

**Narrowing the Achievement Gap: What and how
schools learn through involvement in the Specialist
Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP)**

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1. Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) to find out how schools used the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP) to narrow the gap between the academic attainment and wider achievements of students from disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds. SSAT was also keen to identify the range of indicators of disadvantage used by schools to target support to where it is most required.

We used a two stage data collection process. The first stage was administered by SSAT. It involved sending out a brief case study pro-forma to all schools that had been involved in the SSAP. We received returns from over 70 schools. These brief case studies were analysed by my team of researchers at Strathclyde University and an interim report was submitted to SSAT. After a further 20 brief case studies were received they were analysed by SSAT and a series of books have been produced on the key findings. These are available from SSAT. The findings of the Strathclyde analysis are included as Chapter 3 of this report.

From the brief case studies and performance data we identified six schools that we planned to visit so that we could explore in more depth their approach to improvement in general and narrowing the gap in particular. All the schools in our sample of six had achieved measurable progress in their percentage of students achieving 5 or more A* - C grades for GCSE. They also shared the fact that they all had significant numbers of students who could be thought of as disadvantaged although not always solely identified on the basis of Free School Meals entitlement. Apart from this we used a range of criteria to identify schools for the sample. We identified schools that varied in size from just over 300 students to around 1700. We also achieved a geographical spread. The schools were located across the four corners and middle of England (Essex, Bristol, Birmingham, Yorkshire and Greater Manchester). We also approached two London schools but it was not convenient for them for us to visit them during period of the study. This was a disappointment. London is often cited as having a particular and unique set of educational challenges. We would have liked to explore this. Both 11-16 and 11-18 schools were represented in our sample as was one Catholic school. All were mixed schools in terms of gender.

We used a variety of data collection methods for each school. Our first port of call was usually the school's website from which we could access data about the school's catchment area, its mission, recent Ofsted inspection reports and information on curriculum and community links. We visited each school for two days during which we had tour of the school that allowed us to observe teaching and learning and sometimes to briefly question teachers and students about their activities. We also had around ten interviews in each school that lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. In all schools we interviewed the head teacher and other members of the senior leadership team, groups of students, teachers from the school's specialism, teachers of English and maths, and a teacher from another curricular area. In three of the schools we also spoke to the consultant head or an Education Authority appointed mentor head teacher and in one school we interviewed a parent governor. This helped us to get a detailed picture from each school on the strategies they used to improve in general and to narrow the achievement gap in particular.

Learning is one of the core themes that arose from the findings of our research. Two aspects of learning are relevant here. The first is how the schools learned to improve their performance and to narrow the achievement gap particularly through their

involvement in the SSAP. A second aspect is the strategies, interventions and programmes that the schools used support student learning, particularly the learning of the most disadvantaged students.

SSAP and the development of schools as learning organisations

There is very strong evidence from our study that schools found involvement in the SSAP very helpful in formulating and carrying out improvement strategies. Their involvement in SSAP was often accompanied by parallel involvement in a range of other initiatives, some of which may have been required of them (e.g. Challenge) and others which they elected to be involved in (for example initial teacher education or forest schooling). One Head teacher reported that 'we bid for everything... not willy nilly but things that fit with others'. He justified this strategy by pointing out that in the early phases of new initiatives there is often more funding available than during the roll out phases. Respondents tended to see involvement in these initiatives as complementary rather than conflictual. In around sixty interviews we had only one mention of the phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'Initiative overload'.

Both the launch conferences and the regular conferences during involvement in SSAP were highly regarded by those who had attended them. One feature that interested us was the way that most staff who commented on these meetings described how they moved from receiving ideas to contributing ideas. They appreciated the focus on sharing rather than being told what to do. For example, the Head of Wensleydale School, in one of the first conversations he had with his consultant head was told about the 'War Room' as a strategy for tracking and focusing on student progress. He tried this out in his school and it wasn't long before he was sharing his experiences with others at SSAP conferences.

He reported that he found the launch conference really useful. It was particularly beneficial to see people who had been in the position that his school was in and were now good or outstanding. He was able to pick up tips and to make contacts over and above his consultant head. He reported being 'absolutely sold on the philosophy of by schools for schools'. The Head of Bedminster Downs School on Bristol likewise reported on the benefits of getting away from his own school and locality and to network with other school leaders with lots of ideas. The Head of English at Shoeburyness school reported that after being put on Notice to Improve the Head Teacher went away (to SSAP conferences) 'to find out how to do things'. A colleague who had attended the launch conference with the Head said that as a result of what they had heard at that conference they had been able to identify some 'quick fix' strategies that they had been able to implement immediately as well as some longer term ideas. Success achieved from the implementation of quick fixes gave the school confidence to carry on with other ideas.

Some schools continued to use the model of SSAP conferences and networking meetings in their regular meetings with schools in local consortia. For example, in the Southend East Consortium, at meetings of subject departments, each member is expected in turn to report on something that they are doing to support student learning. This was an idea they had developed from their experience of SSAP meetings.

The role of and help received from consultant heads was also favourably reported on. One example of helpful advice has already been given. Another example was the consultant head sharing his Self Evaluation Form with the school so that it could be used as a model. He then helped the school to have the form scrutinised by the

SSAT redesignation team before submitting it to DCSF. This document was used as the basis of discussions between the school head and the consultant head on aspects of the specialism that needed improvement.

Overall involvement in SSAP gave schools confidence as learning organisations, as organisations prepared to experiment, to try things out because as several heads and others pointed out to us, it's not one big thing; it's lots of little things that make the difference.

The following section lists some of the things that helped schools to improve, especially those that supported the achievement and attainment of all students but especially those seen to be disadvantaged?

Schools supporting students' learning

Many of the features that helped the most disadvantaged students helped all students. The improvements that schools respondents mentioned most frequently were the following.

- **Improved data management, tracking and target setting.** In order to help students to achieve better results all the schools in our sample regarded having robust data on what constituted minimum target grades for each student and what grade each student was currently performing as the minimum information necessary. To this some schools added aspirational grades above the minimum target grade. All the schools tracked student progress regularly. This information formed the basis for decisions about the kind of interventions and support that would be put in place for students. For example, Pat Halliwell, Director of Achievement at Bedminster Downs School reported that 'improving the quality of data', 'very astute interrogation of data' and targeting interventions' were at the core of the school's improvement strategy. She reported that tutors are constantly monitoring students. Both Lostock College and Wensleydale School use adaptations of the 'war room' to provide a visual representation of students' current performance against possibilities for achievement.
- **Appropriately tailored curricula.**
 - **Identifying the right courses.** Careful selection of courses and awarding bodies was seen to be important so that students would be undertaking learning programmes that suited their strengths and abilities. For example, Community Science College@Thornhill identified the inappropriateness of the curriculum as a one reason for poor results in the past. While studying three single sciences was fine for the top set, the high dependency on exams was inappropriate for other students yet switching to alternative programmes that had a higher focus on coursework allowed many more students to gain science qualifications.
 - **Curriculum Pathways.** Inclusion does not mean that all students have to have the same programmes. That is a very naïve view of inclusion and leads to teaching to the middle. Rather having carefully

constructed pathways that meet the individual needs of students offers a much more sophisticated approach to inclusion. Thornhill also had an Aimhigher Form, a National Challenge Form, an Assertive Mentoring Form and an Alternative curriculum group all at Key Stage 4. Shoeburyness had three Excel pathways for students who were bright but disengaged; an achievement pathway for pupils who received a Primary school type of curriculum; and academy groups that operated differently in the different subject areas. One of the Excel Pathways had a football theme and one day per week the class met together in the morning and did English and maths around the theme. In the afternoon they played football but this was linked to maths and English, We asked the students groups whether they thought this form of setting stigmatised some students. They were emphatic that the students in all the pathways were included as members of the school community and even if they were in the achievement group for much of the week they still joined in for some subjects such as sciences or technology.

- **Use of Specialism to Raise Achievement.** The schools we visited saw their specialism as contributing to improved achievement in a variety of ways. For example Lostock College (Performing Arts) reported that emphasis on the specialism contributed in five ways; first of all, it involves non-traditional learners who, in the words of the dance teacher, 'just need to move'; secondly, the performing arts are used to improve teamwork and self-confidence in all students; third, performing arts skills are sometimes used specifically in other subjects, e.g. using raps in maths; fourth, the performing arts develop learning that impacts on other subject areas, e.g. music involves both written work (evaluation of performances) and number work (counting rhythms etc.); lastly the arts are used to bring the community into the college and parents can see their children grow in confidence and enjoy learning.
- **Interventions to improve students' achievements.** The schools we visited used a range of direct interventions to help students to improve their results and to achieve more out of their school experiences. These included:
 - **Targeted revision.** One to one; focus groups; breakfast, after school and holiday revision sessions; outward bound type of revision and fun weekends were all used. One respondent said that these revision sessions provided for children from deprived backgrounds the kind of support that other parents paid private tutors for.
 - **Assertive mentoring.** This was provided in Community Science College@Thornhill by members of the senior leadership teams for students who were falling well behind their minimum target grade level of work. Students regularly met with their mentor to report on progress (with for example coursework) and to set target dates for the completion of work.

- **VLEs used to support homework.** MyMaths for example was used in at least two of the schools. Where students did not have access to computers at home they could borrow laptops from the school or else use school computers after school or at lunchtimes.
- **Staffing Strategies**
 - **After school learning groups.** Getting involved in CPD is now a requirement for teachers but in St Edmund Campion School in Birmingham staff were so taken by their initial experiences of after school sessions for sharing good ideas for teaching and learning that they requested these sessions on a weekly rather than fortnightly basis.
 - **'Growing your own' staff.** Shoeburyness High School found it difficult to recruit teaching staff because of their geographical location. They became involved in the GTP very early on and now around 40 - 50% of their teachers were trained in the school and they have their first home developed teacher as a member of the SLT. Support staff also have opportunities to grow and develop. The school's Behaviour Improvement Programme is led by a woman who started as a cleaner in the school and now teachers are happy to seek advice from her. The staff we spoke to said that these measures helped to firmly establish Shoeburyness as a community school.
 - **Effective use of support staff.** There were many examples of schools using support staff to provide a more targeted service for students while at the same time releasing teaching staff to concentrate on the teaching and learning processes. For example Wensleydale School used Pastoral and Learning Support staff (PALS) to provide targeted interventions for students at risk of failing to meet their potential. Shoeburyness High School employs Year Managers to provide pastoral support and Learning Mentors who are not qualified teachers to provide subject specific support. Bedminster Down School had a highly regarded (by students) counselling unit to help students with social and emotional issues.

Conclusions

The schools used a range of strategies to improve and to help to narrow the achievement gap. However, while results in GCSEs and other examinations were used as key measures of the impact of strategies, developing a caring, educative community of learning ethos was also a feature of practice in each of the schools.

2. Introduction

The Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP) is based on collaboration between two or more schools in which more successful Specialist Schools support Specialist Schools at risk of de-designation. At the core of the programme is an action plan which focuses on a key area for improvement. In the early years of the programme the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) appointed a 'Case Manager' to set up and provide support for the collaborative partnership. This role is now undertaken by a consultant head. SSAT provides funding to support the project.

SSAP has been running for a number of years and there has been previous research on the programme. Chapman and Allen conducted a review of SSAP between 2003 and 2005 during which they conducted over 100 interviews with stakeholders in 10 collaborative partnerships involving 20 schools (Chapman & Allen, 2006a). They identified three sets of conditions that prevail in successful collaborations. These were *emotional conditions* such as 'mutual trust and confidentiality framed within shared values and strong interpersonal skills'; *practical conditions* such as 'geographical accessibility of partnership schools and strong support from senior leaders in partner schools' and; *external support* especially from the case manager (Chapman & Allen, 2006b; 297).

In a later paper Allen identified 'barriers and facilitators of partnership' evidenced in SSAP and some reflections on the evidence from the programme of partnership as a tool for improvement (Allen, 2007:301). Key enablers included the partner schools having similar contextual backgrounds; having action plans integrated with pre-existing school improvement plans and; having appropriate attitudes in partner schools and case managers (ibid. 303-4). Barriers encountered included heavy demands on schools seen to be successful in terms of time, resources and leadership they were able to commit to supporting a school in difficulty; problems with potential local partners who were also competitors for similar students; and disparity of contextual factors (ibid. 305-6). The main aim of SSAP is to improve student attainment. There was evidence of improved attainment in the partner school but it was difficult to separate out the effect due to SSAP since it usually ran alongside other improvement strategies in schools in difficulty. However, Allen did report that both sides of the partnerships regarded SSAP as a key professional development opportunity (ibid. 306).

Quantitative analysis of GCSE examination results also shows a positive impact of SSAP. In an analysis of 20 schools involved in SSAP cohort E, Jesson and Crossley (2006) report that these schools achieved an 8.8% improvement in pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A* to C compared with a national average improvement of 1.8% with the comparative figures for 5 or more A* to C including English and maths being a 5.5% improvement for schools participating in SSAP and a national average of 0.8% improvement. There has been some criticism of the statistical claims made of the impact of specialist school designation on examination results, however the most secure of these criticisms focuses on the size of the effect rather than whether or not there has been a positive effect. Taylor, (2007a and 2007b) for example, argues that 'Government and its agencies have seriously overestimated the impact of the specialist schools programme on educational attainment' and that 'specialist schools perform marginally better than their non-specialist counterparts...but by much less than indicated by previous studies' (Taylor, 2007a; 1 and Taylor 20007b; 445). However, he further argues that 'there is evidence that schools with the highest

proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals have experienced by far the biggest improvement in exam results as a consequence of acquiring specialist status' (Taylor, 2007; 1). Note that Taylor was investigating the impact of schools gaining specialist status with access to all the support this status offers, not just the impact of the SSAP.

In summary both the quantitative and the qualitative research conducted so far indicates that there have been positive impacts of involvement in SSAP and that the impact on schools with the most disadvantaged catchment areas has been the most beneficial.

The research reported in this document built on the prior research on the SSAP by conducting a series of intensive case studies in SSAP schools that explored the processes involved in SSAP schools that led to the improvements in student performance. Since the previous research was conducted there have been some changes made to the SSAP. One of the most significant of these is that there is no longer a case manager appointed. Each project is now supported by a consultant head, 'someone from a school who has made the journey' and is conducted with one or more 'mentor schools' specially selected to provide support for the SSAP school. There is also a range of online support materials available to schools on the programme (SSAT, 2008). It was seen therefore an opportune time to research the programme in its more recent form of organisation.

Research Aim and Questions

The main aim of this research was: to identify the processes involved in participation by schools in the SSAP that led to schools learning to be better at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students.

This aim is framed as a learning issue for quite specific reasons. Firstly previous research has already identified a strong learning element in the success of the SSAP. Allen (2007) reported a Case Manager who pointed out the need for a zone of proximal development to exist for the SSAP to work. This concept was devised by Vygotsky to identify the area of difference between what progress a child could make on his or her own compared with the progress that the child could make with support from adults or peers (see e.g. Hedegard, 2005). This case manager clearly sees school improvement/development as an organisational learning issue in which the school can potentially make more progress with appropriate support than it could on its own. Secondly, it seems appropriate that schools as organisations in which learning of students takes place should be organisations that take their own learning and development seriously. Much of the school improvement and school effectiveness literature focuses on organisational theory rather than on relevant learning theory. This proposal seeks to move towards remedying this.

One of the current interpreters of Vygotsky has specifically addressed the issue of how learning takes place in organisations involved in partnerships (Engeström, 1987 and 2001). He provides five principles that underpin a Vygotskian approach to understanding the processes of organisational learning. These are (interpreted for this research project):

1. The activity system (e.g. the school) is the main unit of analysis. This principle suits the aims of this research project well since, although we recognise and give due regards to the actions of individuals and groups within the school, it is the progress of the school in improving student attainment in which we are mainly interested.

2. The activity system (school) is multi-voiced. There are a variety of traditions, perspectives and values within the school and in partnerships across the school in the partnership. These differences may cause barriers and can block progress but they are also a potential source of learning and innovation.
3. The school is not an island in the present; it is located within its own history and in the history of the English education system. The organisational learning taking place in the school needs to be located within this history.
4. Contradictions are a prime source of change. While many social theories of learning see contradictions as a barrier to progress (e.g. functionalism), they are seen in activity theory as a source of innovation and learning.
5. There is a possibility of expansive transformation as schools engage with each other with a common object of improving the attainment of students.

It is this expansive learning that is the subject of this research proposal. That it has taken place at all can be seen from the results of prior research. The research questions below incorporate the above principles and are designed to explore in some depth the processes of learning in SSAP schools.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the nature of the subjects of the learning (the schools)? Sub questions would include - How big are they? What is their catchment area like? What are their student profiles like? How stable/unstable has the teaching team/ senior leadership team been over time, especially recently? What are the histories of the school? What are the publicly expressed core values of the schools? What are the outsiders' view of the schools e.g. Ofsted, local community? What are the different internal perspectives of the schools e.g. by the SLT, different teaching departments, different student year groups? What is the specialism of each school and how was that specialism agreed upon?
2. What was the core object of their involvement in the SSAP? How did the schools use their specialism to drive forward the improvement they made?
3. What tools, conceptual frameworks or material resources were used in the action plan for improvement? How were these used? How were they accessed?? Which of these tools, conceptual frameworks or material resources were found to be powerful in achieving the object? In what ways? Which were found to be of less benefit and why?
4. What are the relationships of the schools with their external communities? What rules and procedures are imposed by governance at various levels that are perceived to impact on ability to achieve positive results with disadvantaged students? How flexible are these rules and procedures seen to be? In what ways do local communities support/hinder developments in the school? What links do the schools have with other agencies that are supporting students (e.g. youth organisations, police, social services etc)? How strong/effective are these links seen to be? What is the history of relationships with the community? What differences are there in relationships with different community stakeholders?
5. What measures of deprivation are used to guide policy in the school? How useful are these measures/indices? In what ways are they used to show improved outcomes for all students but especially those from backgrounds that have traditionally been less successful?
6. How are the schools organised internally to achieve positive outcomes for all students? How is the school formally organised for teaching and learning purposes and for leadership purposes? What steps are/have been taken to change the ethos if this is/ was seen to be needed?

7. What are the significant outcomes from participation in the SSAP a) for pupils; b) for learning by the school, the teachers and the SLT on how to be more effective in meeting the needs in terms of student attainment of all pupils but especially those less advantaged? How have the ways of thinking about issues to do with improving student attainment changed as a result of involvement in SSAP? Other significant outcomes?

This is a long list of the kind of issues that were explored in the research. The list above is meant primarily to underpin a commitment to avoid superficiality and to probe deeply into the processes that helped the SSAP schools to learn and develop better approaches to meeting the needs of all pupils and thereby narrow the gap between students from areas where attainment has traditionally been low and those from areas that have consistently achieved better educational outcomes.

Research Process

This process was designed to allow detailed investigation of the question areas identified above. The starting point was to have all schools who had participated in the SSAP complete a brief case- study pro-forma (see Appendix 1). Initially 75 of these brief case studies were returned. Seventy of these were analysed by the research team and a preliminary report was sent to SSAT. This first stage was very important in that it identified a wide series of issues that could be followed up in more detail when the in-depth case studies were carried out. SSAT also used these case studies to produce a series of issues-related books.

The second stage of the project involved detailed case studies undertaken in six schools. A number of criteria were used in selecting the case study schools. Firstly some general criteria were applied to get broad representation within the set of case studies of the following features:

- Geography (to get a mix of urban and (semi) rural schools; to include the main conurbations and; to include schools from a variety of English regions).
- Specialism (to ensure that the most popular specialisms in the two cohorts under investigation were broadly represented while also representing specialisms with a smaller frequency in the two cohorts).
- School Roll (schools of different sizes were included).
- Type of school. (One denominational school was selected).

After applying these general criteria, more specific criteria were applied to make the selection of individual schools.

- Two schools were selected because they were involved in both Tranche E and Tranche 7 Wave 1. It was thought that they may offer interesting insights by comparing their experiences of involvement in the two tranches of SSAP.
- All the schools were selected on the basis of indicators of some social disadvantage in their pupil populations. A number of different indicators were used since not all the schools had high levels of entitlement to free school meals. Other indicators included higher than average levels of pupils with additional learning needs; high levels of pupils for whom English was not their first language; or high numbers of pupils coming from areas where levels of adult educational achievement were relatively low.
- All the schools selected had also made better than average improvements in the percentage of pupils gaining 5 GCSE A* - C/ 5 GCSE A*- C including English and Maths.

All of the schools selected with one exception had returned the initial case study pro forma to SSAT indicating that they would be willing to take part in the study.

In the event six schools agreed to take part. All were mixed gender schools. They ranged in size from 300 to 1700 students. Three were 11-16 and three were 11-18 schools. We had one school each from Essex, Bristol, Birmingham, and Greater Manchester and two schools from (very different parts of) Yorkshire. We had two technology schools, two science schools, one languages and one performing arts school.

We contacted the schools by email or telephone and sent them two documents. One was a general information sheet on the research (see Appendix 2) and the other was a list of people we would ideally like to speak to (see Appendix 3). Only two schools declined to take part in the study and in both cases they were undergoing major organisational changes at the time the research was undertaken.

The visits were arranged to take place over two school days. Each visit was undertaken by two researchers and comprised an observational tour of the school so that the researchers could gain a good understanding of the physical environment in which learning was taking place and also observe classes in action. Brief field notes were taken during the tours. The visits also comprised individual interviews with head teachers, other members of the senior leadership teams of the schools, subject or faculty leaders especially for English, maths and the schools' specialisms, other teachers, members of support staff (these varied from school to school but included for example, school data support officer, extended schools coordinator, pastoral and learning support tutors), consultant heads and, in one case, a parent governor. Group interviews were held with students in all the schools. The students targeted were general KS4 or KS5 but in one case students from across the years were interviewed.

A case study report was completed on each school and these were sent to the schools so that errors of fact could be eliminated and the schools could also comment on the interpretation that the researchers put on the data. Regular meetings were also held with the relevant officer from SSAT to report on progress and to check that the needs of SSAT as the client for the research contract were being met.

The next chapter contains the findings from the initial analysis of the brief case studies. It is followed by the five* in-depth school case studies and a chapter that revisits the initial research questions and discusses the findings.

*Note: the findings from one of the case study schools has been excluded since there was a discrepancy discovered after the study was undertaken that meant that the school did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study.

3. Summary of the Analysis of the Brief Case Studies

Background to analysis of Case Studies

The research was carried out to identify the processes that led to schools learning to be better at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The aims of the research were to understand the processes of learning within an appropriate theoretical framework; to do this with a view to producing a knowledge exchange programme; and for a paper or papers to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

As part of this research, a web-based survey of all schools involved in SSAP over the past five years has been carried out. This led to detailed responses from 75 schools. These Case Studies may be helpful for understanding the impact of the SSAP programme; for local interpretations of measuring success; and would improve the opportunity for no significant findings to be missed in the study as a whole.

This report analyses the responses of 70 of these schools¹ with the aim of:

- Answering seven specified questions
- Noting further points that emerge from the analysis
- Identifying Case Studies that may be helpful for further study of 'what works'.

Throughout the analysis Case Studies that address the finding in question are cited by number (see **Appendix 5** for key).

Analytical constraints

Note 1: The character of the Case Studies created a difficulty in distinguishing which interventions and outcomes cited in the Case Studies are due solely to the SSAP and which are the result of other factors.

Note 2: The data provided in the Case Studies is uneven. Each write up is quite different. A few focus on one specific intervention throughout; most bring in information and data on other interventions and strategies. For example for school 39 the Case Study is about staff training/mentoring; the Achievement Strategy is on broader interventions; Measured Outcomes are on SEN and low achieving girls. This redoubles the problem of measuring cause and effect.

Note 3: the Case Studies do not always include objective evidence of the intervention outcomes (sometimes exam results are pending, notably for the recent examples). All are also written from the point-of-view of the school in question, thus outcome data is rarely critiqued. Therefore the findings of this analysis must be indicative rather than conclusive.

What indices of social deprivation do the schools use?

Most schools in the sample use a mix of indices.

Free School Meals is the most commonly cited, for one school it 'indicates lack of home support and access to technology' (56), for another school it is used to 'target

¹ Five schools were removed from the cohort for analysis as they would be the subject of more detailed case studies as part of the main study

interventions following 'Narrowing the Gap' (63). For most schools FSM is generally used alongside other indices to target interventions.

FSM is also the most commonly critiqued index by schools in the sample as an inaccurate measure due to underclaiming by students or their parents (e.g. 45, 65).

SEN, School Action and School Action Plus are the next most commonly cited, and are used, for example, to highlight 'dyslexia and low reading age for intervention' (30), used to target literacy support (14) (70) or to allocate teaching assistants and teachers (17).

KS2 results are used by several schools as a measure of prior attainment (e.g. 4, 11).

Small numbers of schools also use:

- % Parents in FE/HE (to target aspiration programmes e.g. 42, 55)
- Looked after children (esp. recent cohort e.g. 59, 63, 64, 65)
- Gender (e.g. 7, 49, 58)
- Ethnicity (e.g. 22, 65)
- EAL (e.g. 4, 63)
- NEET (to help measure impact of interventions e.g. 4).

How do schools use these indices to improve outcomes for pupils from deprived backgrounds?

There is an overwhelming focus in the Case Studies on continuous improvement of data information and management in order to target underachievement by groups and individuals. Almost all schools are rigorously and relentlessly using data, reviewing results on an ongoing basis to track students' performance and to intervene where required.

This process generally happens as follows:

- a. Most schools triangulate indices: they rarely use one alone
- b. They tend to benchmark the prior achievement of children against their general indices of deprivation using a data tracking system such as Fischer Family Trust (FFT)
- c. They use this data to set individual attainment targets and to focus interventions accordingly
- d. Schools generally emphasise the need to set attainment targets and to intervene as required for all students, not only those with indices of deprivation. They tend to note that indices of deprivation do help with targeting interventions (e.g. 27).

FFT (D, sometimes B)² is most commonly used to translate generalised indices into individualised targets for pupils (e.g. 9, 13). FFT also allows schools to set targets by not only SEN and FSM indices, but by for example gender and ethnicity (good example: 55).

² **Fischer Family Trust** or FFT is a national data set. It has pupil level data, which helps schools to set targets for individual pupils and at whole school level. If a school has met its FFT B target this means it has done as well as similar schools with a similar intake of pupils. If a school has met its FFT D target then this means it is achieving as well as the top 25% of similar schools nationally. See www.fischertrust.org.

FFT is not the only data tracking system used by schools. Small numbers of schools also use:

- Acorn (e.g. 58)
- AimHigher postcode data (e.g. 15)
- Jesson (e.g. 1, 12, 46)
- CATS predictors (e.g. 68, 69)
- IDACI (e.g. 1, 52 and, in future, 62)
- TCI (e.g. 50, 55)
- RaiseOnline (e.g. 37)
- 'Grade calculator' (22)

A handful of schools do not use deprivation indices at all (e.g. 48 – as 'below the national average' for all indices).

The data is then used as a focus for various interventions, varying from school to school, to target improvements amongst underachieving students. A small number of schools use this data to target 'borderline' students (C/D, D/E in particular e.g. 5, 16, 30) in contrast to, or as well as, underachieving students.

What strategies do schools use to help pupils to achieve (better GCSE results)?

Schools overwhelmingly use a mix of strategies to improve attainment for those students identified through personalised data as requiring targeted intervention. The most common strategies fall into four areas as follows:

Strategies for individual students

Data is used to set **personalised attainment targets** for students. Some schools share these with targets students so they know expectations very clearly (e.g. 10, 12, 48).

Mentoring (e.g. 26, 28) is used by perhaps the majority of schools in sample. Varying mentoring models are cited including 'tough' (63), 'smile' (32), 'peer' (39), mentoring by personal tutors (45), and learning mentors (57).

Personalised learning/personalised or flexible curriculum (no simple definition) (e.g. 12, 17, 35, 52, 64) or **one-to-one teaching** (5, 62, 66, 70).

Learning conversations between teacher and individual student, focusing on attainment (e.g. 28, 45, 56).

Strategies targeting groups of underachieving students:

The schools very commonly focus on **interventions to improve English and Maths attainment** above other subjects, including staffing changes or specific programmes to focus on these (e.g. 70).

Changes to the Curriculum are common. Most commonly a shift to greater provision of vocational subjects (4, 12, 13, 28, 58, 61, 70) including ALAN (e.g. 34, 46, 49) or 'restructuring' the curriculum (e.g. 18, 57), sometimes explicitly 'to boost results' (41). Also widening access to broader levels of non-vocational qualifications (e.g. 44 language),

Other common interventions for targeted groups include:

- Cancelling study leave or suspending the timetable, replacing with targeted exam-focused learning or intensive support in school (e.g. 3, 5, 11, 14)
- Exam day preparation (e.g. 62)
- Mock exam results day: making it an event (e.g. 23, 30, 34)
- Early entries to exams, especially Maths and English (e.g. 2, 18, 27, 28)
- Rewards schemes (generally not specified) (e.g. 30, 39)
- Revision – special classes, away days, weeks (e.g. 9, 19, 23)
- ‘Student voice’ (an emerging concept?) (e.g. 27, 31, 64)
- Behaviour management (a recent phenomenon?) (e.g. 68, 69).

Strategies involving parents:

- Sharing data with both parents and students (e.g. 5, 11, 12, 36)
- Parent involvement (e.g. 51, 53; 56 sends a weekly email to parents).

Strategies for teaching staff:

Most schools in the sample have worked to change the role of teachers to focus on attainment – and are driving through this change using a variety of mechanisms.

Accountability of teachers for attainment amongst their students is a very strong theme. Commonly, very regular staff meetings are held where attainment data is discussed in detail, where staff are made accountable for the performance of their students, and where decisions are made to target interventions further.

Techniques used to monitor student attainment and to improve teacher accountability for results include:

- ‘Traffic lights’ (earlier waves in particular) (e.g. 20, 30, 43)
- Venn diagram (e.g. 10, 12)
- ‘War Room’ (later waves in particular) (e.g. 52, 57 - 65 has most detail).

Other common staff strategies include:

- CPD for staff with a focus on teaching for attainment (e.g. 8, 10, 12, 14)
- Changing the focus of ‘middle level’ staff, including through CPD (e.g. 31, 33, 38, 53)
- Recruitment of new staff to boost attainment (e.g. 10, 18, 19, 30, 35, 39)
- Restructuring/refocusing SLT (e.g. 18, 33, 49, 65)
- Coaching approaches for staff (a recent phenomenon?) (e.g. 37, 40, 66)
- Rigorous lesson observation and feedback (e.g. 12, 62, 63).

To what extent do the schools mention help they have received from other schools?

30 Case Studies mention help from partner schools or from other educational sources. Generally, not much detail is provided.

What form has this help taken?

16 of the schools specifically note help from partner schools, including with inspections (37, 62) and secondment of staff (12, 15, 35, 60). One school developed a long-term strategy with their partner on involvement in learning (24) and one developed on-to-one tuition with the help of their partner (70). Others did not specify the support (e.g.6, 11, 31).

Nine of the 30 schools cite receiving help from attending SSAP/RATL conferences (e.g. 6, 17, 18, 20, 30, 32, 41, 65, 69). Six refer to National Challenge focus or funding (5, 6, 10, 12, 34, 40). Some note partnerships involving their local authority (e.g. 31), one notes a Collaborative Trust (66).

Some schools also note that they have learned from a variety of other external sources. Little detail is provided. Examples include:

- School Improvement Plan (e.g. 13,20,23,31)
- Kemnal School (e.g. 17,32)
- Quality Assurance (e.g. 35)
- Ofsted Action Plan (e.g.48)
- Aim Higher (e.g. 42).

To what extent do schools report use of their specialisms in their improvement strategies?

10 of the 70 schools clearly evidence that their specialism has been used to enhance improvement.³

How have they used their specialism in their strategies to improve outcomes?

- To build external partnerships (e.g. 15, 39)
- To invest in technology related to their specialism (e.g. 26, 36)
- To improve attainment in their specialism (e.g. 55, 57)
- To use techniques in improving attainment in their specialism to influence how attainment can be improved in other subject areas (e.g. 22, 63).

Further questions and clarifications highlighted as part of the analysis.

- It is surprisingly rare in the Case Studies to find a clear link between raising attainment and the specialism of the school
- It is rare to be able to isolate a change specifically as a result of SSAP. Schools tend to list a series of interventions, strategies and outcomes
- It is striking that the terms 'action plan', 'case manager' and 'consultant head' are rarely used
- There may be a tension between a short-term 'boost' and long-term sustainability. Many of the case studies do separate their strategies into short, medium and long-term. This may benefit from further analysis.
- The evidence of outcomes for many of the schools is prospective. Some cite Ofsted or prospective results, or quotes from parents and students, but this is patchy and again hard to evaluate.

'What works?'

³ The Case Studies do not always make it clear what the specialism of the school is, so there may be underreporting in this analysis.

Case Studies that are outstanding for the quality of their write-up, evidenced outcomes or innovative intervention are as follows:

- 7: very big CVA and English and Maths improvement; suspending half-term led to 1 extra grade per student
- 8: very strong evidence of success (Ofsted quotes etc.)
- 10: strong evidence of peer and local authority valuing of strategy
- 11: overcame gender attainment deficit for boys
- 15: SEN outcomes seem exceptional
- 17: food programme had potential impact on gendered attainment
- 20: strong focus on sustaining improvements; innovative 'mentor groups' model at year 11
- 22: Science school using specialism to raise results across school
- 24: very clear Ofsted feedback and s/m/long-term plans
- 27: good s/m/long-term plans; 'quiet girls' focus
- 31: intensive turn-around for staff
- 32: lots of well-described and evidenced interventions
- 34: The Exam Factor – intervention for 36 marginal students
- 40: good, simple case study using Ofsted feedback
- 44: 6-point strategy for improvement in response to Ofsted
- 46: raft of interventions for specific groups
- 50: year 11 'reading buddies' for year 7
- 52: evidenced attainment benefit from using animateur to do kinaesthetic learning
- 55: good study of using specialism (languages)
- 60: good, rounded example
- 61: case study of using 'competitive element' identified amongst cohort of boys
- 69: intensive support and change for students
- 70: very strong example of literacy focus to raise attainment across subjects.

4. Bedminster Down School

This case study describes and attempts to explain how Bedminster Down School has made significant improvements in attainment for students, through its involvement in the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP) and through a series of other interventions. It focuses on how the school has paid particular attention to narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged students.

Introduction

Bedminster Down School is a mixed Specialist Technology School of about 1000 pupils aged eleven to sixteen. It has sixty five teachers and thirty five support staff. The school is part of the government's National Challenge programme. The school was active in the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme from 2002 to 2006.

Located in the South West of Bristol, the school primarily serves four wards, three of which are in the bottom 1% for educational deprivation in England and Wales. Student attainment on entry to the school is generally below average (Ofsted 2006). Bedminster Down is in an area where for generations work has been available which has not required high levels of formal education, including in the paper, tobacco and wine industries. Informal English rather than 'academic English' has been all that is required for lifelong employment. This history of '*cognitive deprivation*' (Head) has meant that the national literacy and numeracy strategy has '*not touched*' many of the children, as '*they have nothing cognitively to hang it on to*'.

Due to this historic undervaluing of formal education, the school has placed a strong emphasis on a three-way partnership between the school, students and parents. This is a long process and the school has had '*lots of challenges from parents*' (Head) over issues like uniform, detentions and amounts of homework, in the long transition towards valuing attainment.

The research visit to Bedminster Down took place on 12 and 13 November 2009. Interviewees included the Head Teacher, Associate Head, Assistant Head Teachers, a Director of Achievement, the Subject Leader in Design and Technology and a group of three Year 11 students. The research team was given a tour of the school by two Year 8 students, whose day it was to support the reception staff, a rotated activity in the school.

Comments by interviewees are incorporated throughout this case study.

The Head has been in post since 2000. When he started, he '*challenged*' staff about their expectations of the students. He found '*no effective behaviour strategy*' in the school, which had been de-stabilised by an increase in the number of challenging students through local school closures and re-organisation of catchment areas. There was 30 per cent turnover of staff in his first two to three years. By contrast in 2008-09 there were no staff changes.

In 2000 the school was technologically weak. Internet access was through a phone line. The school had no vision for ICT, and the Head chose to lead the school in this direction in order to '*benefit everyone*'. Bedminster Down gained Specialist Technology School status in 2004. The entire capital bid within the Specialist Schools programme was spent on ICT, skewed towards maths and technology, but

benefitting all subject areas. Staff were upskilled too. There are now two types of laptop that students can borrow, and wireless clouds in the school, an enormous change. The use of ICT has *'pump primed'* the success of the school in the view of the Head.

The school was completely rebuilt in 2006, a year in which it also achieved the best academic results in the school's history. The same year it was given a 'satisfactory' inspection by Ofsted. The Inspection Report noted the Head's clear leadership and vision and noted many improvements, including performance data being used *'very well'*. It also identified gaps including too many fixed-term exclusions, a need for more able Year 10 and 11 students to have access to ICT exams, and targets not being clear or stretching enough for some students.

In 2008 Bedminster Down was named by SSAT a school making sustained improvement. It had been improving attainment at twice the national rate. A further Ofsted Inspection in September 2009 noted that the school was *'satisfactory and improving'* with attainment rising much faster than national rates. It added: *'Students' learning and progress are satisfactory and getting better as a result of improvements to all aspects of provision.'* This included students making good progress in design and technology and children who need additional support doing *'particularly well'*. It recommended that the school continue to work on attainment, and to raise attendance to at least 92.3% by July 2010.

The school's recent results are as follows:

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% 5+ A* - C GCSE	26	37	41	46	47
% 5+ A* - C GCSE inc. English and Maths	19	24	27	30	30

The Head has set the school a 2010 target of 60% 5+ A* to C GCSE and 40% 5+ A* to C GCSE including English and Maths.

'School improvement is a totally active process; you can't take your foot off the pedal. The question is where is the next step up? If our practices were implemented in a 70% school, results would go up to 90%!' (Head)

Strategies introduced to improve standards

Using specialist status to boost standards

All Year 10 students take technology subjects (maths, science and design and technology).

The Specialist Technology status of the school has led to an increase in investment in specialist equipment. The school now has three ICT suites and a digital recording studio. Most classrooms, including all maths classrooms, have interactive

whiteboards. The Design and Technology subject area has seen investment in CAD/CAM, 3D design, laser cutting and vinyl cutting software and sublimation machines. The school has appointed a specialist to train staff on using ICT. The Subject Leader in Design and Technology aims to enhance relationships between the specialism and local industry and businesses.

But investment in technology does not tell the whole story of the school's approach to its specialism: *'There is a lot more ICT, and we have also retained the old fashioned traditional hand skills and the students appreciate that – that's how we win, we offer both.'* (Subject Leader in Design and Technology)

The school organises its technology specialism to allow a very hands on experience. It doesn't stick to 'linear' processes. Students from deprived areas seem to appreciate this. The success rests on *'seeing what the individual student is interested in, what they will actually appreciate, and work from that standpoint to try and get them the qualifications. That for us is what has really worked...the way you go about covering the curriculum, you have to think about the nature of the pupils. I think that is something that we do very well.'* (Subject Leader in Design and Technology)

Out-of-hours support is also offered by teachers as needed to help students complete class work; teachers commonly work with students until 5.30pm.

The school is trying to improve crossover between the subjects. It takes part in an 'F1 in Schools' project. This involves designing rocket cars using CAD and crosses over science, engineering and maths. The school also has 'Super Learning Days' which aim to help students to see the whole curriculum as connected. These involve students working on a specific project for a day. They aim to overcome divisions that students may perceive between the specialist and mainstream subjects.

The school has cross-curricular 'School Priority Action Groups' that look at how Maths and English learning needs are fed in across the faculties. In design, for example, literacy-focused tasks such as evaluation work, generating design briefs, analysing work, and 'writing frames' are used to help students produce high quality written work within the subject.

Although there is evidence of Maths and English being brought into design and technology, the school is less clear on the specifics of how the specialism supports better attainment in other subject areas.

Effective use of data, including benchmarking on entry

Over the past five years, Bedminster Down has developed sophisticated systems to identify individual students who need support and link them to effective intervention strategies. This approach has contributed to outcomes consistently above Fischer Family Trust 'D' indicators (progress equivalent to top 25% of schools in the country) as opposed to FFT 'B' (similar students in similar schools). The Head feels that the key to the process is effective use of data, turning it into useful information for teachers, Heads of Year and senior leaders in the school.

The school has specifically chosen to use FFT data to frame attainment and achievement. They found that CVA weightings and RAISE online, for example, did not fully capture the impact of educational deprivation in the area, nor the community tending to be in low skilled work rather than being eligible for free school meals. FFT indicators take these factors into consideration more effectively.

The Head notes that some predicted grades from Key Stage 2 are not accurate as they do not map onto certain subjects. The school therefore uses NFER CAT tests in Year 7 to analyse preferred learning styles and to help set challenging targets for progress at KS3.

Attainment at KS3 is carefully analysed against FFT indicators, enabling students who have underachieved during KS3 to be identified, and for programmes of mentoring, monitoring and additional study support to be used. Attitudinal surveys are conducted at the end of KS3 to identify students for supportive interventions at the start of Year 10, when subject staff set targets based on national rates of progress from KS3 AVP, KS3 fine graded levels, reading age and CAT data.

Microsoft Access databases and Excel spreadsheets are currently used to process the raw data on students at a fine level. This enables senior and middle leaders to identify trends of underachievement and overachievement rapidly, and to put appropriate strategies in place quickly. The school monitors all students this way, but the *'main battleground'* (Head) is over the C/D cohort. The database records interventions that have been made for each individual student, enabling effectiveness to be measured.

The Subject Leader in Design and Technology notes that when teachers get a new group of students they can easily see which students needs attention and how, and teachers can see strengths and weaknesses across the school. They then use lesson observation to assess what interventions are likely to help e.g. in the technology areas generating ideas or using hand skills.

The data are also analysed to regroup or reallocate students: *'for example we found a group of students who were not achieving in French, so we used some National Challenge money to disapply them from French GCSE and provide them with extra tuition in Maths and English and coursework catch-up. The great thing about having a data system to underpin it is that you can make decisions very quickly, looking at borderline students, boys/girls, children in care for example.'* (Head)

The Head leads on data management, and staff are now being trained in using FFT data directly. Directors of Achievement will cascade the training. This will allow more consistency across the staff team, and enable more focus on expectations of students.

An Assistant Head sums up the difference that this fine data management makes: *'Occasionally you meet teachers from other schools who are aware of the ability of the group they are teaching. Our staff are aware of the individuals within that group, with individual performance possibilities.'*

Refocusing staff

The school has looked at the professional attributes that are required to improve attainment, reconfiguring staff with a focus on *'process rather than function'* (Head). A Director of Achievement, whose role is to keep the focus on attendance, discipline and attainment, now leads every school year. The Senior Learning Team has worked to improve the performance and focus of *'middle leaders'* (Director of Achievement) in the school. There is *'Much more focus on teaching and learning, rather than on managing students' behaviour.'* (Assistant Head Teacher)

The school has aligned the responsibilities of leadership and made sure that every staff member is clear about their role. Each staff member has aims and objectives, which are reviewed at performance appraisals. Performance management is aligned with the annual school development plan, which is disaggregated to Faculties, Departments and individuals, so *'everyone is clear about their contribution to the whole'* (Assistant Head Teacher). For the Head, this approach makes it *'easy to challenge and hold people to account in a 'detached' way.'* Strong performance management is effective here too: *'a manager can enter performance management aims, objectives and targets once and it appears in 10 staff performance management documents individualised to that particular member of staff's faculty and year team's commitments.'* (Head)

The Head notes that the approach taken to staffing has been one of evolutionary change with cooperation, rather than radical directive change, partly in order to sustain support from teachers. *'We have tried to improve, but not at the expense of good relationships. We live and breath collegiality, as reflected in our excellent Investor on People feedback reports.'* (Head).

The school has found it hard to recruit staff to the leadership team who have the personal attributes needed to engage children of the background from which most of Bedminster Down's children come, the *'level of deprivation and challenge, for example, that leads to a two hour battle over the removal of a tongue stud, where the child calls in their parents to support them Battles like this are worth having and winning, but you need a special kind of person to lead the fight'* (Head) so the school is focusing on growing their own leadership from within.

Attendance and discipline

Over the past five to six years, attendance at Bedminster Down has been raised from 86% to 91.8%. Ofsted has asked the school to increase attendance by a further 0.5% by July 2010.

Bedminster Down formerly used the local authority Education Welfare Officer. The officer had to work across several schools and Bedminster Down felt this could be made more effective for them. In 2008, they and another school jointly employed their own Education Welfare Officer. This person works 2.5 days a week with the school, and the school has more control over their priorities. Bedminster Down can make sure that the officer focuses on those students the school wants to focus on; and the officer has time to attend multi-disciplinary meetings and to visit parents. The officer has a sole focus on attendance, although *'The days when schools had time to get kids out of bed are gone – it's about changing hearts and minds, not just shock tactics.'* (Director of Achievement)

The school has introduced new systems for dealing with misbehaviour, including:

- Children being sent to another class in the same Faculty, rather than standing outside a classroom;
- Internal exclusions (one to two days in the school 'withdrawal room' and parents brought in);
- Working in the 'withdrawal room' (one to one learning with an individual teacher); and
- Restorative approaches (students meeting together with staff to address disputes).

Support for students – emotional and behavioural

The school has operated a Support Base for twelve years. It currently has five staff who work flexibly to support motivation to learn as well as behaviour. The Support Base's brief has become more *'sophisticated'* (Director of Achievement) over time. As well as supporting students with anger management, anxiety, behavioural and emotional issues, it targets support to looked after children and support in relation to child protection.

The students noted that staff from the Support Base come into class to sit with individual students who need extra support to study, and spoke highly of its work. *'If you have problems at home or are just sad about something you can always just go down there and there is always someone to talk to.... If you're struggling or if you're nervous about exams or something.'*

Support for students – academic

The school has to start children in a different way from schools in traditionally higher attaining areas. *'Our idea of a starter is to engage the kids. For a really good school it's to 'review prior learning' because the children come ready to learn – the kids are already engaged. It's different strokes for different people.'* (Head)

All students in the school have a Learning Planner, monitored by the school and signed by parents. The Planner has a space for target grades in all subjects to be clearly recorded. These also appear on Progress Reviews and in each student's full report. Staff should mark students' work with a clear comment on what the student needs to do to get to the next grade. The school is still developing consistency on this for all teachers.

Each September the school timetable is collapsed for a day. Year 7 students use this as a 'bonding day' with their tutor; all other years work with their tutors on academic and attitudinal targets - 'target-setting day'. The students interviewed were aware of 'target setting day' and had received targets all the way through their school career at Bedminster Down. They found these helpful: *'they give you something to work for, aim for, you can try and beat it – if you can do that lesson well, you know you are on target for your grade.'* They were also confident that they could talk to teachers if targets were too high or too low. They had needed to negotiate to get maths, art and other targets more reflective of their ongoing attainment.

The school aim is for all students to know what they need to do to improve their grade in each subject. The school is confident that *'a large majority know how to take the next step'*, but are *'not fully confident that they all do.'* (Associate Head). The students' perception was that the school discusses their attainment with them two or three times a year and that parents are asked to come in if targets are not being met.

The school noted that in Year 10 there is six-weekly monitoring of students' attainment. A Director of Achievement might take ten students whose predicted and actual grades are not matching and draw up a contract with them, involving their parents in the process. Mentoring, coaching and additional monitoring and support would be provided where necessary, alongside access to alternative accreditation.

Directors of Achievement also have *'learning conversations'* with targeted students. A letter home follows, stating the outcome for the student and noting that conversations with an achievement focus have happened with many students. This approach avoids parents thinking that their child has been singled out.

The school has support groups for students based on learning rather than on behaviour. The Director of Achievement provided examples of interventions that the school makes. She broke down the groups for intervention as follows:

- Gifted and talented;
- Behaviour affecting performance;
- Middle ability girls;
- Looked after children; and
- Students who should be getting 5 A* to C including English and maths.

Interventions between Christmas and exams include mentoring, regrouping of students, and withdrawal of students from certain GCSEs with additional English and Maths coaching where necessary. The school double-enters students where helpful. They are considering early entry as a strategy.

A mix of setting and mixed ability groups are used at KS4, according to their evidence of success by subject. Timetabled tutorial support is also provided.

Bedminster Down has Saturday schools, after school support, and has a VLE for online study from home. The school has appointed a speech and language therapist as part of their extended schools provision to support children to catch up with gaps in extended English. The Assistant Head Teachers felt that the out of hours support is *'critical'*. They added that the school *'has to work on the assumption that a lot of our students do not do much work out of school as they do not have the facilities or support to do so'*.

The school keeps its focus on the needs of the families that use the school. For example 'Computers for People' funding from the local authority was intended to be targeted at children on Free School Meals, but the school focused on allocating the computers to children whose parents were in low paid work, and still on poverty line.

Reflecting the needs of its population, literacy support is also a very high priority for the school. In Year 7 to 8 there is a support group *'Seven Plus'* for students who may in the past have been placed in special education, who need a specific literacy focus to their learning. There are eighty new 'one-to-one' places at KS3 for students. This entails ten hours one-to-one literacy time for each child, and a test at the end of it to re-assess their reading age. The school receives funding to employ a teacher for the hours required for this. Funding comes from the DCSF, guaranteed for one year.

As part of the community placement element of the school curriculum, some students read with children at primary school. As part of this, they are taught how to teach children to read, which the school hopes will further embed literacy: *'there is nothing like having to explain it to somebody else.'* (Assistant Head Teacher)

Diversifying qualifications

Bedminster Down is a member of a local partnership of six schools. This has opened up choices of 'curriculum pathway' for students at KS4. Students can now take a

wide range of subjects at GCSE or as specialist diplomas including at other schools in the cluster. This opens up the ability of the school to personalise learning to each child's specific requirements and needs. One student interviewed had deliberately chosen a BTEC course in public services, rather than take GCSEs in order to follow a specific career. This would give him four equivalents to GCSEs, alongside taking Maths, English and Science at GCSE.

'An innovative aspect of the curriculum which enables students to make a strong contribution to the community is the weekly community placement programme undertaken by Year 10 students.' (Ofsted report 2009).

Every Year 10 student is out of school for 0.5 days per week to do community work. Students gave examples of teaching French in primary schools and working on a community farm. The student teaching French spoke about how helpful this was for her in keeping up her practice in the language.

The school has focused on *engagement* in learning right up to the Y11 examination period. The school uses alternative accreditations including ALAN online testing. The ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness has also been used widely, as a measure of skill attainment, not simply academic attainment, giving students the opportunity to develop wider key skills and accredit them at Level 2 (equivalent to a GCSE Grade B). Between 20 and 70 students a year might complete the ASDAN portfolio of evidence. The community placement programme contributes to this portfolio. The Head is a trustee of ASDAN.

Students who are *overachieving* with three or four Cs are given access to alternative accreditation strategies as well, giving the potential to lift them to five A*-C.

The school notes that feedback from parents and students to these wider opportunities has been positive. Bedminster Down has chosen not to *'leap'* (Head) into an alternative curriculum. Although they perceive that taking this approach may provide a quick rise in results, the school wants to balance quality of qualifications with extending the range.

SSAP support

The Head attended various SSAP events from 2002-2006. He found these useful for gaining ideas from other schools, and for getting to know other heads. He *'got what he needed'* from it, including from attendance at one event at which he learned the concept, now applied in the school, of making sure that the school is looking at every student, not just those in five A* to C as *'you never know where a superstar might be'* (Head). The school did not have a consultant head or partner school as part of its SSAP work.

Future plans and sustainability

The school has clear plans to continue with the interventions that it has successfully been making, summed up by one staff member as: *'a combination of very astute interrogation of data; also the personal and professional skills of staff; plus a more sophisticated approach towards targeting individual students.'* (Director of Achievement).

The Head emphasises that the school's context of a specific type of deprivation is vital to work with, and that this takes sustained work, and some creativity, to change:

'One of the fundamental barriers to learning is a deep rooted cognitive one, If I had a pot of money I would employ a behavioural psychologist who was familiar with Feuerstein's theory and would work alongside the special needs faculty and with extended groups of weak students, to overcome the cognitive deficiencies of students and help them achieve better; making a well managed, planned intervention and measuring the impact of this.'

Conclusion

Bedminster Down does not have a particular subject area in which it has needed to focus to improve attainment. The 2009 Ofsted report confirms the school's strength across the curriculum.

Rather, as the school is located in an area where education has not had a strong value for generations, the school's mission is to engage both parents and students with the tasks of attending school and attaining at school. This is a long-term, generational process in which, as the Head notes, the school *'can't take its foot off the pedal'*.

The Head is implementing a model of linking the specific type of deprivation affecting the school's children to changing expectations of them, to improving behaviour, to boosting achievement and attainment. The type of deprivation cannot be ignored for the school's interventions to be made effective:

"Every school is unique – where it is on a journey, the experience of the leadership and its priorities. A skilled leader will know which lever to pull, how hard and for how long." (Head)

The Assistant Heads reinforce this. Although the school seeks learning from elsewhere, they always need to adapt it to the unique environment of the school, it needs to be *'personalised and filtered'* (AHT) to make it effective.

The school continues with its target-setting for attainment, improving year-on-year. It plans to continue with its wider intervention set, the only significant change being the new one-to-one funding from DCSF.

The attitude of staff in valuing children really matters, summed up in a phrase used by the Head: *'our parents send us the very best kids they've got.'*

5. Community Science College @ Thornhill

Introduction

The Community Science College @ Thornhill is located in Thornhill, a large village about 3 miles from Dewsbury in West Yorkshire. It is an 11-16 comprehensive school with students progressing to key stage 5 in a variety of schools and colleges in the area as appropriate to their next stage of study. It has a roll of around 700 pupils 50% of whom come from the 1930s built council estate in which it is located, 25% from the surrounding area and 25% coming mainly from Savile Town in Dewsbury. The students from Thornhill and area are mainly White British, while those from Dewsbury are mainly Muslim – just fewer than 17% are Pakistani Muslim and around 9% are from the Gujarati Muslim ethnic group. It was noted that the school has become increasingly popular with the Muslim community and the school has been working at creating a strong supportive ethos, particularly for Muslim girls. Currently, seventy-five percent (75%) of the pupils are from the 20% most deprived super-output areas, with 24% eligible for free school meals and 24% recognised as having special educational needs. The 2007 Ofsted report noted that attainment on entry was low; it was reported by college leadership that attainment on entry was variable according to cohort, but that literacy was particularly poor.

The College has had recent investment in its building stock with, for example, a new Humanities and library block, a Design and Technology block, a new dance and drama studio and, in 2007 a new Sports Hall, which is open to the wider community, was completed. As part of the Kirklees Building Schools for the Future Programme it is proposed that the College will expand to having a roll of up to 1200 within the next 5 years and will have an extensive community role.

The college was designated a science specialist college in 2003, as this was one of the strongest areas in the school at the time. During the period 2003 to 2007 the science department and the school as a whole experienced disruption in staffing, with some staff being promoted out of the school and others, including members of the senior leadership team, on long term absence. The Ofsted inspection in 2007 highlighted this 'turbulence' particularly in relation to science and noted that while overall school achievement was satisfactory it was below average and was hindered by satisfactory rather than good teaching. During the course of interviews, staff, who had been in the school throughout this period, noted that there was a perception that 'things were not well in the school', 'things were not good', and 'in the local area the school had a bad name' but that this had now improved.

In 2007, when it came to redesignation as a specialist school, the SSAT placed the school on probation due to the poor results in science, with a particular focus on improving the achievement of students in science and also on developing a specialist community plan. The original specialist designation had been in science only but at the redesignation stage it was classed as a specialist school in science and mathematics. The college became part of the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme in February 2008 was successfully redesignated as a specialist college in science and mathematics in May 2009.

Specialist Schools Achievement Programme

The current head teacher (who had been deputy head and acting head at the time the school was put on probation) was appointed in 2007. As noted above the main

challenges were to improve from Ofsted's 'satisfactory' report and to regain specialist designation through improving the student results in science and improving the community role of the school.

The main strategies adopted to address raising student achievement were:

- appointing appropriate staff and ensuring stable staffing in all subject departments but science in particular;
- introducing a 'personalised' curriculum primarily in science but in other areas as appropriate;
- improved data management, tracking and intervention across the whole school.

New partner school and wider community plans were developed and implemented. These strategies are reported on in more detail in the following sections.

In 2008 the school was also designated a National Challenge School (i.e. target of 30% of pupils attaining 5+A*-C GCSEs including maths and English), thus allowing the school to provide additional support to raise achievement in English and mathematics at all levels, but especially for those who are considered borderline.

A particular benefit of being part of SSAP was the focus to improve development planning. Staff who had been in the school at the time of the 2003 specialist designation commented that the original plans had been 'too ambitious' and 'enormous' and as a result had been unachievable; they reported that they now worked in a much more focused way. The plans developed while part of the SSAP were more specific, focusing clearly on what actions should be taken; the head teacher acknowledged the support of the consultant head teacher and the role of SSAT in the development and reviewing of these plans. The wider community plan has been particularly beneficial in relation to supporting science in partner schools.

Attendance at the SSAP conferences was beneficial. Ideas had been shared which helped in the development of new strategies or confirmed existing strategies, for example, ways of tracking and intervention, and the introduction of modular mathematics. The college was also able to share their strategies with others.

Over the past three years the various strategies have enabled the college to raise pupil attainment from significantly below the national average to average and above average results for the current year 11 (2009-2010) students are predicted. The progress in key measures since 2007 is given in Table 1.

GCSE Performance

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% GCSE 5+ A*-C	37	35	33	52	56
% GCSE %+ Inc English and Maths	23	23	22	34	29

Improved pupil attainment in terms of examination results is a clear outcome of both SSAP and action in response to the Ofsted report. It was also reported that more post-16 students have progressed to courses linked to mathematics and science.

Strategies introduced to raise standards

Staffing

A key priority was to ensure that people with the relevant skills, expertise and experience were in post with the main focus on establishing a senior leadership team and stable staffing in science. A new senior leadership team was formed, including

one longstanding member from the previous team with responsibility for pastoral care. A new deputy head with specific expertise in ICT and knowledge of data management and tracking was appointed. A new curriculum leader in science was appointed and over the intervening period new science teachers were appointed with full staffing being achieved in September 2009. The full complement of staffing in science has enabled standards to be raised and means the department, along with the mathematics department, can be a focus of wider school developments and improvements. A higher level teaching assistant in science has just been appointed. National Challenge funding has allowed the appointment of an Advanced Skills Teacher in English; there are also higher level teaching assistants in English and mathematics. Interviewees commented that the senior leadership team now worked well together and 'the focus was on the children'. One person commented that they have 'a happier and more motivated staff than 5 years ago'. Year 10 and 11 students expressed the view that 'the new head teacher and deputy head teacher... have changed the way everything's dealt with and it seems like it is improving a lot'. They added, 'teachers here talk to you ... they are really friendly'.

Personalised curriculum

As a science and mathematics specialist college all students study these subjects at key stage 4. One of the reasons identified for the poor results, in addition to instability in the staffing, was the inappropriateness of the curriculum for many of the students. Those in the top set who were studying three single sciences were viewed as being able to cope with this curriculum but that for many other students courses that had a high dependency on examination results were inappropriate. OCR National awards were introduced and for some students the AQA Core curriculum because of its focus on coursework that can be done during lessons and so is less reliant on students completing coursework in their own time. This has resulted in students who would not previously have achieved any qualification in science now gaining an award. The science development plan is that over time, as the work with partner primary schools leads to improved key stage 2 science (see Community Links) and also key stage 3 results improve, more students will be presented for higher level awards.

New courses were also introduced in ICT with a change of examination board which allowed a stronger focus on coursework, allowing students to achieve A passes as opposed to Cs. Different pathways are also offered through English and mathematics.

The year 10 and 11 students were well aware of the different choices in science, mathematics and English and also commented on the variety of subjects that was available to them. They appeared to appreciate that they were on the courses most appropriate to their needs and were the ones that would give them the best chance of success. One year 10 student with a particular career objective in mind, identified through the Aimhigher programme that her science course would not allow her to proceed to the A levels she required. This was discussed with the science curriculum leader and it was agreed she could change programme with appropriate support. At the time of the interview she reported performing above her targets. There is, therefore, flexibility in the approach to 'personalising' the curriculum.

During the interviews considerable emphasis was given to the 'alternative curriculum' that is in place for a group that have been identified as having severe difficulties – both learning difficulties and disabilities and emotional, social and behavioural problems – some with criminal records. The Ofsted report in 2007 acknowledged this tailored support as being good. The view of the senior management and staff was that it is important to keep this group in college, though they could not be part of

the mainstream as their behaviour was too disruptive. They have a separate centre on the college campus and the 'best' teachers are allocated to teach them; they are studying courses in science, design and technology, and art and design. One teacher reported that they would get mainly F and G passes and some would go on to practical college courses. This was a positive outcome for those students and would also assist with the college's contextual value added score. During the visit we met some of those students undertaking their mock Art GCSE exam and they were happy to display their achievements. Other year 10 and 11 students explained the alternative curriculum was for 'those who did not fit in It's good because they get extra support'.

Data management and tracking

The college now has a whole school approach to managing student progress data which was established and managed by the deputy head teacher who, as noted, was specifically appointed, at the beginning of the academic year 2007-2008, to develop appropriate systems. Prior to this, some departments had developed their own student progress monitoring systems for their own subjects and the Ofsted report noted in 2007 that students were beginning to benefit from working towards negotiated targets, notably in mathematics and design and technology, and that rigorous use of data about student progress was a growing strength in the school. The new head of science also introduced student tracking and target setting along with the revised science curriculum. However, school senior leaders and heads of year did not have a whole college overview.

The first step was to analyse student progress, focusing on context value added scores and GSCE scores, and identify which students were underperforming and required intervention. The assistant head teacher, working closely with the deputy head, developed intervention plans for students, particularly those in year 11 and worked with heads of departments to ensure that students participated in appropriate support. Since then the system has continued to develop and staff are being trained to access and use the full range of data about their students, including relevant prior attainment (e.g. key stage 2 levels, CAT scores for literacy and numeracy, key stage 3 levels), target and predicted levels of attainment, deprivation indicators (IMD super-output area, free meal entitlement), and other factors such as SEN, gifted and talented, and ethnicity. Teachers use the data to identify which of their students are not performing to expected levels and as a result could potentially reduce the overall class and school targets. Pupil progress is reviewed in departmental meetings, once a term for key stage 3 and twice a term for key stage 4. Heads of department report to the senior leadership team on students that staff have highlighted as raising concerns, the minutes of these meetings are passed to the assistant head teacher who then reviews each student and identifies where they are 'off-target' and recommends appropriate interventions. As teachers become more confident in using the data, the assistant head teacher will be able to reduce the amount of time spent on monitoring, although there will always be a need to develop and update the approaches used and undertake development for new staff. While of particular relevance to key stage 4 students, key stage 3 students are set targets with an aim of moving them up 2 levels per year.

It was reported that students all now know which level they are working at in their subjects and what their targets are, while in 2007 this would not have been the case. They are all provided with written information on what they need to do to progress to the next level. This information is recorded in their planners which all students must have with them at all times and which is also used as a key means of communication with parents, and, therefore, it is expected that parents will be aware of the progress

their children are making. The group of students that were interviewed were, indeed, very clear about this.

We always know which grades we are working towards because we have them in our planner. We are always reminded and have sheets that have how to work towards them and we know ourselves what we are supposed to be doing in every subject.

Years 8 and 9 have bar charts that they colour in and that show what grades they've gone off in

In year 11 every 6 weeks predicted grades are redone. Predicted grades are what the teacher thinks you'll get.

We get reminded a lot what our targets are.

(Year 10 and 11 students)

One staff interviewee expressed the view that some students, by the time they get to year 10 and 11, can become stressed by the constant drive to meet targets. Some students through 'student voice' had said that they no longer enjoyed some subjects because of it and this was an issue they would need to look at.

Interventions to support student learning

The college has a wide range of opportunities to provide appropriate support to all students or to provide additional support for those who are, or are at risk of being, 'off-target'.

Coursework days are built into the timetable to allow a full-day to be spent on the completion of coursework. This has proved to be beneficial for students who, if left to complete it in their own time, would not do so. It also provides an extended period of time to complete tasks, for example in science to complete and write up an experiment, which is more difficult to do over 5 separate periods. A recurrent theme from interviewees in different subject areas was the importance of ensuring that the students were submitting high quality coursework as this could make a difference between a C and a D pass ... or indeed an A or an A*. Therefore, while a priority is ensuring that key targets are met by focusing on borderline students, especially in English and mathematics, the aim is also to ensure that all students get the best possible grade they can achieve.

In addition to the coursework days, where required, there are 'catch-up classes' after school; indeed, these could be compulsory and, in the words of one of the students, 'if you don't finish it in class you are going to be in detention for course work catch-up'. These classes are also for students who want additional support for homework and revision purposes. They are run by staff on a voluntary basis; one curriculum leader said 'it's all voluntary, but staff are brilliant, they are always around. If more (students) turn up than expected there are staff there to help them'.

Easter holiday revision is supported before the examinations. Students who need extra help are specifically asked to attend this.

The college has introduced assertive mentoring for around half of the year 11 students, mainly those who are C/D borderline but also others, who have the potential to achieve more if appropriately challenged or, as a Year 11 student said, 'who like me need to be pushed a bit'. Parents and students are invited to an introduction to the mentoring programme and are asked to sign up to taking part.

The students meet approximately monthly with their assigned mentors (staff members who have volunteered to take on this role) where a 'no nonsense' approach is adopted to progress and challenging goals set to complete work if they get behind; parents are phoned about the outcome of the meetings. It was reported that in 2008-2009 10% of this group were predicted to achieve 5+A*-C and in the end nearly 70% of them did.

Over the past two years the key stage 4 form structure has been changed to enable targeted tutoring. In year 10 there is a National Challenge form and an Aimhigher form, both of which have two form tutors supporting them; in year 11 there is the assertive mentoring form and a C/D borderline form and the alternative curriculum group. Students not assigned to any of these forms are in form groups based on their subject options. The form tutors take the groups for 20 minutes each morning and also for the personal and social development and personal development classes, which adds up to 200 minutes per week. The form tutors can focus these times on activities specifically relevant to their form groups, for example the National Challenge form can be given additional support in mathematics and English.

The Aimhigher group have been identified from students from poorer backgrounds who have the potential to continue to university studies. The school has an Aimhigher co-ordinator who spends two days a week in the school as part of the Kirklees Aimhigher programme. This group of students are involved in events which introduce them to different opportunities for progressing to higher education and, in addition to the support from their form tutors; they are mentored and advised by the Aimhigher co-ordinator. The Aimhigher co-ordinator was organising a trip to Oxford University for year 10 students who were gifted in mathematics. The visit would include a maths masterclass and 'fun and cultural' activities.

The college has begun to encourage early entry in some subjects, for example, some year 11 students had been entered for English GCSE in November. This would allow those who were successful to concentrate on other subjects such as English literature or Media Studies or provide the opportunity for those who were unsuccessful to resit their exams. While waiting on their results they could spend extra time on their mathematics. In some subjects the key stage 4 curriculum was being introduced in year 9.

Use of specialism/specialist subject staff

An important aspect of the subject specialism in the Specialist Schools programme is to drive improvement across the school. The priority for the college, while on probation for its science specialism, was to improve the performance of the science department and, as reported, this has been achieved through science being highly focused in implementing the above strategies. The science curriculum leader also introduced approaches to improve teaching in the department through a process of classroom observation, 'book monitoring' to identify evidence of different approaches to teaching (e.g. didactic or active and experimental), reviewing approaches with staff on an individual basis, and using the resources of the Specialist Schools science teachers network. As part of the community plan, the science department has developed a strong working relationship with Huddersfield University initial teacher training programme (see below) which has led to having good quality student teachers on placement and appointing some of them as teachers in the department.

The commitment within the science department is to maintain the standard of teaching and learning; the staff themselves introduced peer-observation and are now carrying this forward including discussions and support for each other in improving

their own practices. The science department, along with the mathematics department, is now in a position to lead developments in the college.

Staff in the maths and science departments are asked to lead the training of other staff in new systems, for example, the new self-evaluation framework was trialled by them; staff in maths and science are working together to develop a virtual learning environment which they will then train other staff to use. New equipment and software is also trialled in these departments along with ICT and Design and Technology. They also take a role in helping other departments identify their technology needs and support them in through the process of purchasing and introducing new technologies.

The science and mathematics specialism is used as the focus for cross-curricular themed days. A science topic is identified and all departments do something in their area supported by the science staff. One recent example was the theme of genetics when, for example, the humanities department investigated Hitler and genocide, geography looked at GM foods, PE studied fitness and genetic links. These days are designed to allow students to see the links across subjects while emphasising the science specialism; they involve group-working, including 'vertical groupings' with older and younger students working together, problem-solving and thinking skills. As one interviewee said, it is important 'to give the kids a day to remember'.

Science and mathematics have not been asked to contribute to continuing professional development on a college-wide basis as CPD is departmentally based. However, Assessment for Learning is a whole school policy for improving teaching and learning and has been led by the advanced skills teacher in Design and Technology. This supports the personalised approach to the curriculum and the use of data, individual target setting and improvement strategies for each student.

Because of its science and mathematics specialism, the college was invited to be part of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programme. The additional funding from this allows the college to pay staff to run year 7 and 8 STEM clubs and to participate in Young Engineers with the partner primary schools (see following sections).

Community links

The community development plan was a priority for the school during probation and in its redesignation as a science specialist college. There are three main elements in community links: support for partner schools which include 3 primary schools, a nursery and a secondary special school; wider community links which have concentrated so far on the relationship with Huddersfield University Initial Teacher Training provision; and links with business and higher education to enrich the learning experiences and widen opportunities for the college's students.

Partner schools

The assistant curriculum leader in science has responsibility for developing links with the partner schools and has been in this role for a year. New and stronger relations have been developed with the partners schools and networking amongst them has been encouraged, something which had not previously occurred. The role is to 'empower' the primary teachers to teach science well with a view to improving performance at key stage 2 and lay the foundation for improved learning and achievement at key stages 3 and 4. One example, which the ACL has worked on with the primary schools, is the topic of space. It is a topic about which pupils have

misconceptions and as it recurs in years 7, 9 and at GCSE, it is important to address these misconceptions at an early stage.

The college has community science rooms which are specifically for the use of the partner schools. These previously were not used but activities are now being developed which is leading to greater use of them. They are transition programmes developed around themes, for example 'The Dewsbury Thief' which builds on pupils interest in forensic science. These programmes assist in the general transition process to secondary school, but specifically prepare the pupils for working in a laboratory environment.

Pupils in the primary schools take part in Young Engineers as part of the STEM programme. Year 4 children design and make electronic cars in a project which combines science, technology and maths around the theme of transport; they bring them to the college where they have a competition and also experience a design and technology lesson. The winners go on to the national competition.

Huddersfield University ITT

Strong links have been developed with Huddersfield University Initial Teacher Training programme. Staff from the college science department assist with interviewing potential students for the programme and contribute to the programme by lecturing on common misconceptions in science. The college takes ITT students on placement, mentor them and include them in the wider science activities such as the partner school developments.

Business, industry and further/higher education links

Wider community links are important for enriching the learning experiences of the students and the college has well-established work-related learning which has improved particularly in relation to science and mathematics during participation in SSAP. Students visit colleges and sixth forms to find out how science and mathematics are taught to encourage them to progress with these subjects in their next stage. The work-related learning programme involves students visiting companies to experience first hand the relevance of the curriculum they are learning (for example, environmental sustainability issues as addressed by waste management, the car industry and soap and chemical manufacturers) and in-college industry days, when representatives of business, industry and higher education come into the college. These are an important feature of year 10 when there are 3 industry days which involve science challenges and 'roadshows'.

School organisation and ethos

The college prospectus states that

the College is a happy, vibrant place where students work hard in their academic studies and are involved in a wide range of sporting, creative, practical and social activities.

It goes on to emphasise its supportive, inclusive environment that encourages students to achieve the highest possible academic success and develops respect and responsibility.

During the interviews the view was widely expressed that the school now had a good leadership team that worked well together with shared values and a focus on the students. Several interviewees reported that it was now a happier place than several years ago and staff were more motivated and students were enjoying being in

school. Factors which contributed to this ethos included the pastoral support system, positive discipline policy and approaches to inclusion (or alternatives to exclusion), and the enrichment activities which were part of school life.

Since 2007 the heads of year have been non-teaching, support staff. Their role is to 'care for students from 8.30 to 4.30'. They support all aspects of pastoral care but during the past two years their major focus and success has been in raising attendance and reducing the number of persistent absentees, that is pupils who miss at least one-fifth of school. During the first hour of the day they phone the parents of children who are not in school, ask why they are absent and when they will be back. They meet with parents and negotiate ways of overcoming absence. In just over one year the number of persistent absentees was reduced from 102 to 32. One of the roles of the heads of year is to work with pupils who are in the 'isolation unit'. This is a room set aside for pupils who might otherwise be excluded for serious misdemeanours and aims to support their continued inclusion in mainstream classes. The alternative curriculum group which has its own centre was noted above and is another example of how the school is supporting inclusion.

The school has a clearly set out positive discipline policy with clear rewards and sanctions. The pupils who were interviewed were well aware of this and valued it as a way of ensuring that they were not distracted by students who misbehaved.

A further example of how the school has promoted inclusion is the way it has reduced the number of students who become NEET (not in education, employment or training). This had increased to 13% but in 2008-2009 was reduced to 3.9%. Changes were made based on feedback from students, such as a private area for discussions about choices and careers. The improved student data management allowed the careers co-ordinator to identify students who were at risk and they were given additional mentoring and support, in some cases by reducing the number of GCSEs they were doing. It had also been noted that it was not only low performing students that became NEET, but some good AS level students did not continue to sixth-form or other college as planned and 'turned up as NEET'. The year 11 head of year and the careers co-ordinator followed up on students and went to visit them in college to see how they had settled in and to help them with problems. It has been identified that the period between leaving college in June and continuing to the next stage in September is when many are vulnerable and they are looking at ways of providing support during that period. The school was able to appoint a NEET worker, though the sustainability of such a post is under question as the statistics no longer appear to support the need for the post. However, the additional support is still required for students who might become NEET and the college has endeavoured to put in place sustainable support; at the time of the visit it was also seeking alternative sources of funding to support a NEET worker.

The college has a range of after-school clubs and activities. Specifically in relation its specialism there is the STEM club which allows gifted and talented students in science and maths, who are likely to go on to A-level in these subject, to participate in activities involving the design or rockets and go-karts. There are also clubs at lunch time and after school for all pupils involving activities such as sports, dance, drama, ICT and music. The college puts on drama productions which the students spoke about very enthusiastically. It also organises trips for students from local visits to museums to trips abroad including visits to Paris and New York.

Future plans and sustainability

The college aims to continue the progress it has achieved so far through continuing to develop and implement the strategies outlined above. As the Kirklees Building Schools for the Future plans proceed and the college embraces an increasing roll, a more diverse population and new buildings it will face many challenges. The college senior leadership team face this with commitment and enthusiasm.

The key plans for the next 3 years are to progress the work that has started.

The priorities for mathematics and science are

- To increase the uptake of maths and science post-16
- To involve all key stage 4 students in work related learning in maths and science
- To allow year 8 and year 10 students to experience science courses at university to assist them in their career choices
- To support gifted and talented provision in the science curriculum

The priorities for the partner schools are

- To raise attainment in science at key stages 1 and 2 by sharing good practice and establishing a science network meeting
- To run the primary engineer project
- To enrich key stage 2 curriculum in science and maths through the Every Child Matters (ECM) 'enjoy and achieve' agenda focusing on the 'awe and wonderment of science' and the application of maths in context
- To train science and ICT staff in primary schools in the use of data loggers
- To provide support for specific areas of the primary curriculum
- To promote and support 'healthy lifestyle' through cooking in some of schools.
- To raise the attainment in science and mathematics of the pupils at the secondary special school and to enrich the curriculum in line with ECM outcomes.

The priorities for wider community groups are

- To continue and develop the work with Huddersfield University
- To provide learning opportunities through the medium of ICT for local senior citizens by offering access to college facilities
- To raise the awareness of members of the local community of healthy lifestyle in terms of diet and cooking
- To provide opportunities for parents in science and mathematics
- To provide opportunities to parents and students to improve their scientific understanding of astronomy.

6. Lostock College

Introduction

Lostock College is a Specialist School for the Performing Arts located in Trafford, Greater Manchester. The college was part of the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme from September 2007 to September 2009.

Lostock College is located in an area where the level of social deprivation is above the national average. The college has an above average number of students taking free school meals. It has a mobility rate of students entering or leaving the college at other than usual times that is well above average.

Lostock is an unusually small secondary school, with a roll of 376 students aged 11 to 16, having fallen from 473 in 2006. There is currently a proposal that it will merge with another school in the Authority, creating a new establishment of over 1000 students.

The research visit to Lostock College took place on 23 and 24 November 2009. The Head, Dawn Farrent conducted a guided tour of the college. Interviews included the Deputy Headteacher, Subject Leaders in English and Maths, teaching staff, the college Counsellor, the college data manager, and a group of three Year 11 students selected by the college. The SSAP Consultant Head was interviewed by telephone.

Comments by interviewees are incorporated throughout this case study.

Externally the college seems quite ordinary. On entry a warm welcome is provided by dedicated reception staff. The corridors of the school are vibrant with student art. The school library is shared with the community.

The college gained its specialist status in 2002-03. This has led to investment in industry standard music and digital recording suites, renovation of the tiered school theatre and the building of a sprung-floor, mirrored dance studio.

The college was put on probation on 16 January 2006, and successfully re-designated on 30 April 2009. It was given a Notice to Improve by Ofsted on 08 February 2006 which was lifted on 06 June 2007.

The Ofsted Inspection of February 2006 highlighted that the college required significant improvement. They assessed standards in English, Maths and the Performing Arts as not being high enough; teaching and learning not being of consistently sufficient quality; and inconsistent expectations by the college of standards of work and behaviour by students. The Inspection report noted that the college had satisfactory capacity to improve due to the newly appointed Head and her senior team. The Deputy Head notes that this Inspection was not fundamental in driving change at the school, as the new Head had already made decisions to change practices, but adds that it may have given an extra '*boost*' to some staff to improve their performance.

The Notice was lifted in June 2007, with Ofsted finding the college satisfactory with many good and some outstanding features, including in care, guidance and support. It noted that English results continued to require improvement. A further Ofsted monitoring report in September 2008 noted continuing satisfactory improvement, citing expert use of data on student progress. It noted that improvements in English

had been marginal due to staffing issues out of the college's control, and added that the college's targets for 2009 were 'ambitious'.

The schools improvement in results in 2009 was indeed below their predictions:

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% 5+ A* - C GCSE	50	44	53	58	54
% 5+ A* - C GCSE inc. English and Maths	14	13	22	25	28

The Head notes that the college was '*distraught*' at the 2009 outcome of 5+ A* - C GCSE including English and Maths in particular. Nevertheless, standards at the college have continued to improve year-on-year.

Strategies introduced to raise standards

Lostock's aim when the Head and her team started in 2005/6 was to have the greatest impact on its students by identifying the major barriers to learning. Several strategies have been employed to effect change, including SSAP-related support.

A focus on attendance and behaviour

The first focus for the college on its improvement journey was to improve attendance and behaviour. This was done by getting staff and student agreement on a consistent behaviour policy across the school, then making sure that staff took a consistent approach to breaches of the policy. The Student Voice was involved in this to make sure that both staff and students 'owned' the policy. This was a '*long process*' but led to a '*dramatic improvement*' (Deputy Head). Attendance improved from 89% in 2005/6 to 92% in 2008/9. Instances of poor behaviour that required a student to be removed from the classroom, decreased by 51% between 2006/7 and 2008 /9. To make these interventions even more effective, data collection related to removals has been enhanced, including monitoring which teacher, the time of day, even what the weather was like at the time of removal.

The introduction of cross-curricular teaching and learning teams

The second significant change involved sharing of good practice, ideas and strategies between '*outstanding*' departments and other departments, aiming to overcome the '*isolation*' of some departments. This led to '*dramatically improved teaching and learning throughout the school*' (Deputy Head).

Redesigning the college curriculum and supporting all students to attain

The college then worked to radically redesign the whole college curriculum to a 'stage not age' model, bolstered by support centres for students requiring extra help. This has resulted in a fully personalised model for all learners.

The redesign included approaches to enable deprived children and children who had difficulties with traditional learning to gain qualifications. The flexible curriculum allows students to get many types of vocational qualifications at all levels, including Foundation qualifications and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Level 1 and Level 2. The

focus is on helping all students to get qualifications. BTEC Music, for example, has replaced GCSE for all students, as it has a stronger focus on performance and on contemporary music and demands less work on topics such as musical notation and theory. The Art Teacher noted that students can gain art qualifications in year 9, so they gain a qualification without needing to take the subject in years 10 and 11. Students can enter early for GCSE Maths (all students entered early in 2009/10) and GCSE English.

Students are given further support through one to one tutoring, mentoring of groups of students, after-school classes and revision classes. At KS4, progress is tracked on a weekly basis and interventions are instigated as soon as they are needed. The students interviewed said that teachers '*always*' remind them of revision classes. The school also hold maths revision away days jointly with another school, which were commented on positively by the students: '*you learn other ways of teaching*'.

Further initiatives to support specific groups of students included a SMART Centre to provide intensive short-term support for individual students with academic work, and a Personalised Learning Pathways Centre for students with behaviour management issues to get extra support with attainment.

The Deputy Head noted that the college gets a high proportion of students in '*managed moves*' from across the local authority. This happens partly as the college is undersubscribed, but also because it is good at getting the right curriculum and support for students who have difficulty coping in other schools.

The Student Counsellor/SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning) Coordinator also plays a role in supporting students to remain focused. All students learn about emotional intelligence, empathy and using emotional vocabulary. She provides extra support to specific students. For example, students can drop in, and staff also highlight students who they feel need support. She helps students with strategies to talk to their parents, which helps to support better child-parent relationships. Relatives also come into the school and offer counselling to students. This provides a third party to speak to, which some students find helpful. Some students at the college do have anxiety and depression. Although cause-and-effect is hard to prove, the Student Counsellor/SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning) Coordinator feels that these services help students with attainment. They '*help students release their emotional anxieties, meaning that they can concentrate on learning.*'

The introduction of non-teaching Heads of House

Lostock has also changed from a Year system to a House system. Non-teaching Heads of House have been employed as part of wider restructuring of staff. Heads of House have responsibility for pastoral care and child development, attendance and data management of student performance. They were selected for their experience and expertise in working with young people. The difference this separation of roles and the change to the House system has made is freeing up teaching staff and subject leaders to focus solely on academic attainment. The students at the school had experienced the impact of this change:

'When I came here in Year 7 it had quite a bad reputation, but in one year they became a lot stricter on uniform and brought in a House system. This was a lot better as you can always see a Head of House. You didn't used to be able to see your Head of Year because they had lessons of their own, and you can always see a Head of House – even if they are not your own Head of

House - and they always sort out your problems straight away, which is really good.'

Data tracking, including baselining and 'passports to success' model

The 2007 Ofsted report noted that the college had invested in a 'thorough' system of data management. The college have used Schools Information Management System (SIMS) to manage data, and are shortly to change to AIMHigh software which will enable teachers to update student progress directly, rather than going through the college data manager.

The college uses a combination of indicators to identify student attainment levels on entry, and has a sophisticated data tracking system in order to rapidly identify underperformance by individual students. Target grades are individualised, rather than being a standard ambition. The Head noted that standardised expectations (e.g. two Grades above baseline expectations) would place *'too much pressure'* on some students.

The college found that KS2 results were not a helpful baseline for targets. There were difficulties in 'reading across' results at KS2 to all subject areas. The college therefore independently tests all students in their first half term at Lostock to provide an accurate baseline. As one teacher noted *'the baseline helps to motivate students as it is accurate for the subject'*. Students have a traffic light system for 'satisfactory', 'good' and 'outstanding' in relation to expected grades. Teachers write reports twice per term on student performance in relation to expected grades, and letters are sent out to all parents twice per term with this information. The college have continued to tweak their methodology for setting baselines and targets, including using FFTD and CAT.

The college's focus on attainment includes 'passports to success'. Identical grids are on the wall of the Head's office and the staff room which identify each individual Year 11 child's current academic performance in relation to their expected performance. Female students have pink tinted passport-sized cards and males have blue tinted cards. These are moved within the grid according to current performance which provides a simple and striking visual image of which students are most in need of intervention to boost attainment, and ensures that no single student is overlooked. It is *'very different'* from seeing names on a spreadsheet and has had a *'very positive knock-on'* for staff (Deputy Head).

The students interviewed all knew what precisely what grades they were expected to get for all their subjects. They expected that most students would know as *'after every test the teacher tell you what mark you got and what your predicted grade is, and how to work on it to get it better ... and every half term they send home a report, so your parents know your expected grades as well.'*

The Year 11 students were also very aware of the school involving their parents in their attainment: *'We get weekly reports. If you are really bad they will contact your parents. They don't just send a letter they will phone. They will also send a text to your parents if you have done really well... Parents can check up what homework you have got by checking the school website.'*

The students were also very conscious of the school's reward system, which provides collective incentives for students on attendance and performance:

'At the end of each term you get House Points for after-school classes and revision classes, there are also Prom Points for turning up on time, things like that. Rewards are trips out or 'own clothes' days, things like that.'

Use of the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme

The college was part of the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme from September 2007 to September 2009. The college did not have a partner school.

The Consultant Head came in every term during the SSAP period. The Deputy Head found the Consultant Head *'very helpful'*, particularly in supporting the college to continually improve its strategic use of data tracking, including adapting the Jesson Value Added model. He was also very helpful in supporting the school with its Self-Evaluation Form writing. The Consultant Head agrees that the college is now much more rigorous in its use of data, and is also more rigorous in its use of the specialism. His view is that prior to the SSAP Programme the college *'would not have had the confidence to take risks'*. He gave the example of the degree of change to the curriculum that it has made.

Although the SSAP programme has formally ended for the college, the Consultant Head still supports them, including continuing to improve their data tracking.

The school also found the SSAP experience useful for getting ideas from other schools at the termly SSAP conferences. This has included the 'passports to success' grid idea and learning on SEF writing. The college also learned at SSAP about a colour coded 'seating plan' that identifies the current performance of each student sitting in each class. They have taken up this idea, and are developing it further, integrating the seating plans into a spreadsheet, enabling them to be changed easily and quickly according to each student's current attainment, and incorporating any related significant circumstances for each student.

Use of the college Specialism to raise standards

The performing arts specialism has been used to raise student engagement and attainment in a number of ways.

Firstly, it is helpful for non-traditional learners, students who *'just need to move'* (Dance Teacher) and kinaesthetic learners. Drama and dance help Year 7 students with emotional and behavioural needs that may struggle with group work and concentration in other classes. Short tasks are devised that use drama as a tool to help with negotiating and social skills. Role play, 'hot seating', and games on recognition of facial expressions and body language are used. These develop into longer tasks and groupwork as students develop. MC-ing has been used and Capoeira is used to help boys in particular to engage with the specialism. External groups are invited into the school to lead performing arts classes which help with role modelling the performing arts.

Second, the performing arts are used to improve teamwork and self-confidence amongst students generally. The Deputy Head noted:

'the ability to stand up in front of a class and perform something, which works into other lessons ... there is a lot more group work in the school now and less behaviour management ... that's due to the performing arts.'

Third, performing arts skills are sometimes used specifically in other subjects. Raps have been used in maths, which *'makes it more fun for them'* (Maths subject leader). The English syllabus deliberately includes elements of drama performance because of the school specialism: *'Shakespeare is often preferred from the acting point-of-view'*, and *'we are looking at Comedia del Arte ... some students will act, others will do make up, others will direct or take a technical role, not everybody will 'act''* (English Subject Leader). The English Subject Leader added that *'good literacy starts with oracy'* and *'it is a little bit different when you take them over to the performing arts environment (in the school)'*. The students interviewed provided a couple of examples of how they saw the specialism was being used in maths and English: *'We learned a song about the area of a trapezium ... and in English we used to write stories and perform them.'*

Fourth, interviews with dance and music teachers at the college made it clear that performing arts subjects help develop learning that impacts on other subject areas as they involve a much wider range of academic skills and disciplines than may initially appear. For example, dance involves stage design, marketing, planning for self-employment, using I.T (e.g. for choreography); music includes both written work including self-evaluation, comparing and contrasting and work with words e.g. homophones, and work with numbers e.g. counting rhythms and 'musical maths'.

Fifth, the arts are used to bring the community into the college, for example to see performances. Local primary schools also come in to the college to use the dance studio. This supports transitions, joint working between primary and secondary levels, and community engagement with the college. One of the main issues for the school is parental support for what the school is trying to do in terms of academic attainment. The area tends not to traditionally hold academic qualifications in high regard, and the old, poor reputation of the school still hangs on. Parents can see their children grow in *'confidence'* and in *'patience'* (Dance teacher) as they participate in the Performing Arts at the college from Primary level. This notably happened with a recent co-production by KS2 and KS3 jointly with feeder primary schools of Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat which was performed in the theatre at Lostock and was *'great for transition'* (Dance teacher).

Engagement with feeder primary schools

Teachers from Lostock across all subject areas are increasingly spending time working with primary schools, doing workshops and supporting teaching. The purpose is to support primary schools to improve attainment by students before they attend Lostock, and to help students with transition to secondary. This is again results-focused: the better outcomes a student has at primary, the better they are likely to do at secondary school. Time to be spent at Primary Schools is allotted on Lostock staff timetables. As a small college, the staff may have more flexibility to do this than at larger schools. Primary school students also use the science labs at Lostock. This again aids primary school student learning and aims to support better transition.

Future plans and sustainability

In terms of maintaining and improving attainment by all students, the college are to continue with the set of interventions that they have successfully made so far. They are continuing to develop their use and application of data to focus on attainment,

and the efficiency of this, including enhancing the ability of individual teachers to directly input and interpret data.

The likely merger of the college dominates the broader future for students and staff.

Conclusion

There are unique elements to Lostock, as with every school. One element that separates them from most is their small student roll. A number of staff cited this as making a difference: a smaller school means that it is easier for everyone to have personal knowledge of every staff member and every student; classes are smaller; students can have lunch at one sitting all together. It also means that the college's spare capacity can be used to enhance the engagement of primary schools and the community.

This distinction, though, has not obviated the need for the college to actively shape the experiences of all its students in order to improve attainment. The continuous upward trend in results is due to a series of factors: the mix of active leadership from the Head and her senior team; a raft of disciplinary, student support and data management interventions; strategic changes to staff configurations, to student learning experiences, and to the curriculum; using the specialism to play both a supporting role for raising attainment in general, and for supporting the learning of students with social and behavioural needs in particular; keeping parents regularly informed of their child's attainment; support from the SSAP Consultant Head; and active engagement by staff in all of these processes.

It is not possible to isolate any one of these factors as a 'magic bullet' that has made Lostock College a place of continuing improvement for all its students. It is only possible to say that, together, these changes seem to have made a tangible difference to achieving sustained attainment.

7. Shoeburyness High School

On 18 August 2009 Sue Murphy, Head of Shoeburyness High School, Southend-on-Sea passed away after an operation. A week later the GCSE examination results were published. Shoeburyness High School had its best ever performance with 70% of the pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* -C grades. They also raised their performance in five or more A*-C including English and Maths to almost 47%. Four years earlier, when Mrs Murphy took over as Head, only 33% of pupils achieved five GCSE A*-C, and only 22% achieved five GCSE A*-C including English and maths. There has also been an increase in the quality of GCSE grades achieved, up from 2% of pupils gaining 3 A* or A grades in 2005 to 20% gaining these highest grades in 2009.

This case study describes and attempts to explain how the school made this significant improvement; in particular how it's involvement in the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP) assisted in this improvement; and finally how the school paid particular attention to narrowing the gap between the better-off and the most disadvantaged pupils.

The School

Shoeburyness High School is in the west of Shoeburyness towards Thorpe Bay. It is within Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. Shoeburyness railway station is literally the end of the line. To the east of Shoeburyness is the North Sea; to the south is the Thames estuary; and to the north the Roach and Crouch estuary and Foulness Island. This geography is relevant since it has made recruitment of teaching staff difficult in the past.

The school catchment area is socially mixed. In 2008 17.7% of pupils were entitled to free school meals. However, the school cites evidence that indicates that FSM entitlement understates the poverty of support received by some pupils. Shoeburyness catchment area contains five Lower Layer Super Output Areas which are within the top 7,500 most deprived areas in England (i.e. within approximately the 20% most deprived areas) (Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2007). The average percentage of adults with low or no qualifications in the Shoeburyness Super Output areas is almost 50% with some areas as high as 64% (2001 Census). The catchment area also includes the 'leafy suburbs' of Thorpe Bay and Southend. Southend still operates a selective school system so Shoeburyness is in competition with four local grammar schools for the most academically able pupils leaving KS2. The number on the school roll is currently around 1700 up from around 1550 in 2005. In 2007 almost 6% of the pupils came from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities was above the national average (Ofsted, 2007; 1).

Externally, the school buildings are rather plain although the area is clean and, at the time of our visit, there was no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. Internally, the picture is quite different. One enters a reception area that is attended at all times by a receptionist. A bright poster welcomes visitors into the school. Framed certificates announcing the school's achievements cover the wall behind the poster including a certificate from SSAT designating the school one of the most improved schools of 2009. While waiting to be met, a plasma screen on another wall invites the visitor to try out some maths problems and to seek any help required from the maths learning

mentor. Once into the main part of the school, one is struck by large, bright photographs of pupils engaged in learning every couple of metres along the corridor walls. These vary according to the curriculum area through which the corridor passes. In the hall are much larger images of alumni of the school who have made significant achievements in sports, the arts and academically. The interior of the school conveys a positive, bright learning atmosphere.

Recent History

The journey towards significant improvements for Shoeburyness High School began in November 2005 when Ofsted issued a Notice to Improve following an inspection of the school. The Ofsted report of 2005 acknowledged much that was good about the school, for example the strong level of pastoral care provided to pupils; the satisfaction of many pupils with the school, their enjoyment of many subjects especially practical subjects and their pride in being part of the school; and the good leadership of the recently appointed Head. The major criticism was the standards achieved by many of the pupils which were deemed to be inadequate, especially in science and English.

Although the Notice to Improve was a jolt for the staff of the school the message behind it was not unexpected. The school's own 'assessment of its strengths and weaknesses' was deemed 'broadly accurate' by the inspection team (Ofsted, 2005; 5). Several the school staff we spoke to referred to a fairly complacent attitude before the 2005 inspection. They accepted responsibility for this attitude. Clare Costello, Assistant Head with responsibility for curriculum and specialist school commented as follows;

I suppose we convinced ourselves generally, collectively, that we were doing the best for our students. The excuses were always there, about lack of performance, lack of this 'Well what do you expect? Grammar schools have got their students and whatever...But we look after our students and they like coming to school. It is nice here. We all smile at each other.' But the students weren't being challenged. They just weren't being challenged. There wasn't such a rigorous system of 'These are their targets. Are you moving them towards their targets? Are you monitoring them towards their targets? Do they know if they are moving towards their targets?' It was just a drift, in retrospect. At the time you don't acknowledge it but in retrospect it was just a general drift.... There wasn't general monitoring across the whole school. Students could hide more then. [They] knew how to play the system.

Fran Haddock, Assistant Head with responsibility for teaching and learning summarised that the school had been very complacent; pupil behaviour "wasn't brilliant" and; that "staff didn't believe in student abilities and students didn't believe in themselves". She also indicated that the school was "too loose on the kids" and that there were "too many loopholes". The school was "data rich but information poor." Pupils also recognise one of the problems in retrospect. A year 11 pupil who started at the school just before the 2005 inspection spoke of the "You're a Boff" attitude that displayed an anti-academic culture among pupils that prevailed at the time.

The Notice to Improve provided a wakeup call but the staff were ready to be woken up and very quickly moved to rectify the shortcomings. Fourteen months after the original inspection report, Ofsted made the following evaluation:

Shoeburyness High School has improved markedly in the last year and its effectiveness and value for money are now satisfactory. Leaders and

managers have a good capacity for further improvement, which they focus on relentlessly... Students' achievement is satisfactory, their progress matching similar students elsewhere. (Ofsted, 2007; 2)

The opinion of HMCI was that the school no longer requires significant improvement. However, the school has continued to make significant improvements and is still doing so almost three years after the inspectors' last visit. The staff of the school continue to use visits to others schools and engagements in local networks both to gain ideas for new practice.

GCSE Performance

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% GCSE 5+ A*-C	33	42	46	64	70
% GCSE %+ A*-C Inc English and Maths	22	25	30	40	46

Improving Performance

When asked what has made the difference the staff are keen to stress that it is no one big thing. Mark Schofield, the Head reported that *"We don't do any extraordinary things. We just do lots of ordinary things extraordinarily well."* Fran Haddock said *"It's no one thing. It's '165' small things."*

Dr Haddock had attended the launch conference for SSAP with the former Head and another Assistant Head who has since left the school. She said how useful it had been to meet with schools that had made the improvement journey ahead of Shoeburyness. One of the useful things to come out of the launch meeting was the identification of *quick fixes*, interventions that could be put into place quickly to achieve immediate results.

Bill Peel, Acting Assistant Head and Head of English, gave the 'visionary' head a great deal of credit for the turnaround. He said that she refused to accept that students couldn't achieve and that she went away to find out how to do things better. Staff in the school were open to any ideas that would help the school to improve in terms of raising the attainment and achievements of students. He reported that *"everybody feels valued"*, that he had *"never seen [the school] more energised than in the last few years"*, and that *"there's not much cynicism."* Many initiatives and experiments were tried. Ideas were gained from many sources such as other schools including primary schools, the web which contains lots of good resources, subject leader meetings in the local schools consortium.

Paul Evans, Assistant Head Curriculum, said *"Sue [previous head] stressed the importance of ethos. Shoebury had a bad reputation. Now estate agents advertise houses as being in the catchment area. That wouldn't have happened four or five years ago."* Paul also indicated that other local schools provided ideas especially Southend High School for Girls which was the school of Shoeburyness's consultant head in the SSAP.

Clare Costello, Assistant Head, Curriculum and Specialist School, reported that she kept scanning the SSAT website to see what's available. As a result of this the Shoeburyness had applied successfully to become a space school. The school also made regular use of the SSAT subject based network meetings of which there are

three per subject per year. They are always held in schools and it was good to see what other schools are doing.

Shoeburyness, Southend High School for Girls, Cecil Jones High School, Futures, and Southend High School for Boys formed the Southend East Consortium (SEC). This led to collaboration in maths, science and English. It led to whole schools working together for improvement rather than just heads mentoring heads. The Consultant Head was one of the drivers in the formation of SEC which was modelled on SSAT network meetings and conferences.

The new Head, Mark Schofield, gave a long list of ideas that had come through involvement in the SSAP. He stressed that the focus was to *“do ordinary things extraordinarily well.”* In the next sections we recount some of these ordinary things that are done extraordinarily well.

Data and Target Setting

Just before the school received its Notice to Improve and joined the SSAP, Jeff Goodman was appointed Assessment and Examinations Officer. He has taught science in the school for 20 years and is now Director of Assessment and Monitoring. He considers the timing of his appointment to be good. The science department had previously run a data gathering and target setting system. Some other departments also had their own systems. The NTI combined with what the school learnt through involvement in the SSAP meant that the time was opportune for introducing a rigorous, whole school data gathering, monitoring and target setting system. As Mr Goodman pointed out *“I didn’t meet much resistance because we knew we needed to improve.”*

Students’ targets are set centrally by Mr Goodman and are based on prior achievements. Targets for GCSEs rely mainly on KS2 SATs results and internal tests at KS3 (previously KS3 SATs results were used). Mr Goodman argues that it is important to have a simple system; one that is not too sophisticated and can be easily explained to students and their parents. Individual teachers or departments are not allowed to make adjustments to these targets. The targets do not take account of indicators of deprivation such as whether or not a student is entitled to free school meals. This information is available to teachers who would be expected to take it into account in their strategies to help the students to meet their targets. Two sets of targets are produced for each student. The first is the minimum target grade based on expectations given previous performance as explained above. The second is a challenge target based on the student achieving two levels of progress. If the challenge target is less than the minimum grade target then just the latter holds. The scheme has been very successful. Around 70% of students either meet or exceed their targets. Mr Goodman argues that this is about the right figure. If more students were meeting their targets then it could be argued that the targets were not stretching enough. If less than 70% met their targets then they could be seen as too demanding. Students and their parents receive regular updates on performance against target. This uses ‘smiley face’ symbols with two smiley faces representing performance above target; one smiley face performance on target; a face with a straight mouth one grade below target; and a blank face (no features) more than one grade below target (a frowny face symbol was dropped in response to student feedback).

The beauty of the system is that *“everyone now sings from the same hymn sheet”*. Mr Goodman suggested that in the past there was too much focus on C grades or in getting students to pass the exams. Now that each student’s potential is accurately

known to the school, the teacher, the student and the parent a C is still seen to be a good achievement for a student with a C or D target but would not be considered satisfactory for a student with an A or B target. The KS5 students to whom we spoke echoed this. One of them argued in favour of target minimum grades saying that *“they stop people from just accepting a pass i.e. a C. If you’re targeted for an A then a C isn’t good enough.”* Another KS5 student appreciated that target minimum grades were shared with *“parents who can help you to achieve them.”* Students have regular learning conversations at which their performance against target is discussed with them.

The strong system of target setting, data tracking and the resultant support offered to students is claimed to have had an impact of the improved GCSE results achieved by the school reported above.

Curriculum

Tailoring the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students was seen to be a very important way to narrow the achievement gap by engaging all students. There were three main ways in which this was achieved at Shoeburyness High School. The school offered curriculum pathways geared to student abilities and needs; it carefully selected courses to ensure maximum levels of attainment and; it used its technology specialism to motivate and engage students at all levels of ability and to improve their achievements and attainment.

Curriculum Pathways

Fran Haddock explained that the curriculum was changed to allow pupils to do things that they wanted to do. Paul Evans, AHT Curriculum and Student and Staff Voice, reiterated this *“There’s something for everyone in curriculum terms. Students can say, ‘That’s what I like.’”* This involves offering a highly differentiated curriculum that allows a significant level of personalisation. The curriculum pathways offered vary across subject departments and can appear quite complex to the outsider but the principle seems to be to allow each student to maximise their opportunities to learn. In our observational tour of the school, the first two areas we visited were the Double Club and the Bright Centre. The Double Club is in the Excel pathway. These are aimed at bright but disengaged students, described to us as the school’s ‘characters’. There are three Double Clubs within the Excel pathway. The Double Club that we saw is focused around football. It had support from the local soccer club, Southend United. In the morning maths and English have football as their theme. So for example, maths may involve calculations of goal differences between clubs. In the afternoon the students get physically involved in football but maths and English remain part of the activities. The other two Excel Double Clubs are Bon Appetit that has a food technology theme and Spotlight that has a performing arts theme. Ian Williams, Head of Maths said that the Double Clubs do motivate students and they are more focused when they return to regular maths lessons.

The Bright Centre in the school is where the Achievement Pathways have most of their lessons. Students in this pathway have very low levels of attainment. They receive a primary school type of curriculum with a high staff to student ratio and intensive help with literacy and numeracy. However, students on this pathway still participate in mainstream pathways according to their strengths so, for example, they may participate in regular technology or science classes and there have been examples of success at GCSE for students in the Achievement Pathway.

A concern that has been expressed about setting is it labels students in lower sets as being non-achievers and is detrimental to inclusion. We raised this issue with the student groups to whom we spoke and they were emphatic that because the school has such an overall ethos of inclusion and of valuing every student and because students in any pathway can be in higher groups for subjects in which they have strengths, that all students felt included. Dr Haddock explained that *'a student can be in an Excell group for something and gifted and talented for another subject.'* She admitted that this was not always easy to organise. To us it seemed to be a much more sophisticated approach to inclusion than having wholly mixed groups which can lead to teaching to the middle. It also seemed to us to be a sound organisational approach to differentiation and personalisation.

A further sophistication of this approach is the formation of Academy Groups within subjects. These are used differently in different subject departments so, for example, in English and science; the Academy groups are the highest attaining students. In other subjects they are formed by students who are very interested in and motivated in the subject but are not necessarily the highest attaining students in the subject.

There is also an AimHigher Group which comprises students from families without a history of participation in higher education. This is clearly attempting to narrow the achievement gap.

Shoeburyness also offers a work-related curriculum for students who want to follow a more career-orientated pathway. The school is a host site for a young apprenticeship in sport and has 14 learners on this pathway all of whom are capable of 5 GCSE A* - C. They undertake a combination of BTEC and GCSEs as well as being on work placements for one day per week for 5 weeks in both years 10 and 11. The students on this programme can follow either an educational pathway or a commercial pathway. If they opt for the former they spend their year 11 placement in a primary school. If they opt for the commercial pathway then their year 11 placement is in a leisure centre or with Southend United. Year 10 placements are general rather than specialist. Hairdressing is another vocational option with 13 young women and 1 young man undertaking a course at Central.

Identifying the right courses

For most students GCSEs are the course of choice. They are designed to meet the needs of students in KS4 and they offer attainment at different levels. However, in some cases they may not be the most appropriate course for some students in some subjects.

For example, in English at Shoeburyness High school, the expectation is that every student will take GCSE but for some this is too big a jump from where they are. The school offers the alternative of a Certificate in Education in English at Level 1 (Entry Level). They also offer the Adult Literacy qualifications at Level 2. This latter qualification has the advantage that if Numeracy is also achieved at Level 2 then the combination is equivalent to a level B GCSE.

In science all students undertake two GCSEs and some take three but there is careful selection of courses to suit the needs of students in the different sets with the balance of coursework and examinations required from different awarding bodies being taken into consideration. In the vocational set 60% of the assessment relies on coursework since this allows the students to succeed in science.

Use of specialism

Shoeburyness High School is a specialist technology school. Technology is interpreted widely to include all science and mathematics as well as the subjects labelled technology in the curriculum.

Both the teaching staff and the students to whom we spoke reported their delight with the hardware and software that had been purchased using funds from the school's specialist status. Ian Williams, Head of Maths said that he had "*never seen a department so well resourced in terms of computing.*" He had seen departments with more computers but the difference in Shoeburyness was the much better access to relevant software. Charlotte Gales, Advanced Skills Teacher in Science echoed this. She reported that the benefits of being a technology college were that there was an interactive whiteboard in every room. She used electronic visualisers to display objects to the whole class. There is the opportunity to bring in specialists for example in her area a company that does Crime Scene simulation was brought in to illustrate in an interactive way with students application of science.

The KS5 students reported that the electronic whiteboards are used to improve lessons. Teachers are prepared with the material all ready to run at the start of the lesson. The software makes it easy to demonstrate complex subjects (compared to a blackboard or write-on whiteboard). In our tour of the school we observed frequent use of the interactive boards.

The maths department used a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that allows students to access material from home. They have exam items published on the site with revision videos and they students can also access maths tutorial programmes such as Maths Watch which use animated clips to illustrate mathematical principles. After using this students reported that it was '*like having a teacher at home.*' My Maths is used mainly at KS3 but also at KS4 and all students are provided with a Methods Maths data key that is an interactive past paper resource developed by a local school. Homework clubs and lunchtime access to computers are available to students without access to broadband internet or other necessary computer resources at home. The use of these resources is modelled by every teacher in class at some stage so that the students can see what is available on the VLE.

The PE department has also invested heavily in technology. They use both Nintendo Wii hardware and software including dance mats and specialist computer software such as Cyber Coach. The latter cost around £10,000 but comprises around 250 programmes that allow students to get access to activities outside the expertise of the school PE staff such as cheerleading, boxercise and Tai Chi. This has been successful in improving the participation of adolescent young women in physical activity which is a recognised problem. The Wii dance mats can be programmed to do numeracy and maths games that develop skills up to A-Level so there is some cross-curricular benefit.

Not all the benefits of being a technology school are related to information technology resources. The schools specialism and the national focus on STEM subjects have led to an interesting partnership with Qinetiq, a science-based, defence-industry company that has a large base near the school. The school's STEM Academy for year 8 students is sponsored by Qinetiq who help the students to develop and carry out an applied science project.

At the strategic level there is encouragement for science, maths and technology to work together to promote the STEM agenda through the identification of links in the curriculum. Maths and science (with English) also collaborate effectively with four

other schools forming the Southend East Consortium. This grew out of the SSAP and uses the same model of sharing ideas that work.

Technology and science subjects are also used to motivate the most disadvantaged students by cherry picking aspects that are practical and hands-on and therefore engage their interest. Even students in the achievement group undertake GCSEs although their targets are often Es or Fs.

Interventions to support students' attainments

The school has a very strong focus on helping all students to achieve their target grades and a wide range of strategies has been put in place to help students. These include early entry for GCSE exams; cancelling study leave and replacing it with structured revision in school; weekend and holiday revision classes; the use of learning mentors; focus groups; one to one support; English and maths working together and; learning interviews at least once per term for all students.

Early Entry

Early entry at Shoeburyness High School takes two forms. For high achieving students in English and science early entry occurs in the summer diet of exams in year 10. If successful, these students are then able to carry on and do AS level exams in year 11. This has improved KS5 retention. For most other students early entry is a means of getting English or maths passes 'under their belts' in the November diet of exams. This can lead to a number of possible outcomes. If students gain at least a C in either English or maths but do not achieve in the other then they can drop the subject they have passed and the time released can be used for extra work on the other. If they pass both then, in English, the time released can be used to study for English Literature exams or, for either subject, the students can opt to try to improve the grade they achieved. Early entry in maths is a recent innovation at Shoeburyness and although the advantages could be seen, there was also some concern that some highest grades may be lost as a result of early entry so the top maths group were not entered early. The senior leadership team are very supportive of students taking exams and, on the first day of our visit, they had been on the school premises at 8.00am cooking and serving bacon sandwiches to students about to take their exams.

Supporting Exam Preparation

Students from better-off backgrounds often benefit from investment by their parents in private tutors or revision classes to help them to prepare for exams. The school replicates this support by providing structured revision in the period leading up to the exams. In the past this period was often given to students as study leave, taken at home in the expectation that students would be able to structure their revision appropriately. Study leave has been cancelled and replaced with structured and guided revision. This has been well received by both students and their parents and the claim was made that 1 hour of structured revision is worth two or three hours of unguided work.

Revision sessions are also available during the autumn, spring and summer mid-term holidays for two days and also during the Easter holidays for three days. Additional support is also available during lunch breaks. These sessions are especially for students who have been identified as needing extra help and are likely to be students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

The maths and English departments collaborate to provide support weekend sessions at an outdoor pursuits centre. These weekends are targeted at students who are secure in either English or maths but wobbly in the other subject. A problem orientated approach is taken with revision sessions in the mornings and outdoor activities in the afternoons. This was an idea gained from participation in SSAP. In science the Year 11 focus group students are taken to an adventure centre for additional revision the weekend before their exam.

Tutorial support

The school offers tutorial support for all students and extended support for some students. Every student has a learning interview once per term to discuss their progress towards targets. The focus is wholly on learning not on behaviour. For some students who are struggling, these interviews may be more frequent. Additional mentoring is also provided for students on free school meals or who are looked after as needed. Dr Haddock explained that the thing that students from disadvantaged backgrounds lacked most is individual discussions about how they are doing. The school aims to make up for this.

The school also has Learning Mentors in English and maths who provide both individual support and support focus groups of five or six pupils. This support can be during regular class sessions or in some cases can be out of class. This was appreciated by the students we spoke to who reported that *“the learning mentors are on your side, pushing you and helping you.”* The school has also received funding from the national one to one tutoring initiative that targets year 7 students but are disappointed that they cannot use their learning mentors who are skilled in providing support for students but who are not teacher trained.

The school also draws on year 11 prefects to help younger students who are struggling. Year managers run a lunchtime ‘Lads’ club for young men who are disengaged or poor attenders. This does not seem to be viewed negatively by the students since the focus is on achievement.

Staff recruitment, development and deployment

The difficulties that Shoeburyness School had in recruiting staff was referred to above so growing their own staff was a strategy borne out of necessity. The school has also prioritised spending on staffing above other areas such as buildings. This has resulted in what one participant in our research referred to as the best non-contact hours around. However, all time is to be spent on learning related activities. National imperatives for staff development are met for all staff and exceeded by many. Lastly very effective use is made of non-teaching staff so that teaching staff can concentrate on learning focused activities.

Growing own staff

Shoeburyness High School found it difficult to recruit teaching staff because of their geographical location. They got involved in the GTP very early on and now around 40-50% of their teachers were trained in the school either through GTP or through conventional college based routes. The school has its first home developed teacher as a member of the SLT. The Head of Training commented that *“staff trained in the school understand the systems, ethos and protocols of the school.”* We asked one of the teachers who had been on the GTP at the school six years ago and who was now an advanced skills teacher in the school whether she felt that she had missed out by only having had experience in one school. She responded that Shoeburyness

was *“the place to be”* and that she had thought of moving several times but had always been promoted.

Support staff also have opportunities to grow and develop. The school's Behaviour Improvement Programme is led by a woman who started as a cleaner in the school and now teachers are happy to seek advice from her. A high proportion of support staff had been students at the school or had been parents of students. The staff we spoke to said that these measures helped to firmly establish Shoeburyness as a community school.

Staff Development

Teaching staff are organised into Learning Groups who follow school priorities for development (at the time of our visit, sixth form engagement) and who meet six times per year. Staff are also required to attend six workshops from a choice of 39 during the year but teachers often sign up for more.

Staff Deployment

Both teaching and non-teaching staff are used in ways that maximise the benefits for students. Most of the pastoral, guidance and behaviour roles have been removed from teachers and are the responsibilities of support staff. The school has a full time attendance officer to follow up on absences. The Behaviour Improvement Programme has already been referred to. It is not unusual for the head of BIP to visit students at home to challenge them on their non-attendance and to bring them to school. Each year has a year manager whose role is pastoral. One KS5 student said that *“the introduction of year managers helped me a lot. I feel I have someone to go to.”* There are also three Cross-Phase Progress Leaders who interview and support students on their progress. They pay particular concern to vulnerable students including those looked after and on free school meals. They also ensure that the needs of gifted and talented students are being met. Lastly the generous staffing allows the deployment of floating teachers who provide absence cover for teachers to ensure that classes have a subject specialist when their regular teacher is off. They are also available to provide extra support and the year 11 prefects appreciated the support of sometimes having a second teacher in the class.

In summary Shoeburyness is a school that takes pupil learning, attainment and achievement very seriously. To do this it has built up an ethos in which students feel safe and valued yet challenged academically. It is appropriate to leave the last words to a student *“Shoeburyness is a really, really good school.”*

8. The Wensleydale School

In January 2008 the Wensleydale School was put into special measures after an Ofsted inspection. A week before our visit in December 2009 Ofsted visited again and the school was taken off special measures. A remarkable turnaround had been achieved. In 2007, 52% of students had achieved % A* - C GCSEs. In 2008 this fell to 49%. However, in 2009 the figure increased to 70%. There was also a similar movement in the GCSE results including English and maths which went from 44% in 2007 down to 36.4% in 2008 then up again in 2009. The quality of teaching has also improved. According to the Head Teacher in 2008 *“the profile was one or two pockets of good and outstanding teaching, and only one or two, the vast bulk of the teaching was satisfactory or dull and a significant proportion, almost a quarter of lessons when they were observed were seen to be unsatisfactory.”* During the latest Ofsted inspection 28 lessons were observed and the inspection team noted that ‘lessons are well planned... There is evidence of good and sometimes outstanding teaching’ (Ofsted 2010, 7). Overall the Quality of Teaching was given a grade 3 (satisfactory).

This case study will explore how this turnaround was achieved and in particular how the school learnt from its involvement in SSAP and how it attempts to narrow the achievement gap that affects the most disadvantaged young people.

The School

The Wensleydale School nestles on a hillside on the edge of the small town of Leyburn in the North Yorkshire Dales. It is a mixed, 11 - 18 comprehensive with a roll of about 500. It is a specialist science school with a strong focus on rural sciences given its location. According to the Head, the school serves three broad communities. The first of these is traditional Dales families mainly involved in farming or related professions. The second group comprises affluent, middle-class families who have moved to the Dales for employment or lifestyle reasons. The final group comprises around 70 children of members of the army based at Catterick Barracks. For the last group, coming to Wensleydale is a positive choice since there is a closer school. KS2 SAT scores on entry are above the national average; entitlement to free school meals is well below the national average; the number of students with special educational needs is around the national average; and the school has one looked after child.

Debbie Coulson, the Extended School Coordinator pointed out that although the Dales are thought of as an affluent area, there are pockets of deprivation. Some people do live in trailers. The area is also deprived in terms of services, particularly transport.

Recent History

In the period preceding the 2008 Ofsted inspection, the school had suffered from some serious turbulence in staffing. The previous Headteacher’s wife had died, the head of maths had died and there were health problems that led to absences among other staff. The KS5 students who were interviewed for this research said that they were *“messed around a lot”* during this period, with one reporting that he had seven supply teachers for science and another that she had five teachers of English in the space of one year. One student reported his sadness at the death of the head of

maths who he said was one of the best teachers he had. This disruption was recognised in the Ofsted report which commented that ‘Staff absences mean that students have had a series of teachers which has disrupted their learning’ (Ofsted 2008, 4). Two of the staff who had left had made the initial bid for specialist science status, so some impetus was lost in developing the specialist school initiative.

Behaviour was mentioned in the 2008 Ofsted report as being ‘inadequate’ with exclusion being ‘high’. ‘Low level disruption that hampers learning in a significant proportion of lessons’ was seen to be a problem of concern to parents and students (Ofsted 2008, 4). Certainly both the group of KS5 students and the group of KS3 and 4 students that we interviewed spoke of the recent improvements in behaviour as being noticeable. The latter group said that behaviour had “*got a lot better*” and that things were now “*stricter although not in a bad way...like by stopping people messing about by straight away giving them a verbal warning.*” The KS5 group also said that behaviour management had “*got a lot stricter.*”

The Ofsted inspectors in 2008 had a number of other concerns. They were concerned about the lack of student achievement, particularly that of boys. They thought that the school failed to give students an acceptable standard of education and that there was a lack of leadership capacity to secure the necessary improvements. Lastly they considered that the school had poor systems for tracking the progress of students.

However, the inspectors also found many positive features of provision. The sixth form received better grades than the rest of the school. Attendance was reported as being above average. Students were generally happy and appreciated the education they were receiving; they received good pastoral care and support and; they were very aware of healthy lifestyle issues.

Five days before the 2008 inspection, the local authority appointed an executive Headteacher to start the process of turning the school around. The previous Headteacher was seconded to the Authority. The deputy head was appointed Acting Head Teacher in early 2008 then confirmed as head in September 2008. The school now has a completely new senior leadership and since January 2008 13 staff out of a full time equivalent of 33 staff have moved on. It is this new team that has driven forward the changes that have led to the improved performance of students.

GCSE Performance

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% GCSE 5+ A*-C	52	52	53	49	60
% GCSE 5+ A*-C Inc English and Maths	44	37	42	36	50

Improving Performance

Scott Lunn, the Head of Maths reported that the school had been performing well below average. Teachers had become used to accepting pretty low standards. This changed when some staff moved on and new staff came in. This brought values from other schools showing the way things are done properly. There was also support from the LEA. All these things were pointing towards the way things are done properly. “*It is all about doing the job properly.*”

For Mr Lunn doing the job properly meant putting in place a management system that monitored data across the school and aimed for decent standards. It meant calling

staff to account for the progress and achievements of students. Previously the students had reported to Mr Lunn that felt that they were solely to blame for their poor performance. Doing the job properly also means simple things like wall displays that can make a powerful difference. It means the proper recording of data and getting exam entries right, lots of little things.

For Gareth Seaborne, Assistant Head with responsibility for the specialism and Head of science in the school, involvement in the SSAP, *“raised the bar of expectations”* and provided sound ideas for improvement such as the ‘war room’. Phil Benaiges, the Headteacher also found involvement in the SSAP very useful in the school’s improvement journey. He found the launch conference *“really useful... getting a feeling that there are people who have been there, in your situation and who are succeeding, and who are now running schools that are outstanding.”* Secondly it was useful to pick up any tips about what had been successful short term. Thirdly were the contacts made in other schools over and above the formal support and contacts from the programme in terms of the consultant head (*“who was fantastic”*). *“We’ve had beneficial outcomes that that we weren’t planning for from SSAP. We’ve just had an exchange with Greenhead High School in Keighley for our year 7s to experience a very different multicultural school.”* He further underwrote the importance of SSAP by enthusing *“I am absolutely sold on the philosophy of SSAP which is by schools for schools.”*

Phil Benaiges argued that if you want staff to buy in and you want to be effective you just need to do a few things well. He said that the school’s priority had been to fix three things. These were data tracking and intervention; learning and teaching; and behaviour. In the remainder of the case study, these things will be dealt with in turn.

Data tracking and intervention

Gareth Seaborne summarised the advantages of data tracking quite neatly by saying that it let you know where the students are at and what their potential is. Jenna Potter, the Deputy Head, who had very recently arrived in the school, said that one of her first impressions of the school was the active and clever use of data although she understood that the previous year was the first that it had been done properly and it bore huge results at the end of the year. She also thought that more could be done on intervention and that there was also still work to do on the quality of data.

During the current year, for the first time, targets are negotiated with students but are based on FFT D which is seen to be reasonable in most cases. The advantage of negotiated targets is that the students have ownership of their own targets since they have had a say in setting them. The major pitfall is that if students are overly ambitious are not appropriately advised then they can be setting themselves up for failure. This was not seen to be a major problem with only a handful of potential cases in this category.

The performance of students is then tracked against their targets and a green, amber, red flagging system is used to initiate appropriate interventions. These flags are up to the judgement of teachers so, for example, if a student is currently working one level below target the teacher may still award a green flag on the basis that the student is working diligently and is likely to achieve target grade. A green flag indicates likely to achieve or exceed target; amber may achieve or miss by one grade and; red means that the student is unlikely to meet the target grade. Mrs Potter thought that using flagging in this way meant that it is only students who, because of their attitudes to work, are unlikely to achieve targets that are picked up for

interventions. It also means that the many compliant students who are working as hard as they can and are likely to meet their targets are allowed to get on with it.

There are not many reds so the system is very workable. The lowest level of intervention is where students are not going to meet their end of year targets in one or two subjects. These students are monitored by their subject tutor who has to fill out a subject intervention plan. Subject teachers have to choose to three improvement targets for students in this category. The form contains a list of suggested types of targets although subject tutors can add to these. This document is then used as a basis for a weekly meeting between the teacher and the student. Parents are also involved and, in the main parents are very proactive and supportive. They receive a letter and a copy of the intervention form.

The next level of input is group intervention and this is for students who are under in three or more subjects. This is a very small group (only nine students in year 11 i.e. one in ten students). These students have a high level of intervention with three generic targets and the school's Pastoral Learning Assistants (PALs) worked with three each on a daily basis. This seemed to have been having success at the time if the interview although it was recognised that the mock GCSE results would provide data.

There were also three students who were receiving individual intervention. These are potential NEETs students who could achieve no qualifications. They all have a part-time timetable with work experience or an alternative course. Each of these students is individually mentored by the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head or one of the Assistant Head Teachers. Mrs Potter indicated the level of support provided by saying that two days before our interview, she had gone to the home of one of the students to meet the his mother who does not drive. This student was on two days out of lessons to catch up on coursework. Mrs Potter admitted that this was not ideal but that the student had a great deal of catching up to do from year 10. He was a very bright student who could achieve grade As but was heading for Us. A recent piece of his science coursework had been at grade B standard. Work for this student is broken down into small chunks to help him to get it all done.

Year 8s have subject and group interventions as described above. Year 7 students all have an individual interview with members of the SLT after they have completed a self report. This is followed up by a call from the school to their parents. Years 9 and 10 also have group and subject interventions and further strategies such as homework interventions are being considered.

In the first meeting between the Mr Benaiges, the Head and the school's Consultant Headteacher, the latter advised Wensleydale School to use the 'War Room' approach to monitoring student progress. This approach is based on a visual display of where is student is compared with where they could be in terms of Jesson conversion rates. It gets its name from the war rooms portrayed in old films with table top maps upon which ships, infantry divisions or air squadrons were moved around thereby giving the generals a visual display of progress and strategic options. In the education version a chart on the wall shows a matrix with GCSE outcomes as rows and Jesson conversion rates as columns (see the figure). Photographs of all year 11 students with stickers indicating different considerations with respect to students (e.g. target grades, any risk factors such as FSM, attendance, gifted and talented etc) are displayed on the matrix. This provides the Head (at Wensleydale it's in his office) and other relevant people including the student with a visual display of actuality and potential.

The key aspects according to the Head, are to have the photographs of every student because data becomes people and to realise that every student has the potential to get 5 A* - C grades or equivalent. The wall chart and Jesson conversion rates are used to show students and their parents the chances that students have of achieving 5 A* - C grades. Last year 60% of the intervention group did achieve and in fact the school's achievement of 5 A* – C grades was better than predicted in that one more student achieved 5 A*-C grades than was predicted. This is significant in a school with such a small roll.

There will be some changes for next year by for example getting rid of the straight 5 A* - C and concentrate on the target that includes English and maths. The Head Teacher also considers it important to include the 5 A – A* so that the students who are predicted to achieve the best results are not missed from consideration and support.

Two other tools provided by SSAP are used by Wensleydale School. The first is Visualising the Challenge and the other is the Data Enabler Toolkit. The latter is predictive so one can look at any current year 11, 10, 9 or 8 etc and see what the predictions are; at numbers from each cohort doing different subjects to see what is predicted for them; challenge can be added; and it allows one to tailor the appropriate curriculum by, for example, seeing what would happen to the attainments of the current cohort of students if BTEC PE were offered instead of GCSE PE. Visualising the Challenge is a Venn diagram that helps to focus on maths and English.

War Room Chart

Jesson Conversion Rates

	E	D	C	B	A
5 A – A*					
5 A* - C inc. English and Maths					
5 A* - C					
5 A* - D inc. English and Maths					
5 A* - D					
< 5 A* - D					

Learning and Teaching

When the group of year 8 to 10 students were asked about their learning experiences, they spoke at length about features that have changed in teaching and learning. One of the first things that they reported were features of *Assessment for Learning*. So for example, they found the use of WILF (What I'm Looking For) very helpful. One student reported that *"it helps if they [the teachers] write it on the board rather than just saying it."* Another said that it helped her to see what she had learned she said that *"if you haven't got it you can look back over and see what you have to do."* These students also appreciated the very specific feedback that they were given when assignments, homework or coursework was returned to them. The feedback is very specific in terms of the current grade and details of what needs to be done to improve the grade. At the start of some lessons it is made clear what has to be done to achieve particular grades. This work for the lesson is displayed along with the longer term work targets for the year or stage.

Some GCSE work, in maths and science for example was started in year 9. This was appreciated by the students since it gave them more time to do the work for GCSEs. It also meant that students could go on school trips without missing out on time for GCSE work. Trips were organised to India and Canada. There are also exchanges with a number of different countries. These trips help with learning other languages and also history and cultures of other countries. Some students spoke of learning a little Czech for an exchange visit.

This group were very complimentary about both the range of revision materials available and the use of technology to help learning. The former includes the use of *MyMaths* on the internet and books of past tests. These are given out at the start of the year and referred to when particular topics are covered. Resources that were mentioned include interactive whiteboards, laptops, and computer rooms. One particularly useful resource was the use of keypads to answer questions. Every student has a keypad and, when asked, keys in their answer from a choice of four. When the teacher asked the question the students were required to *"think then answer"*. The keypads and software allow the teacher to see how well concepts are being understood and highlight possible misunderstandings. A bar graph is displayed that shows the number of students answering each choice for a question. The teacher can see which students give particular answers but this is kept private from other students.

Finally, these students reported that the school took care in identifying appropriate GCSE courses for the cohort of students. They gave several examples of instances when there had been a change of exam board that they felt was to their benefit. Mr Lunn, the Head of Maths, also reported on changes in the choice of exam board to tailor provision to the needs of students.

The school's specialism is science. This has been re-focused recently to concentrate on rural sciences given the school's location and the importance of agriculture in the local economy. A recent development is the school farm that comprises a series of allotments, some of which are rented to local residents and others are cultivated by students. At the time of our visit the farm also included sheep and poultry. The farm received a seal of approval from the year 7 students. There are also lunch and Saturday clubs related to the science specialism. These included fly fishing during the summer; a lads and dads club on Saturdays based around science and design and technology; and a winter programme that involved building hovercrafts and remote-controlled aircraft. During the first eight weeks 11 families were involved (although it was called a lads and dads club, uncles, grandfathers and mothers were involved) now 32 families take part. These initiatives are led by Debbie Coulson, the school's Extended School Coordinator. Family learning is an important aspect of her

role. Mrs Coulson also organises a Forest School which involves outdoor learning. This has been particularly successful at engaging students with behavioural problems. For Mr Benaiges, the success of the focus on the science specialism has been the increased number of students opting for science.

Mr Benaiges takes the improvement of teaching seriously. He spends two hours every day in lessons. He focussed on improving teaching in the specialism, getting it all up to good or outstanding. The quality of teaching was noticed by the year 7 students who had only been in the school for three months. They said that the teachers were nice and lessons were fun. They appreciated that teachers were all specialists in their subjects. Even the year 12 and 13 students had noticed changes. The teachers had become friendlier. Achieving better results, better discipline and requiring more of students while also appearing to be 'nice' and 'friendly' is a good balance in a school.

Behaviour

In our visit to the school the topic of behaviour came up in almost every interview with students and with staff. The year 12 and 13 students commented that the school had become a lot stricter. The behaviour policy was now much clearer with the oral warning then yellow card then red card system. The year 8 to 10 students reported that detention was now done well with follow through every time. The year 7 students noticed that 'bullying or fighting' was not tolerated.

There are several elements involved in the behaviour improvement policy. The school PALS (Pastoral and Learning Support) staff work right through the school and part of their work involves investigating incidents and creating an environment in which students feel safer and behaviour is well managed. They act as key workers for two year groups each (one covers year 6 transition from Primary as well as year 7s). They are the first port of call for students in their year groups. They also spend time in student services during lunch breaks supervising students who are on lunchtime detention. Denise Jeffery, a PALS tutor who was interviewed, reported that the changes had led to improvements in behaviour since there are clear boundaries and a consistent policy is applied across the board.

Ann Snook was the Assistant Head Teacher who managed the change to the new behaviour policy. Her goal was to get behaviour back on track. This involved lots of meetings and also visits to other schools. The main aims were to cut the layers in the behaviour management policy and to ensure carry through both of which were seen to be problems previously. The sanctions part of the policy involves a verbal warning, a yellow card (half hour lunch time detention) and a red card which involves removal from class, a letter home and evening detention. Parents were involved a lot quicker and have been very supportive. Detentions are every day at lunch time so are immediate. As a result of the good behaviour in the school, teachers are able to produce better lessons and even 'more risky' lessons. Staff are more confident in dealing with challenging behaviour. The system also involves instant rewards and every Wednesday there is a positive assembly in which the credits for good behaviour are announced and the form with the most credits get a trophy. The top students in each year group get a £5 voucher at the end of the year. Credits can also earn raffle tickets for very desirable prizes (e.g. sports tickets, a mountain bike). There is clear evidence of improvement since in September 2008 there were 99 days of exclusions; by September 2009 this had dropped to 13 days. The main lesson from other schools was to have a simple system rather than any specific ideas that may not have been directly transferable.

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

Mrs Snook also reorganised provision for students who have special educational needs. Students with special needs are withdrawn from difficult lessons where they might fail and receive an alternative curriculum in which they might find success. They also might receive extra tuition or booster sessions, work experience or BTEC courses. The school is in a local area partnership for the BTECs and offer construction at Catterick, mechanics or environment at Bedale, hair and beauty at Northallerton. Further down the school students can receive extra interventions or the ASDAN qualification.

Information is available to all staff on intervention that students have received, the students' reading ages so that lesson materials are targeted at the appropriate reading age. The online information on students also offers suggestions for teaching approaches for students who have particular difficulties or how to involve a teaching assistant. The system also has links to specific conditions such as information on ADHD, or hearing impairment, ESOL and so on. This system was presented to staff at an in-service day in September.

Mrs Snook also prepared a vulnerable student register that includes fifteen categories linked to an inclusion passport. Each vulnerable student has a teaching assistant as a keyworker who meets regularly with the student. In addition each Faculty was asked to report to Mrs Snook what they did for every student (Wave 1), what they did in terms of booster lessons (Wave 2) and when students were removed from lessons for support (Wave 3).

Summary

Wensleydale is a small school. The parents are supportive and the students compliant and hard working. The school's history has shown that even a school like this can get into difficulties in the absence of tight management with clear goals. The SSAP helped the head teacher and staff to get back on track and ultimately to achieve the schools best ever results for students.

9. Summary

This research questions focused on seven areas as follows. This final chapter provides a summary and discussion of our findings in each of these seven areas.

Question Area 1 – the schools as learning communities

The schools in our sample varied from 300 to 1700 students. Size then is neither a help nor a hindrance to improvement. Small schools can end up in difficulty even though in theory they should be easier to keep on track. On the other hand large schools can be turned around quickly even though one would expect that they would be less flexible because of their size.

None of the schools in our sample were in areas of very extreme deprivation. While the entitlement to free school meals was, in the main, above the national average, they were not in the areas of highest needs in terms of FSM. However, the heads argued convincingly that FSM does not tell the whole story and that there are other important indicators of deprivation such as very low family histories of higher education that was the case for most of the schools or deprivation in terms of services in the most rural school we surveyed. In at several of the cases the schools were located in areas that were considerably better off than the areas from which most of the students came. This was often for historical reasons or because local families used parental choice to select other schools. In some case this was changing as a result of improvements being achieved and the reputations of the case study schools resulted in them being considered as first choices.

Student behaviour, attainment and achievement all appear to be very sensitive to the effectiveness of the leadership of the school. Poor leadership seems to result in poor student outcomes and behaviour and poor leaders appear to blame the students for this. Good leaders (and teachers) on the other hand accept responsibility for student behaviour and outcomes and achieve improvements with the same groups of students.

In five out of the six schools we surveyed, improvements were related to changes in the senior leadership teams of the schools, especially a change of head, and in a couple of cases, by significant changes in the teaching team (30% turnover in one case). This suggests that change is easier when undertaken by a new team but that this does not always have to be the case. Head teachers do seem to make a difference for good or for bad. This is evidenced by the fact that in several of the schools an existing senior leadership team with a new head had achieved a turnaround indicating that a good SLT can be hampered by a poorly performing head.

Schools participate in SSAP generally because they have suffered a dip in their performance. The evidence of our study is that participation in SSAP does not simply take them back up to their previous level of performance, but in most cases results in their best ever outcomes. In commencing the research there was a concern that the focus on the results of public examinations might mean that schools were neglecting other important outcomes of general education. This concern was allayed in all of our case study schools. Each one displayed an ethos of having the students' learning and welfare as the central concerns. Achieving excellent exam results was one (important) aspect of these central concerns but other aspects of education

(artistic endeavour, community engagement, and sporting achievements, for example) were also valued.

Although our findings were not entirely independent of Ofsted inspections in that we used these as sources of evidence, our findings from interviews and observations supported and were supported by, Ofsted inspection results. We were also pleasantly surprised by the knowledge that students had of school strategies and achievements. This suggested good relationship and communications between, SLT, other staff and students. Student Voice was taken seriously in all the schools.

Question Area 2 – SSAP and specialism

School leaders very much saw involvement in SSAP as a learning and development opportunity. Their main aim was to turn their schools around in terms of outcomes and achievements. Their schools' specialisms formed an important part of this strategy. In three of the schools, however, the specialism had become a bit of an albatross. In each case the pattern had been similar. A committed group of teachers and curriculum leaders in the specialist area had put together the proposals for specialist status. Their success had in a sense become problematic for the schools in that they had then achieved promotion out of the school leaving the school with weakened provision in the specialist subjects. For a period, in two of the schools there was a high level of staff turnover in the specialist area prior to involvement in the SSAP. In the case of these schools the SSAP provided the opportunity to re-engage with the specialism and put it back in the centre of the school's improvement strategy.

The schools used their specialism to drive forward change in two important ways. Firstly, they used the enhanced funding coming through specialist status to improve physical resources throughout the school (e.g. by the provision of interactive whiteboards or other ICT resources) across all subject areas. Secondly they used the good and outstanding teaching undertaken by teachers in the specialism as models for practice across the school.

Question Area 3 – improvement resources, tools and frameworks

Schools in the SSAP firstly drew on a wide range of human resources to help them to improve. These human resources included the consultant heads, the network of contacts established at SSAP conferences, and the support available to them through their local authorities (who often offered enhanced support to schools on the programme). These were all external sources of support. During their involvement in the programme and subsequently, schools also managed to release the creativity of their own staff and to use this to drive forward improvements. This was possible because when staff saw the effect that change made they started to think of other changes that would take things even farther. Often the changes were relatively inexpensive financially but just involved doing things differently.

As mentioned above additional material resources such as ICT hardware and software was also used to drive forward improvements. These resources were often seen to be particularly effective at engaging groups who were sometimes on the periphery. For example, engaging young people through videoing drama and performing arts or engaging young women in PE using Nintendo Wii and so on.

Question Area 4 – community links

When a school is put into special measures or under a notice to improve this is sometimes taken as a personal affront by the community and the community seeks to support the school to get back on track. All the schools that we surveyed had developed strong community links. Many of these focused on links with associated primary schools through using the schools' specialisms to enhance provision in primary schools either directly through teaching in the Primary schools or indirectly through the provision of staff development opportunities for primary school teachers. In a couple of cases students went into primary schools to support learning in, for example, sciences or modern foreign languages.

In other cases specialist equipment or facilities achieved through specialist status, were open to use by the community when not being used by the school. These included sports facilities, drama and art studios and ICT equipment. The current government policy on enhancing the status and uptake of STEM subjects has resulted in several strong links with science and technology based industries whose STEM ambassadors work closely with the school to demonstrate the relevance of school subjects in the operation of their industries. This is particularly important for disengaged young people who often fail to connect the relevance of school subjects to the outside world.

Global links, visits and exchanges were also seen to be important not just as 'holiday' opportunities in other countries but as opportunities to provide service and education to schools in countries with less well funded and resourced education systems.

Question Area 5 – measures of deprivation

Schools use a wide range of measures of disadvantage including free school meal entitlement, parental qualifications, special educational needs, disabilities, ethnicity, looked after children, danger of becoming NEET and so on. These measures or indicators are used in a variety of ways. They are shared with teachers and teachers are expected to take account of them in designing learning strategies for students (by for example, having a seating chart for each class that shows students at risk). In the case of students at risk of becoming NEET senior staff are often involved in providing specific mentoring. One school followed through after students had left to ease the transition into their next destination and thereby reduce the risk of students becoming NEET.

Question Area 6 – internal organisation

As recorded above, improvement was often accompanied by changes in the senior leadership team of the school. These changes did not simply involve changing the people at the top but also in changing the organisation of responsibilities so that these were more focused on outcomes in terms of student learning. Below the level of SLT the schools tended to have a fairly traditional subject focused departmental or faculty structure.

Changing the ethos was a key part of the changes in all of the schools. That this was achieved was evident in the responses of students who had been in the school both before and after the improvement process.

Question Area 7 – significant outcomes

For students the most significant outcome of the schools' involvement in the SSAP was improved results in all cases. In most of the schools students also noticed that the schools had become friendlier better places in which to be. Improvements in

behaviour were reported either as a result of direct action or as an indirect result of a focus on learning. Improved teaching and a focus on learning helped all students and as a result helped students from less advantaged backgrounds. The focus on attendance, behaviour and strategies to make lessons more interesting and relevant were likely to have an impact on previously disengaged students.

For teachers and the SLT seeing that things could be done differently and more effectively and that by doing things differently measurable results could be seen proved to be a powerful motivator for continued further improvements. Teachers and SLTs changed their attitudes from complacency or acceptance of what they saw as the 'natural' outcomes for the kind of students they had to realising that if they did things differently then the outcomes could be different.

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Appendix 1

SSAP Successes: Case Study Template

<i>Brief summary of your case study (What you did that was successful/had an impact)</i>			
<i>Date</i>			
<i>Name of School</i>			
<i>Start and end dates of the SSAP Programme</i>			
<i>Dates on probation</i>			
<i>Dates in SM/NTI</i>			
<i>Author details</i>	<i>Name of Writer</i>		
	Position in School:		
	E-mail:		
	Direct Line:		
<i>1. School context</i> <i>Specialist Status: Technology</i>			
To include: % 5+ A* - C GCSE	2007	2008	2009 (predictions)
% 5+ A* - C GCSE Including English and Maths			
CVA			
Please give information against any of the following indices of deprivation which you use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSM • SEN • TCI (tax credit index) • Worklessness • ACORN • Other 			

Which of these do you find most effective in targeting students in need and why?				
How do you make use of them in targeting student support/intervention?				
Achievement Strategy or Strategies (Changes you have made to cause an improvement in results)				
1. What strategies undertaken recently have had a significant impact on raising achievement in your school? How do you know? Please give evidence and any relevant quotations from Ofsted, students, teachers, and parents.				
2. How did you implement these strategies? (You could describe each of these or categorise them according to short, medium and longer term).				
3. What raising achievement strategies are you planning to develop in the future?				
•				
4. Would you be happy to host a visit from other SSAP schools interested in seeing your strategies in action?				
Yes			No	
5. Would you be happy to present your case study at conferences (held in London) for current schools on SSAP?				
Yes			No	
6. Would you be happy to be interviewed by a researcher who would produce a more indepth case study to form part of a book?				
Yes			Yes	

Appendix 2



Narrowing the Achievement Gap: What and how schools learn through involvement in the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP)

Aim and Question Topics

The main aim of this research is: to identify the processes involved in participation by schools in the SSAP that led to schools learning to be better at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The question topics in which we are interested are as follows (not all topic areas will be relevant to all respondents):

10. Description of the school.
 - a. Size, catchment area, student profile, senior leadership team, teaching team, history, core values, **Note:** Many of these questions can be answered by information on the school's website or on the Ofsted website and will only be checked in the interviews to ensure accuracy.
11. What was the key aim of the school's involvement in SSAP?
 - Involvement of the school in other improvement initiatives/ activities?
 - Use of the specialism in the SSAP
12. What strategies and material resources were used in the action plan for improvement?
 - People, networks, financial and material resources.
13. What is the relationship of the school with its external community?
 - Use of the local community to support the SSAP
14. What measures of deprivation/ indicators of achievement are used to guide policy in the school?
 - How useful are these measures/indices?
 - In what ways are they used to improve outcomes for all students but especially those from backgrounds that have traditionally been less successful?
15. How is the school organised internally to achieve positive outcomes for all students?
 - Has this changed as a result of involvement in SSAP?
16. What are the significant outcomes from participation in the SSAP
 - For pupils;
 - For learning by the school, the teachers and the SLT on how to be more effective in meeting the needs in terms of student attainment of all pupils but especially those less advantaged?
 - Other significant issues or outcomes
 -
17. What is the school doing to ensure sustainability of the improvements made during involvement in the SSAP?

Appendix 3



Narrowing the Achievement Gap: What and how schools learn through involvement in the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme (SSAP)

People we'd like to interview

The purpose of this research project is to identify the kind of practices undertaken by your school that have a positive impact on the attainment of students in the school. We are not engaged in inspection or evaluation but rather in research to find out why your school has managed to raise the percentage of pupils gaining 5 GCSE A*-C and 5 GCSE A*-C including English and Maths. To identify what you have done, how you have done it and why it might have worked, we wish to speak to a wide range of people across the school community and, if possible, from partners in the local community.

The following list is indicative of the kind of people we'd like to speak to if possible. We are grateful to your school for agreeing to be part of the research so please treat this as our wish list. If there are people that you would find difficult to make arrangements for us to see, then just miss them out. Equally if there are people that you think we really ought to speak to then include them. We will be visiting for two school days from 9.30 until end of the school day although we will also be available on the first day for interviews after school or in the evening if necessary. Each interview should last no longer than an hour or the length of a school period depending on who we are speaking to. Thank you very much for assisting us in undertaking this important research.

Head Teacher

Other members of the Senior Leadership Team as appropriate

Teacher(s) from the school's specialism

English teacher(s)

Maths teacher(s)

Teachers from other areas of the curriculum

One or two group(s) of 5 or 6 pupils from Years 10 or 11

One or two group(s) of 5 or 6 pupils from Year 12

School Governor(s)

The SSAP Consultant Head Teacher

Representative(s) of partners in the local community

Parent(s)

We would be willing to interview people external to the school by telephone at a later time if that is more convenient)

We are willing to speak to people either individually or in groups. There will be two researchers visiting the school both of whom have enhanced disclosure (equivalent to enhanced CRB checks) or equivalent. Ideally we would conduct the interviews together but if interviews have to be scheduled at the same time then we could split up to conduct separate interviews.

We will ask each respondent if they are willing to have the interview recorded and their wishes will be respected. We will also invite them to sign a consent form indicating that we have explained to them the purpose of the research and they are willing to allow us to use their responses for the purposes of the research. The school will be identified in the case studies produced but individual responses will be kept confidential unless respondents explicitly agree to allow their names to be used in the report and other publications.

Appendix 4

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

Participant Consent Form

1. I have had the purpose of the research explained to me and have received a participant information sheet.
2. My participation in this research project is voluntary.
3. I am aware that I may withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason to the researchers. If I do withdraw I may ask that any information I have provided be disregarded.
4. I wish my responses to be anonymous/ to be attributed to me (please delete that which is inapplicable).
5. If anonymous I would like my pseudonym to be _____
6. I agree to participate in the research project and would like my responses to be part of the data used in the research:-

NAME _____

SIGNATURE

DATE _____

Appendix 5

Schools involved in Brief Case Study

List of schools to which the above Case numbers in Chapter 3 refer:

Case	School
1 Tranche 5	Andrew Marvell Business and Enterprise College
2	ARCHERS COURT MATHS & COMPUTING COLLEGE
3	Edensor Technology College
4	Hamilton Community College
5	Hartsdown Technology College
6	King Edmund Community School, Yate
7	St Hughs School
8 Tranche 6 wave 1	Chafford Hundred Campus Business and Enterprise College
9	Cockburn College of Arts
10	Freebrough Specialist Engineering College
11	Miltoncross School
12	The City School
13	Valley School, workshop
14	Walton-le-Dale Arts College and High School
15	Wednesfield High School Specialist Engineering College
16	Whitby Community College
17	Wyvern College
18 Tranche 6 Wave 2	Belfairs High School
19	BISPHAM HIGH SCHOOL – ARTS COLLEGE
20	CASTLE VIEW SCHOOL & SPECIALIST SCIENCE COLLEGE
21	Christleton High School
22	Copland A Science Specialist School
23	The Deanery High School, Wigan
24	Higham Lane School, Nuneaton, Warwickshire.
25	Southmoor Community School
26	Swinton Community School
27	Teesdale School
28	The Wildernesse School
29	Ullswater Community College
30 Tranche 7 wave 1	Ashford Christ Church

31	Campion School Northamptonshire
32	Costessey High School
33	Dorcan Technology College
34	Edenham High School
35	Fullbrook School
36	Greenhead High School
37	Headlands School and Community Science College
38	John Mason School
39	The Kimberley School
40	Kingswood College of Arts
41	Longbenton Community College
42	Mayfield School
43	St Aidan's Catholic School and Language College
44	WOODHEY HIGH SCHOOL (SPECIALIST SCIENCE COLLEGE)
45	Tranche 7 Wave 2 Caldew School
46	Yewlands Technology College
47	Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre
48	Eckington school – a specialist engineering college
49	Francis Bacon Maths and Computing College
50	Hameldon Community College
51	John o' Gaunt Community Technology College
52	Malbank School and Sixth Form Centre, Nantwich
53	Millom School
54	Sidmouth College
55	Sir Bernard Lovell School
56	The Rushden Community College
57	Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College
58	Woodhouse Business and Enterprise College
59	Tranche 7 Wave 3 Tavistock College
60	Coquet High School
61	Cromer High School and Language College
62	Denefield School
63	Hellesdon High School
64	Scalby School
65	St Catherine's Catholic High School
66	Tranche E Broadgreen International School
67	Friern Barnet School
68	Hextable School

69

Highfield Humanities College

70

Norham Community Technology College

Removed from analysis since it was planned to use them for detailed case studies:

Tranche E

Bedminster Down

Shoeburyness High School

Tranche 7 Wave 1

Bishopsford Community School

Community Science College

Lostock College