided by staff in the inclusion team: 'Highly skilled support and excellent resources for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, help these pupils to make excellent progress.' (**Ofsted 2013, School B**)

In a research interview, at **School H** the EAL Co-ordinator said that the school keeps a register of all children with EAL needs by year group and that the school is very good at tracking the performance of EAL children. This register records their name, sex, date of birth, date on roll, SEN, family origins, home language/s, their stage of English fluency (LA assessment scales) by each year throughout their school career and attainment and test results. This information is updated once a term. All form teachers are given this information so that they have an up to date picture of their pupils' EAL stage. There is an expectation that they will use this information in their target setting for individual children during independent activities. Strategies might include talk partners and speaking frames to reflect their level of fluency. Teachers could incorporate language structures into their planning- e.g. for stage 1 speakers, key words; for stage 2 speakers, a fuller response and for stage 3/4 an academic language response. These features are starting to be built into teachers' planning.

At School H there is comprehensive support for pupils with EAL. When a new EAL pupil arrives at the school an assessment is done within two weeks. They are then tracked to monitor their progress and their levels of English and targets are adjusted accordingly. This is in reading/speaking/listening and is modified depending on the child. This informs what group the child should go in to. If they are a level but have a strong academic background in their own language then they will go into 7A or 7B. Pupils are withdrawn for English support between 1 and 4 periods a week depending on their level of English. This does not stop, although it might lessen if they have a strong background which is helping them to make good academic gains. The children are tracked and then picked up again in Key Stage 4 where there is a focus on academic language ahead of GCSEs 'more sophisticated tenses, different language, extending vocabulary etc. They might be at stage 3 but they need to start using the academic language.' (EAL Co-ordinator). There are IEPs for pupils on stage 3 which recognises the need to support them to access the academic language of the KS4 curriculum. All teachers differentiate for EAL children in the school but appreciate that the language focus will benefit all children regardless of EAL needs.

There is in-class support which focuses on the core subjects from qualified EAL staff.

There is also pre-teaching in English lessons which gives them a head start when they start their lessons. '*They can go on to get a 'C'. We also give them any lunchtime or after school help that they might need. We also encourage the EAL children to read a book a week and encourage the use of a thesaurus. We send them away to watch the news and then ask them to summarise.' (**EAL Co-ordinator, School H)***

An Assistant Headteacher reiterated this:

> '*I can see an individual child make progress in one lesson if you throw them into a Year 7 lesson with collaborative learning. With the visual, media, drama and arts they learn to interact, as well as learn a new language. Teachers group them carefully.'*

The Somali children are now the top achievers in the school with 71% 5+ A*-C.

Ofsted affirmed the school's successful provision for pupils who speak EAL:

> '*Students who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress because they are helped by teachers specialising in teaching English as a foreign language. One student, speaking fluently to the inspectors, said that, 'before I came to this school I could not speak English, now look at me.' (**Ofsted 2014, School H)***

At School E, the school uses three teaching assistants who are designated EAL assistants for part of their time. All have developed an understanding of EAL pedagogy through attending whole school training and addition specialist training by an EAL Consultant to deliver intervention programmes, designed to develop the more academic language for EAL children – Talking Maths and guided

writing units for children with EAL. They join weekly team meetings after school, reporting back and contributing to planning. Whilst working in classrooms, they emphasised their role in helping children to apply their learning from the group work and in modelling and supporting children to use the key vocabulary and sentences starters, rephrasing questions and supporting them to structure responses. They explained that it is now '*an automatic process – we know what is needed, so we embed it automatically.*' They work with class teachers to model language and activities for example, hot-seating. The school recognises that the children move quite quickly from fluency stage 1 to a secure stage 2, after which children sometimes need additional support to develop the more demanding 'language for learning'. One teaching assistant delivers the 'Talking Maths' programme, which develops the use and understanding of the language in maths and two deliver the guided writing units focusing on grammatical issues for EAL Learners. The work in these group sessions is clearly linked to class work and close liaison with the class teachers ensures they are constantly encouraging the children to apply their learning in class. Detailed systems are in place which require the teaching assistants to assess, plan, record, monitor and evaluate teaching and impact.   Both teaching assistants commented on how the small group work develops the children's oral confidence and how '*they take it back to the classroom and apply it. You can see it in class. The children really think about what they are saying in class.*' The examples below illustrate the impact of their work.

Child E Case study: Child E arrived at the beginning of Year 1, speaking no English. The teacher believes that the class teaching strategies, especially the speaking and listening, supported both the child's development of English and the curriculum, enhanced by parental support. By the Spring term of Year 2 the child was achieving levels 2b in reading and writing and a 2c in maths. She had been identified as a child who has no conceptual difficulties in maths, but who had difficulty understanding subject-specific vocabulary and talking about maths, especially explaining her thinking and reasoning. As a result she is now participating in the Talking Maths intervention to support her through consolidating, extending and applying the mathematical language, needed in class. The class teacher commented that after participation 'the children are much more confident in understanding when on the carpet and they can get straight on with the task. One child in particular is much more coherent when explaining how to solve a problem.'

Another common feature of the strategies for raising EAL achievement in School E is also the intelligent use of assessment data, progress-tracking, target setting and targeted support for pupils who might be slipping behind. Every EAL pupil is expected and encouraged to achieve their full potential by teachers. These high expectations are underpinned by the effective use of data to pinpoint underachievement and target additional EAL support. This can be seen from the following case studies of remarkable pupils with EAL who were identified as having no or little English when they started in the school, but despite barriers in the English language have been successful:

Child F Case Study: Child F came to School E 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 the more academic language. Her KS2 results confirmed that she attained level 4 in English and level 5 in the maths test.

> ***Child G Case study:*** *Child G came to Britain from Poland with no English. He speaks Polish at home. He was at beginner stage 1 level of fluency when he was assessed in KS1 as a 'W' in reading and writing and 1 in maths. With additional EAL support his levels of English fluency improved to stage 3 where he needed only some support by the end of 2011. Child B is one of the fastest improving pupils with EAL at KS2 and his test result shows he achieved level 4 in English and level 5 in mathematics. This is an excellent achievement for a child with no English at the time he joined the school.*
>
> ***Child H Case study:*** *Child H joined the school Nursery with no English. He speaks Urdu at home. His KS1 results showed that he achieved 2A in reading, writing and maths. With additional EAL support his levels of English fluency improved to stage 4 fully fluent by the time he started Year 6. Child C is one of the high performing pupils with EAL at KS2 and his test result shows he achieved level 5 in English and mathematics. This is again remarkable progress for a child with little English when he joined the school.*

Inclusive curriculum

School A's website states that 'the aim of all those at School A is to ensure that the curriculum offered to the children is not only fun and enjoyable. The school has continued to develop its own rich and diverse, creative curriculum over the last three years; it has been a work in progress as the Head of school describes: 'One of the first things we did to improve the curriculum was to work hard to develop our subject leaders. We decided to do away with QCA schemes because they are too restrictive and now plan using the National Curriculum documents. We bring the whole school together with a particular theme or topic. We teach Maths, English, Science and ICT separately but use the themes to support those subjects too. As much as possible, we link the teaching and learning of subjects together through a common theme or topic. We look at our children and we ask what do our children need to learn about?' How can we encourage girls and boys? Our creative curriculum changes each year because we evaluate and see how effective our curriculum is. This way of working allows teachers to become more creative. We also link our homework to the whole school theme so families become involved.'

Teachers are enthusiastic about its impact on the children: 'The curriculum offers so much flexibility in what I can do in the classroom. I can ask the children what we could do and because they are involved they take so much enjoyment from it. I can see evidence of their achievement.' The school logo says 'Excellence together with our community' in the belief that it is with the 'partnership between parents and staff' that the children will be able to develop into 'well rounded individuals'. Parents can access 'curriculum guides' each term for each class from EYFS to Year 6, which outline the creative curriculum and homework projects. The school's innovative and exciting partnership with London Music Masters, through The Bridge Project (which has spanned six years) has contributed to the excellence of the school's curriculum. The Bridge Project is an educational initiative which identifies and nurtures young children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in classical music. The Project encourages children, their families and communities to develop a life-long appreciation for classical music in all its varied forms. Pupils at School A have therefore had a range of unique opportunities and experiences including performing at the Royal Festival Hall. They receive music tuition and participate in various musical workshops and performances throughout the school year.

The rich and diverse curriculum provides many memorable experiences and brings learning to life by linking topic themes creatively between subjects. Boys' writing has greatly improved by developing their skills in contexts they find engaging. Whole school topics cover EYFS to Year 6 which the EYFS

team leader views as being a very positive feature. She says: 'The EYFS in many schools are in their own little bubble… here we feel more included in the whole school and so do the children. It motivates them. From my point of view it really makes a difference.'

The creative curriculum was praised in **School A's** Ofsted report:

> *'The creative curriculum offers a very broad range of themed activities which are developed extremely well with contributions from pupils. Consequently, the school provides rich and memorable experiences for pupils that prepare them exceptionally well for their next steps in learning. There are many excellent opportunities through the curriculum and in assemblies to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The diversity of the school is celebrated and pupils are encouraged to consider other faiths and cultures through projects such as Our Heritage…. A very wide range of well-attended after-school clubs provides many opportunities for sports, arts and music activities.' (Ofsted 2012)*

Black History Month is built reflectively into the curriculum in the autumn term and covers influential people and groups, e.g. in Nursery there are Stories from Africa, Reception: Stories from America – the Obamas, Year 1: Ride to Freedom - Rosa Parks, Yr. 2 Amazing Adventures of Mary Seacole, Year 3 Blast from the past WW2 (children's viewpoints), Year 4 Aboriginal Australia - artists, Year 5: Windrush - influential people and Year 6 From Apartheid to Peace – Nelson Mandela.

There is an exhibition of children's work twice per year to which parents are invited. Classes are timetabled to view each year group's work in the exhibition and this helps them to understand what is expected of them as they progress through the school. Homework is also included in the exhibition which later goes on display at the local Library.

School B believes that they can most successfully offer deep learning experiences to their children through a broad and balanced curriculum which provides children with fulfilling and challenging experiences. The leadership considers that:

> *'foundation subjects provide the ideal forum for giving children real, multi-sensory experiences that excite and inspire them to apply their learning in the core subjects in creative and individual ways… we aim to raise the status of these subjects while continuing to provide a rigorous education in the core subjects.'*

Ofsted took the view that*: 'Subjects and topics contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment in learning and allow them to develop their talents. They are creative, lively, appealing and capture pupils' curiosity about the world around them, allowing pupils to achieve highly. There are many rich learning experiences including working alongside professional artists and musicians. A recent Global Art Day resulted in outstanding art work by pupils of all ages.' (Ofsted 2014, School B)*

The deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Standards and the Curriculum explains how the innovative and creative curriculum has been developed:

> *'We have personalised the curriculum and arts, we took the initiative before the government! It was quite challenging for some people. Three years ago as a group we visited a school in Norfolk; we looked at what we were doing well but considered how we could make it more interesting and challenging. It hasn't stood still; we revised it again a year ago. We have looked at the way we structure history and we take on board what our teachers say, what children enjoy, obviously assessment and what the government says….but I think the structures are fairly simple. We make sure our subject leaders meet together and it has strengthened our humanities and arts teaching. We teach English, maths and science discretely. It has emphasised the areas of the curriculum that are not tested. It is about*

taking back some power from the standards and assessment agenda… developing the curriculum felt very empowering. It felt quite brave.' (**School B, Deputy Headteacher**)

The subject areas covered and the expectations for progression in knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects are taken from the National Curriculum. However, the range of pedagogies suggested for making learning exceptional draw on the expertise of the federation's team of ASTs and all their outstanding teachers; they are research-based and have been adapted in-house to meet the needs of the children at School B and the federation schools. Curriculum project work is planned to provide children with opportunities to progress in key learning and thinking skills: to explain, question, investigate, discover, invent, apply, create, predict, prove, solve problems and collaborate.

Detailed guidance is provided for teachers for the planning, marking and presentation of curriculum projects, in order to ensure rigour and equality of provision for pupils. Templates are provided to support teachers in their planning and examples are given as additional guidance. Impressive portfolios with samples of pupils' work in each year group, which have been levelled and marked to provide examples of the range and quality of work expected.

Ofsted acknowledge the richness of the curriculum in the following statement: 'A highly creative and rich range of subjects and topics allows pupils to develop their talents, especially in art, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very strongly.'

Teachers at **School D** have developed a broad, balanced and imaginative curriculum and were proactive in incorporating the revised National Curriculum into their plans well before the implementation date. A curriculum map identifies foundation subjects to be taught through topics and presents a well-structured learning journey for pupils from Year 1-Year 6. The Humanities co-ordinator has taken a leading role in curriculum development and has produced exciting materials for Black History Month which feature local and National 'heroes' or role models, people from the West Indies and Africa who have made a significant contribution to life in Britain.

Core subjects are taught systematically and the school has pioneered its own approach to the teaching of phonics and numeracy. Phonics teaching is rigorous and is taught for 25 minutes per day to children in years 1 and 2. Because of the success of this programme (taught by teachers and Instructional leaders) the school has introduced Number Masters, targeting the same pupils, who are taught in small groups for 15 minutes every day to ensure that their engagement with numbers is intensive and consistent.

Teachers talk with enthusiasm about their approach to the curriculum and try to make lessons exciting and relevant to the children.

> *'We used to use the Creative Learning Journey so people could become imaginative – especially in maths as it starts to make sense to children when you use real-life situations … we did a great maths shop last year… each class came up with things they could make and sell, sandwiches, fruit shops, each class had a stall. The rest of the school came around and bought things!'*

Making the connections between subjects is another strength and examples of how drama was incorporated into work on food-chains in science e.g. children played the part of bees pollinating flowers.

Children benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of interest. Because of the location of the school and the excellent range of partnerships which have been established, pupils are able to perform at the Royal Festival Hall and the Young Vic and capitalise on visits to Tate Modern and events at the South Bank.

With regard to the curriculum offered at **School H** in 2008 Ofsted noted:

> *'The quality of the curriculum for students working below the attainment for their age is outstanding.'*

The school has Supported Curriculum classes, where pupils are taught in smaller groups, mainly by one teacher. These groups are usually single gendered, with boys in classes of around 16 and girls in classes of around 20. These pupils spend the majority of their time with one teacher. Teaching Assistants are deployed in these classes to support learning. Many of the teachers teaching in these classes are primary trained or have a primary school background and the pedagogy employed has much in common with primary practice. This classroom arrangement also provides emotional stability for pupils, which may be particularly important for groups of pupils who may have experienced trauma and difficult circumstances. The Ofsted inspection report also confirmed that:

> *'The supported curriculum provided at KS3 enables students working below expected levels to catch up quickly. Students who are placed in the supported curriculum from year 7 work predominantly with one teacher to allow for a smoother transition from the primary phase.'* **(Ofsted 2008, School H)**

The success of the school's approach can be measured by the following comment on the curriculum from a recent inspection:

> *'A broad and balanced curriculum provides a wide range of academic and extra-curricular courses. The school is moving to an increasingly academic approach which has resulted in many more students choosing to take humanities and language courses for their GCSEs.'* **(Ofsted 2014, School H)**

There is also a diverse curriculum on offer to pupils. 14 - 19 meets a variety of needs and there is the BTEC first diploma – Sales and Marketing. There are different varieties of BTECs and the school offers up to 4 GCSEs in Science.

At the end of each unit, pupils and parents complete an evaluation form on the resources, internet site and learning styles.

> '*We try to promote independent learning. All of the BTEC courses have a work-related element. Much of the principle learning is done at Lambeth College. A Business Tracker focuses on how every subject is enhanced with Business and Enterprise skills.'* **(School H Assistant Headteacher**)

The pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 follow a Business and Enterprise inspired course called Portfolio for Life. This portfolio provides pupils with a vehicle for development for skills for life. All pupils will compile a portfolio during their time at school, giving them a unique record of their achievement and business and enterprise learning.

> '*The portfolio is our way of ensuring that all pupils get a GCSE in Business and it promotes independent learning. It is the chance to leave school with a recognised GCSE.'* **(Assistant Headteacher, School H)**

> '*We have a set of programmes that we have written in house.- discrete subjects. An example is 'Possibilities' aimed at Year 7- what they want to achieve in school and the options they might take.'* **(Assistant Headteacher, School H)**

School G, like the other case study schools, is situated in an area of inner city London which experiences considerable challenges from issues connected to 'relative poverty'. Barriers to learning that have arisen within this context in the past have been lack of confidence and subsequently

aspiration; lack of parental engagement; difficulties with completing homework due to lack of personal space; lack of engagement with opportunities to widen experience beyond school through curriculum enrichment activities, trips and visits. This was further stated by the Headteacher:

> *'Many parents do not have a tradition in, or understanding of the UK school and higher education systems, creating a sense of 'inaccessibility' to both pupils and their families.'*
> **(Headteacher, School G)**

To provide the necessary support for pupils to access what is available beyond the school, **School G** has put the following in place:

- Scholarship Programme to promote excellence, to prepare pupils for the rigour of A level study and provide appropriate support to enable successful applications to the top universities regardless of their background As part of this Programme pupils are allocated a school tutor and an external mentor.
- Appointment of additional support agencies on site, including a school counsellor, family support worker, multi-agency link worker and youth worker.
- The Sister Circle project which equips young people in preparing for further education or the workplace.
- Russell Group programme for pupils in Years 10-13 run by an external careers consultant. Pupils are mentored and tracked from Year 10 to support their career and university aspirations.
- Increased the number of visits and trips on offer to pupils, including residential visits to Cern, Iceland, Berlin, Rome, New York, Barcelona, Lake District, and World War One Battlefields to enhance their learning potential.

School C uses an enquiry led approach to the curriculum to ensure subjects are taught within a unifying theme. This allows them to provide pupils with a more meaningful, rich and exciting array of classroom experiences, that relate, inspire and enthuse young learners' imagination. The versatile 'teacher led, pupil driven' approach allows the school to respond to pupils interests within a topic and adapt them around current events and local community projects that provide relevance and real life contexts.

Topics start with, for example, the following questions: How do you become a Superhero? What was it like to be a Saxon settler? Would an alien wear underpants? The journey of a cocoa bean? What makes an invention worth investing in? Can you make your own Aztec woven bag? How did it feel to be a passenger on the Windrush? How does a windmill work? These are only some of the exciting questions pupils have been asking and exploring at School C. To bring these topics to life and capture pupils' imagination teachers use techniques such as outdoor lessons, educational visits, theatre trips, dress-up days, hands-on 'explorer' lessons, 'expert into school' days, parent workshops and show days.

Recent changes in the National Curriculum have been used to enhance and update all topic based units with new themes, resources and learning outcomes. The school has been making as many natural links to subjects as possible and teaching cross curricular skills in unison such as detailed map-design from a visit to the local Brixton Windmill, Ashby Mill, whilst in maths learning co-ordinates and scales.

Key skills in union with subject knowledge provide a balanced, yet far more hands on approach to exploratory learning, which provides enthusiastic, memorable learning opportunities. The school's aim is that this approach not only stimulates enhanced communication opportunities and problem-solving skills, but embeds the love of learning for the rest of the children's lives.

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 it's Headteacher from having an effective governing body.

At **School A**, 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.'* ***(School A, chair of governors)***

At **School D** 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.'* ***(School D, chair of governors)***

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

The assistant Headteacher of **School H** acknowledges the strengths of their governing body:

> '*In the case of this school, the role of the governors has been crucial. Their vision of what they want for the school has been clear all along the journey. Their development planning has been clear, lucid, simple and everyone has bought into it. They make decisions and explain why - they are transparent.'* (**Assistant Head**)

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 importance part of the education business.* ***(School governor, School H)***

> *'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 successes.* ***(School governor, School H)***

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.

Effective use of pupil voice and feedback

The case study schools have established a culture where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and well-being. Research has shown that children and young people who participate in decision-making enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation, gain important personal, social and organisational skills, and become familiar with group and democratic processes. At the organisational level, pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies and better learning. In case study schools it is clear from a pupil's comment below, that children's views are listened to and taken on board.

The pupils interviewed at **School G** came from a diverse range of heritage groups and languages spoken included French, Italian, Spanish, Lingala, Twi and Yoruba in addition to English. Some had been born in London, others abroad but all were fully fluent in English. We asked them about their choice of subjects they would like to study at University when they finished their secondary education, and they responded as follows:

> *'I would like to go to Oxbridge to study mechanical engineering and physics'*
> *'I like Oxbridge and Russell Group. I would like to study astrophysics'*
> *'I would like to study law and would like to go to Exeter University'*
> I want to study medicine at Oxford'*
> *'I want to study English at Cambridge University. English is my favourite subject'*
> *'I want to study Arabic and would like to study at SOAS'.*

The pupils were asked about how much help or support do you get for your school work from home? The majority commented that they get much help and targeted support from school but not from home. One commented that:

> *'I do it myself, I am quite independent'*. Others said *'my dad helps me and he is good in physics',* and another said '*my mum helps me in biology and chemistry. She is good in these subjects.'*

In the school's outstanding Ofsted inspection report (2013), inspectors commented:

> *'Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in high attendance. When asked how good they believed the school to be on a scale of one to ten, a group of students responded with scores between nine point nine and ten. Time in school before the start of the school day is used well for breakfast and use of the new library, which offers good access to computer facilities and adult support for learning.'*

We asked a pupil focus group at **School I's** the same questions 'what is special about your school?'

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

> *'Good support is available for students in our school. They go all the way to support you'*
> *'We are encouraged to aim high and we are supported to achieve it'*

'Our school is ambitious and helps us to achieve our dreams. We all want to achieve both academically and in social life'
'This school prepares you for life in addition to academic successes'
'There are a lot of curriculum activities that motivate you in this school'
'They give us opportunities to broaden our experience and travel to other educational places and institutions to learn'
'This is a good school- the teachers care'
'Teachers in this school teach well and help you'
'The teachers push you- you can take GCSE Maths early'
'They help us to achieve beyond expectations'

As part of pupil voice focus group at **School A** we asked five pupils from year 5 and 6, what do you like best about the school? What is special about your school? They pointed out during the interview and focus group discussion how much they enjoy coming to school and also expressed how proud they are about how well they are doing at the school. They also gave a number of reasons why the school is a special school and outstanding including:-

'You always learn new things'
'Our school is special because we have someone to play with – we have friendship buddies'
'They ask us how we feel about stuff because everyone in the school is different'
'Our school is special because they always encourage us with outstanding behaviour'
'The school is welcoming'
'Teachers in this school teach well and help you'
'We are encouraged to aim high and we are supported to achieve it'

Twelve pupils from Years 3 – 6 at **School D** also responded to the question **why is your school special?**
'Teachers respect you and you get lots of education'.
'We have buddies if you are new; someone shows you around the school and looks after you to make sure you have some friends'
'If teachers see you are struggling, they do the lesson the next day so you can learn'.
'You get chance to speak about what you have done'
'We get to take part in loads of competitions, the Primary School of the Year and football competitions'
'Teachers are strict and firm'
''The teachers are very good'
'If you really need help you get it from adults'
'Every day you get to learn something different in classes.' (School D)

Over the pupil voice and comments demonstrated both their enjoyment of school and the support from their families. They were proud of their schools and staff and were happy and enthusiastic and felt secure at their schools. They are confident, articulate and accomplished learners. There is a buzz of learning in the school and pupils take genuine delight to mastering new skills. There is also strong evidence that schools are using the feedback for targeted support to secure improvement.

Summary and Conclusions

This research project has been undertaken to investigate how schools have helped pupils to achieve high standards and to identify significant common themes for success in raising achievement. It draws lessons from good practice research carried out in inner city outstanding schools.

Overall the case study schools' data shows that from their generally low starting points, pupils reach exceptionally high standards. All schools achieved remarkable results for all their pupils, far exceeding national average benchmarks at the end of Key Stage 2 and GCSE. The research identified the following success factors for driving school improvement:

- **Leadership and management**: All schools demonstrate 'outstanding' leadership by the headteacher and senior management teams. Each is supported by a committed team of teachers. Leaders are described as 'inspirational' and 'visionary'. Each has a strong moral drive for pupils to succeed whatever their background. The headteachers of schools in the case study schools are intrinsically motivated to sustain excellence. Descriptions such as 'brave', 'pioneering' and 'courageous' sum up the qualities of leadership expressed by their colleagues. All are strongly focused on developing further the highest possible standards and achievement. In each of these schools there is a culture of high expectations and no excuses, collaboration with colleagues and close links with parents/carers and the community. The picture that has emerged is of schools which, while focused on their pupils and communities, are alert to the need to not only appoint high-quality staff but also to add to their repertoire of skills to sustain their interest, motivation and effectiveness. The depth and extent of teamwork, openness in sharing practice, and interest in providing new and exciting stimuli for children's learning all contribute to these schools as real learning communities.There is an exceptional sense of teamwork across each school which is reflected in the consistent and committed way managers at all levels work toward the schools' aims to raise achievement.

- **Effective Governing Body**: Evidence suggests that the governing bodies are excellent in challenging and supporting the executive headteachers, the heads of schools and SMT. They carefully monitor the impact of the school's work in raising achievement and rigorously hold school leaders and managers to account through effective use of data. The governing bodies discuss extensively what the data tells them about the schools' performance including the interventions strategies and the impact of the strategies the school has put in place to improve performance of particular groups of children. These discussions have led to new challenging targets for one school in particular.

  What is remarkable in this school are the words of their chair of governors: *'The data is read and used in the context and focuses on where the school could look to make further improvements. The school endeavours to go beyond outstanding.'*

- **High Quality Teaching and Learning:** There are high levels of rigour and consistency in all schools. There is also a lot of support, for example inexperienced teachers are paired with outstanding teachers or work with parallel year groups of colleagues across a federation to plan high quality lessons. Collaborative planning, marking and the moderation of pupils' work are other important features which offer support and challenge to teachers. Ofsted commented on the teaching in schools, as follows:

  *'Teaching is outstanding. Pupils are highly motivated in lessons because tasks and explanations are matched exceptionally well to their needs.' **(Ofsted)***

  *'One key feature of the high achievement is outstanding teaching. This includes 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.' **(Ofsted)***

Teachers are continually encouraged to take responsibility for improving their teaching. The high investment in their ongoing training is paying huge dividends, as seen by the high quality of many lessons as observed by Ofsted. Teachers capture the pupils' enthusiasm and make them want to succeed because they show how much they enjoy their teaching.

- **Innovative Curriculum:** As confident organisations, the case study schools weigh up curriculum initiatives and local and national programmes before deciding whether they are right for the school, not being afraid to dispense with them if they are not. Common to all schools is the way in which they understand the needs of their pupils and shape the curriculum to match them very closely. They place great emphasis on achieving very high standards in the core skills and enrich these through a creative and innovative approach to the curriculum. Curriculum project work is planned to provide children with opportunities to progress in key learning and thinking skills: to explain, question, investigate, discover, invent, apply, create, predict, prove, solve problems and collaborate. Homework is often linked to this project work.

  Children benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of interest. Because of the location of the schools and the excellent range of partnerships which have been established, pupils are able to perform at the Royal Festival Hall and the Young Vic and capitalise on visits to Tate Modern and other events at the South Bank. An example of innovation is the exciting partnership established with the London Music Masters, through The Bridge Project which has contributed to the excellence of one school's curriculum. The Bridge Project is an educational initiative which identifies and nurtures young children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in classical music. Children have a range of unique opportunities and experiences including performing at the Royal Festival Hall. They receive music tuition and participate in various musical workshops and performances throughout the school year.

- **Targeted Intervention and Support:** Each school provides high quality targeted support and intervention through the effective use of teaching assistants and HLTAs to support children with additional needs, pupils with EAL, more able and any underachieving groups or individuals. Highly skilled teaching assistants work very effectively alongside classroom teachers. They provide seamless and valuable support both in class and by working with small groups and individuals. Very rigorous checking of pupils' learning leads to effective 'pinpoint' teaching of specific skills. Where additional support is required, it is extremely well matched to pupils' needs. All groups of pupils do exceptionally well and make excellent progress from their starting point.

- **Inclusion:** The schools all place emphasis on the importance of early intervention in the case of children who require extra help. These needs are identified in the Children's Centre or Nursery and support is targeted at the outset.   The work of the inclusion teams is expertly co-ordinated, and efficiently managed to provide unusually high levels of support for individual pupils: *'it has allowed us to buy in speech and language and occupational therapy, a CAMHS worker, music therapist, and two reading recovery teachers. It's not that these resources in themselves make a difference but it is the way it is managed and led and shared across the federation.'*

- **Parental engagement:** All case study schools have strong links to their community. The schools encouraged and valued the active involvement of parents in their children's education and communication is a major strength. they have used resourcefulness in

employing specialists who can build trusting bridges between school and family, e.g. family support workers, and learning mentors with specific roles with parents/carers or in promoting 'Dads' in activities. They try to find imaginative ways to break down barriers and make parents welcome, always responsive to parents' needs. Information is shared with parents on achievement and development as well as discipline issues and there is a high level of communication. The school staff see themselves as being part of a community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the schools and know what the schools do to provide an environment of learning. They are appreciative of the schools efforts to guide their children and give them grounding, both academically and socially. They feel that each child is valued in his/her own terms and although children might perceive differences in standards between them the schools encouraged them to do the best for themselves:

- **Use of data:** The use of data is exemplary and a strength of each school. High quality assessment, tracking and target setting procedures, for individual and groups, are the features of the effective management, which supports teaching and learning. Rigorous pupil tracking is established as one of the core elements of raising achievement in these schools. The use of data involves all staff, governors and parents:

  > *'The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are systematic and robust. Careful use of data, rigorous monitoring in lessons and regular tracking ensure that any variance in progress is tackled quickly.'* **(Ofsted)**

  > *The school has excellent practice in relation to self-evaluation. Every year there is a thorough review of the whole school, including parental feedback and pupil voice which feeds into the school development plan and school self-evaluation.'* **(chair of governors)**

  > *'Teachers make effective use of data to evaluate quality of provision and to identify and support for differentiated groups of pupils.'* **(head of school)**

  > *'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.'* **(inclusion manager**)

- **Effective use of pupil voice:** The case study schools have established a culture where all children and young people have a voice and have an opportunity to play active role in decision that affect their learning and well-being. The pupils we spoke to had specific roles on the School's Council or as prefects. They were unanimous in their love for their schools, giving examples of how they enjoy their lessons and their play times, after school activities and how they get on exceptionally well with each other and with the adults in the school, saying '*Teachers, staff, TAs, all support us and push us. They want what's best for us.'* There is also strong evidence that schools are using the pupil voice and feedback for targeted support to secure improvement.

- **Celebration of cultural diversity:** One of the factors that has helped these schools to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of pupils is that many of the staff working in the schools represent the communities they serve. Not only does this give them insight into the lives of their pupils, it also provides pupils with good role models and the sense that the school is also part of their community. These are truly multi-cultural schools where the diversity of ethnic origin, languages spoken, and of cultural heritage,

brings real life to learning. Pupils thrive because they see around them every day the living evidence of what it is to live in a multi-cultural world.

The schools celebrate the cultural heritage of pupils in a number of ways. The displays in the school celebrate pupils' achievement and acknowledge the diversity of its pupil population. One staff member commented:

> '*Displays are the reflection of our community. They are part of the community dialogue. They reflect what is going on in the school. They are part of the ethos of high expectations.*'

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

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

All schools use Black History month as an opportunity to explore different countries and celebrate diversity. *'Every class studies a different country to give them a wealth of knowledge about the culture, the food, the language and the people.'*

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