

Office for
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Education Action Zones: tackling difficult issues in round 2 zones

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Introduction

'Education Action Zones can receive up to £1m per annum from the DfES and from private sector sponsorship and in return are expected to set and achieve challenging targets. EAZs are, however, more than just another funding stream for schools. They represent a concerted effort to make a sustainable change that will endure beyond a zone's statutory existence, not only in terms of examination results but also in effecting structural and cultural change in and towards education in some of the country's most disadvantaged areas.'

Education Action Zones, Annual Report, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2001

1. In autumn 1998 and spring 1999, 25 round 1 Education Action Zones (EAZs) were set up, followed by 48 round 2 zones a year later.
2. An Ofsted report published in 2003, *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and effect*, analysed progress made by round 1 zones. This report evaluates the progress made by ten round 2 EAZs in tackling difficult issues within schools and their communities. Each case study covers one issue in one zone. The issues covered are:
 - attendance
 - Key Stage 2/3 transition
 - raising standards at Key Stage 3
 - raising standards at Key Stage 4
 - work-related learning
 - dealing with disaffection
 - behaviour management
 - improving teaching and learning
 - school leadership and management
 - raising pupils' self-esteem.
3. Tackling issues such as these effectively is central to the success of zones. They are matters of concern to schools throughout the country, but they are particularly significant to schools in EAZs because of the circumstances in which they work.

Main findings

- ❑ Effective and sometimes highly effective work by EAZs was seen on some of the difficult issues covered by the survey, with clear effect from well-designed and well-managed programmes.
- ❑ Zones have made a significant investment in the appointment of specialist staff to reinforce national school improvement strategies and their additional contribution is generally valued and helpful.
- ❑ All zones have been successful in helping their schools to work more closely together, although only a few zones fully engage all schools. Most zones have established beneficial links with local partners, including businesses.
- ❑ Progress in raising attainment within zones is often uneven, and in secondary schools it is slow, in particular at Key Stage 3.
- ❑ Most zones have not effectively supported schools in re-integrating those pupils whose education may have been interrupted because of mobility, absence or exclusion.
- ❑ The monitoring and evaluation of programmes have taken time to develop. Zones usually had insufficient data and inadequate methods of evaluation at the outset to be able to judge the effectiveness of their programmes.
- ❑ Zones rarely hold schools to account for the outcomes of the funding and support they receive, and they struggle to bring about improvement in poorly managed schools because they lack the authority to require change.
- ❑ In the majority of zones there is insufficient dialogue with local education authorities (LEAs) about support for schools in particular need and about zone initiatives and their sustainability. Only in a minority of cases have innovative zone programmes been adopted by LEAs.
- ❑ Most of the 48 round 2 zones are not targeting difficult issues directly and deliberately enough. Analysis of the schools' needs has sometimes not been thorough enough and there are some significant gaps in zone plans. Most zones have too many initiatives, and many of them are not linked clearly enough to the issues that need particular attention, especially in secondary schools.

Survey

4. A survey of all 48 round 2 zones was carried out in summer and autumn 2002 to gain an update of the zones' views of the progress they were making in tackling the 10 issues covered in the survey. The results of this survey, together with the DfES annual report on EAZs and Ofsted reports, provided background for the case studies.

5. The 10 zones whose work is covered in detail in the case studies were selected on the basis of data, annual progress reports and analysis of Ofsted school inspection reports on zone schools. The 10 zones represent a range of different contexts across England: urban, rural and coastal. Despite their differences, they all face similar challenges:

- many pupils have poor self-esteem and low aspirations
- attendance is often poor and disaffection can lead to misbehaviour
- a significant number of parents do not place sufficient value on education
- most have unemployment that spans more than one generation.

6. Analysis of Ofsted reports on all the zone schools showed that they had similar problems to tackle in order to improve. Common issues reflected in the reports included: information and communication technology (ICT); monitoring and evaluation; attendance; curriculum; the role of the subject co-ordinator; planning; the professional development of staff; raising standards of attainment; the quality of teaching; and the assessment and marking of pupils' work.

7. Many of the secondary schools face difficulties in raising attainment arising from:

- the transfer of excluded pupils from other schools
- the arrival of refugees and asylum-seekers, some with little English
- poor attendance and behaviour
- high staff turnover and heavy use of temporary staff
- poor exchange of information, including subject-specific information, as pupils move from Key Stage 2
- failure to maintain the momentum often built up by the end of Key Stage 2.

8. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) spent two days in each zone and visited between two and four schools in each case, following a programme drawn up in discussion with the zone. The programme allowed HMI to discuss how individual zones had tackled a particular issue and to gauge its effect through discussions with staff and pupils, first-hand observations and the analysis of data.

9. Each section of this report begins with an **overview** based on national evidence, data about the schools in the 48 zones and an analysis of the responses made by the zones in the telephone survey. This overview is followed by an account of the **background** provided by zone directors and a summary of **action by the zone**. **Data on progress** and the **inspection findings** are then presented.

Case study 1: Attendance

Hamilton Oxford Schools Partnership Education Action Zone

Overview

Ofsted's Annual Report for 2001/02 shows that attendance, nationally, in primary and secondary schools improved slightly, although unauthorised absence remained at the same level compared with the previous year. Over a quarter of all secondary schools, most of which are located in inner cities, have unsatisfactory levels of attendance. A relatively small number of pupils account for a high proportion of absence in these schools. The high level of unjustified absence that is condoned by parents remains a major problem in some areas. The intermittent presence of poorly attending pupils places considerable demands on teachers.

Authorised and unauthorised absence are greater in EAZs for both primary and secondary schools than nationally. School inspection reports identify attendance as an issue in 40% of the schools across all 48 zones. There are problems with extended family holidays and poor punctuality.

Of the 48 round 2 zones, 25 considered they were making good or better progress with improving attendance. Nine of the zones had no specific programme to tackle attendance, and four said their programme was at an early stage. Of the remaining zones, five reported their programme was satisfactory, and five judged that they were making little or no progress.

Background provided by the zone

The Oxford EAZ has worked since its inception in September 1999 to improve attendance. Attendance is now a higher priority for all schools as they aim to change the culture in the community regarding absence. Initiatives have been funded for three years, and although there has been significant improvement, levels of attendance remain below the national averages.

The zone has been successful in influencing the working practices of the LEA education social work service, and Standards Fund monies have been used to fund school-based first-day response workers and the zone education social worker. There has been a significant rise in awareness among class teachers and tutors of the importance of attendance and their responsibility to work with pupils. The zone has also created support systems for schools and families that have helped to improve attendance across the zone.

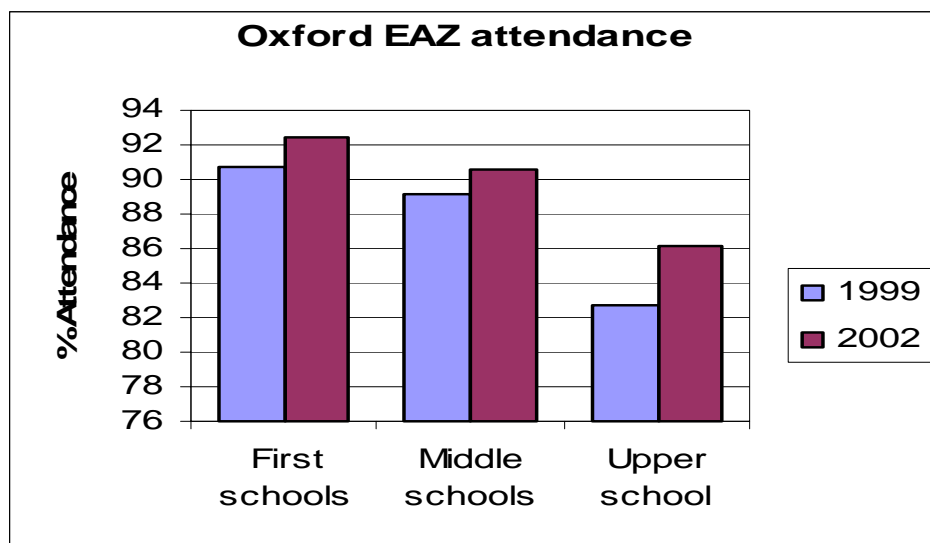
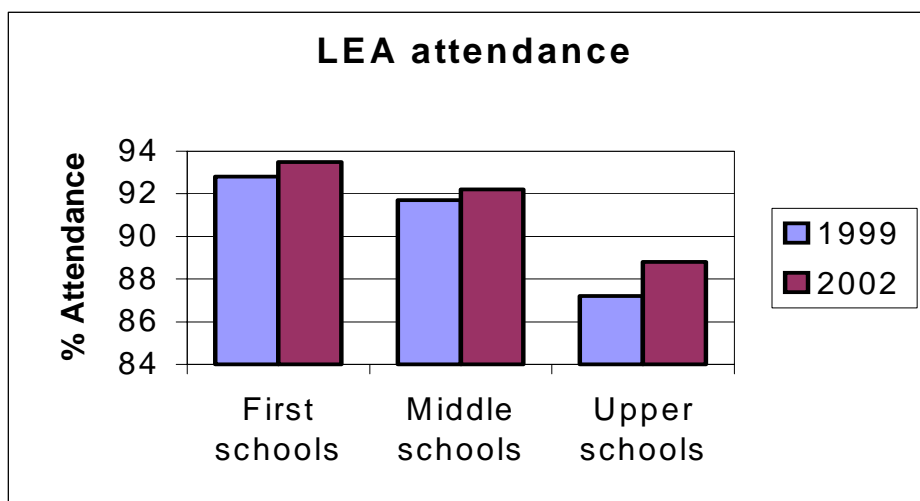
Action by the zone

The zone:

- funded home/school link workers and an education social worker dedicated to working with families across the zone
- funded the appointment for one and a half hours a day of 'first-day response' workers, preferably from the local community, whose job is to contact parents when children are absent and then to decide whether to refer the child to the home/school link worker – who in turn decides how to support the parents or whether to refer them to the education social worker
- brought all schools and interested parties together and ensured that senior managers in schools have attendance as a priority and devise school policies through which class teachers take responsibility for attendance issues
- provided training on electronic attendance recording
- helped to create individual plans in primary schools and organised attendance competitions and rewards in secondary schools
- ensured schools have good systems for promoting attendance and punctuality, including letters home, 'early bird' weeks, rewards, trips and competitions.

Data on progress

The charts show improvement in attendance since the start of the zone's programme in first, middle and upper schools.



Inspection findings

The zone has been successful in improving attendance at a greater rate than in the LEA by using a range of good strategies devised by the zone, its headteachers, and the LEA. Its success is due to the explicit and well-understood approach to improving attendance. The zone has raised the awareness of the importance of good attendance among pupils and parents, and in the community. However, poor attendance is deeply entrenched in the culture of the local community and is still condoned by some parents. Aspirations are low, and some pupils see little point in going to school as unemployment is low and casual work is plentiful.

Attendance falls by only one percentage point on transfer from first to middle school; but by five points overall on transfer from middle to upper school. The curriculum is perceived as inappropriate by some older pupils who, as a consequence, are selective of the lessons they attend. Staff turnover, up to 50% in many schools, leads to inconsistent relationships that contribute to poor pupil attendance in some cases.

The work of the zone in telephoning parents of absent pupils on the first day they are absent illustrates the very positive effect the zone is having on changing parental attitudes. The pupils who receive support to improve their attendance are carefully targeted. The use of zone home/school link workers and a dedicated education social worker to follow up more deeply entrenched issues with persistent non-attenders is helping to get them back to school.

Case Study 2: Key Stage 2/3 Transfer

East Manchester Education Action Zone

Overview

National studies show that, generally, greater attention is given in primary/secondary transfer to social matters than to academic progress. Comprehensive information is usually provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). However, some departments in secondary schools, especially the foundation subjects, receive little or no information about pupils' attainment; some teachers assume limited knowledge, and as a consequence tend to use the same starting point for all pupils.

Good transfer of information is difficult to manage when pupils move from one primary school to a large number of secondary schools. A consequence is that many pupils are not challenged sufficiently in the early part of Key Stage 3. Primary schools collect a wide range of useful pupil data, but secondary schools usually request or receive only Year 6 test results. They usually struggle to obtain consistent pupil data for the start of Year 7. Without this information, teachers are unaware of individuals' abilities and, too often, a dip occurs in pupils' attainment. Schools often re-assess pupils at the beginning of Year 7 using a range of commercial tests to obtain consistent data. National initiatives, using bridging units and the common transfer of data in the core subjects, are beginning to bring about improvement.

Of the 48 round 2 EAZs, 19 considered they had a satisfactory or better programme to address transfer. Twelve zones had a programme that was at the early stages of development and six zones had no transfer programme.

Background provided by the zone

East Manchester EAZ recognised that the various transfer points can have a negative effect on pupils' progress and a number of initiatives have been put in place to address these problems.

Tackling the issues raised by transfer between Key Stages 2 and 3 is particularly problematic because of the pattern of movement from primary to secondary schools. There has been a tendency for more able pupils from EAZ primary schools to transfer to secondary schools outside the zone and for zone secondary schools to admit significant numbers of pupils from primary schools outside the zone.

The core EAZ initiative seeking to improve Key Stage 2/3 transfer has focused on co-ordinating and supporting the effective use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy bridging units in mathematics and later in English. Zone evaluation indicates that this has had a positive effect on Year 7 pupils' progress in mathematics.

The transfer project in 2002 has also been a factor in reversing the trend of pupils moving out of the zone at the end of Year 6. It has also been significant in supporting pupils' progress beyond Year 7.

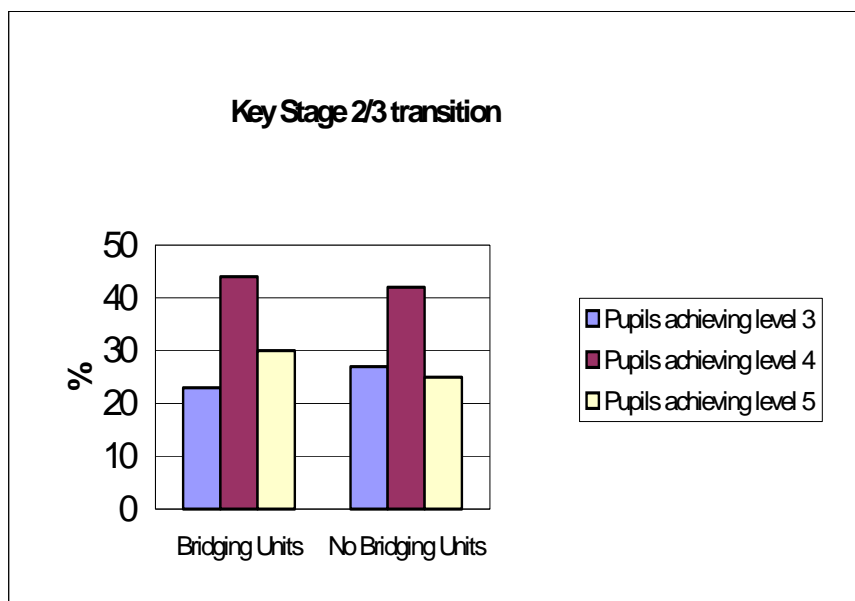
Action by the zone

The zone:

- funded staff to support pupil transfer, including transfer between classes within the same school and to help to organise the use of bridging units through training, collecting data and direct work with staff in schools
- tried to involve as many of the contributing primary schools as possible in using the bridging units, including schools on the borders of two LEAs, with the result that all pupils proceeded with the units in secondary school, even if they had not undertaken the units in primary schools
- improved the speed and efficiency with which data are exchanged at transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.

Data on progress

The following chart compares the Year 7 optional test results in mathematics of those engaged in bridging units with those who were not. All the pupils in this sample continued work on bridging units in their secondary schools in 2001.



Inspection findings

There has been a good start to improving the progress of zone pupils when they transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 by the use of bridging units in English and mathematics. Commendably, some primary schools outside the zone have also been involved. Zone data, currently only available for mathematics, shows that pupils make better progress and fewer pupils regress.

There is, however, insufficient use by secondary schools of primary school data to track individual pupils and monitor the effect of the units when they transfer. Secondary schools do not communicate effectively with primary schools on all subjects across the curriculum and Year 7 pupils report that they are not consistently challenged.

The zone has contributed very successfully to reversing the trend for more able Year 6 pupils to attend secondary schools outside the zone. The proportion reduced from 67% of Year 6 in 2001 to 39% in 2002.

The bridging units have been very effectively supported by zone learning development managers. Evaluation of the transfer project by staff and pupils indicates that most pupils felt that the work was of an appropriate level and prepared them well for secondary school. Parents, however, are not well informed and the opportunity to engage them more fully in the transfer is missed. The majority of teachers felt that they had been well trained to use the resources. Sustaining transfer activities will involve substantial school investment and this has begun in part.

Zone-funded work on transfer from class to class within primary schools contributes effectively to a prompt and well-informed start to the next year's work. Teachers are provided with time to talk and share information with the next teacher to ensure learning continuity for pupils in all areas of the curriculum. Work on transfer, not directly supported by the zone, in a specialist sports college, is innovative, but not widely disseminated. It centres on a physical education curriculum for Year 7 that ensures continuity with primary teaching methods and accurate assessment before pupils embark on the secondary curriculum.

Case Study 3: Raising standards at Key Stage 3

Easington and Seaham Education Action Zone, Durham

Overview

The Ofsted Annual Report for 2001/02 shows that national standards rose significantly by the time pupils reached the end of Key Stage 2, but standards in Key Stage 3 did not improve as much compared to the previous year. Over recent years there has been little improvement in national test results in English and only a slight rise in mathematics. The wide gap in the performance between girls and boys in English remains.

There is also concern about the standards achieved in science. They show that pupils do not generally make progress from the level they achieved at the end of Key Stage 2. Evidence from Ofsted inspections indicates that the overall progress made by pupils in Key Stage 3 science is slower than in Key Stage 4. It is hampered for many by a weakness in basic skills. Pupils' attitudes to learning in science are less positive from Year 7 to Year 9 and only pick up again in Key Stage 4.

In almost all the round 2 zones attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has not risen.

Of the 48 round 2 EAZs, 22 considered they had a satisfactory or better programme to raise standards at Key Stage 3. Of the remaining zones, nine said they had a programme that was at an early stage, seven recognised that their programme was unsatisfactory, and ten had no programme.

Background provided by the zone

At the end of Key Stage 2, with the exception of four denominational primary schools, pupils transfer to the zone's two secondary schools. The EAZ agreed that raising achievement would be best met by focusing on the quality of teaching, literacy, leadership and management, the development of ICT skills, and cultural and sports development. Under the banner of 'Building New Traditions', teachers agreed that schools should invigorate their own capacity to build and innovate.

Analysis of the 1999 performance statistics led the zone to place initial priority on providing support for Key Stages 1 and 2, to establish the firm foundation from which to raise expectations across all schools.

The creation of a range of initiatives and partnerships, involving teachers and headteachers, was a catalyst for improvement. The improvement in Key Stage 1 and 2 results has led to higher expectations across all phases. Key Stage 3 performance has improved through literacy support, sharing of data, raising achievement plans focused on improvement strategies, a learning framework, out-of-hours learning, and

dialogues between schools, further education and higher education. The zone's priority has now moved toward supporting the change in culture in secondary schools.

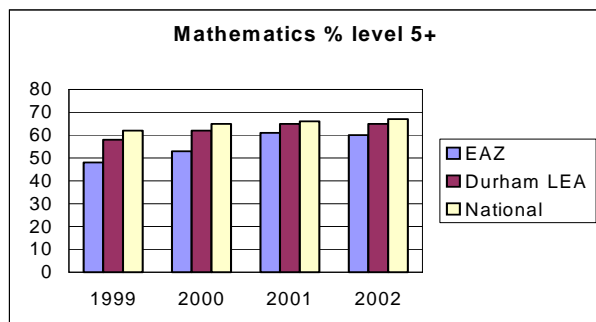
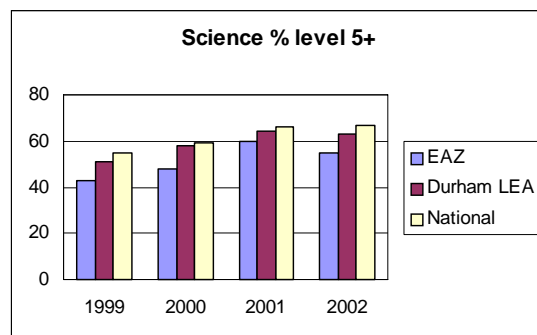
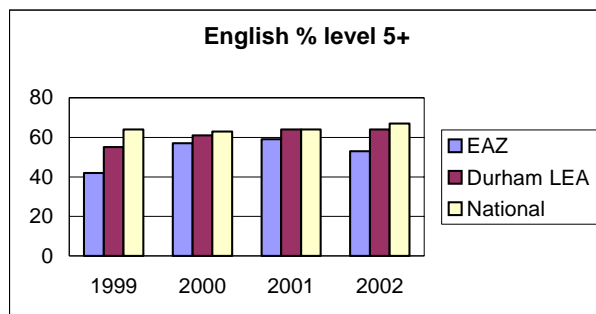
Action by the zone

The zone:

- raised awareness of how to interrogate data among all schools in the zone
- increased understanding of monitoring and review among schools
- supported additional activities after school
- funded a literacy consultant to work with heads of department in secondary schools.

Data on progress

The charts show improvement in Key Stage 3 tests in the zone schools between 1999 and 2002, compared with improvement in the LEA and nationally.



Inspection findings

Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen within the zone at a greater rate in English and mathematics than in the LEA and nationally. With the exception of the support for literacy, improvement cannot be attributed only to the work of the zone. More pupils transfer to zone secondary schools at the end of Key Stage 2 than in the majority of EAZs and the secondary school intake includes the full range of attainment. The zone does not take full advantage of this stability in its transfer arrangements from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3; exchange of information and use of bridging programmes are, at best, patchy.

The newly appointed literacy consultant has provided secondary schools with additional support, alongside that provided by the LEA, by devising materials and interpretation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy specifically tailored to the needs of individual schools. The appointment of literacy assistants to secondary school English departments has enabled teachers to concentrate more on their teaching and learning strategies. Good communication and networking by the zone have facilitated more open discussion between schools. Joint in-service training has also created more opportunities for staff to share work in progress.

Focused support by the zone for Key Stage 4 science and mathematics is not replicated for Key Stage 3. The fact that there is no zone plan to raise attainment in these subjects at Key Stage 3 means that the work of the zone does not build systematically on the standards achieved at Key Stage 2.

Case Study 4: Raising standards at Key Stage 4

Leigh Park Achieve Schools Education Action Zone, Hampshire

Overview

Ofsted's Annual Report for 2001/02 shows that national standards at Key Stage 4 in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) examinations continued to improve, and the average point score per pupil rose compared with the previous year. The proportion of pupils achieving higher grades at GCSE increased. Overall, boys continue to perform less well than girls and pupils from some minority ethnic groups underachieve. Where boys have been given particular support, high expectations and good teaching, their performance has improved more sharply than the national rate.

In round 2 zones, GCSE and GNVQ performance is disappointing, with the only improvement being a very slight increase in the proportion of pupils gaining one or more GCSE A*–G grades.

Ten zones considered they were making good or better progress in raising standards at Key Stage 4, seven judged it as satisfactory and eight considered that it was unsatisfactory. Of the remaining zones, seven had no specific programme and 16 reported that their programme was at an early stage.

Background provided by the zone

Leigh Park is a large post-war housing estate built by the local authority. In 2000, zone results revealed a widening gap from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 compared with national figures. This reflected a long-established practice of more able Year 6 pupils travelling off the estate for secondary education, depriving schools of the support of aspiring parents. Over 55% of pupils have SEN.

The zone strategy aims to reverse this trend and to secure a comprehensive, full-capacity, first-choice intake for its secondary schools. It is doing this by providing additional and complementary resources for school improvement and inclusion, with the emphasis on staffing; support for specialist school status; improving standards in earlier phases; strengthening transition; and building pathways post 16. A strong focus on communication, public relations and the publicising of success is also raising the confidence of the community in its secondary schools.

The two zone secondary schools were described as 'much improved' and 'improving' by Ofsted in March 2001, having previously been removed from special measures. Good teaching has led to improved results at Key Stage 4 and improved value

added measures. One of the zone secondary schools is now a specialist arts college and the other is preparing for sports college status.

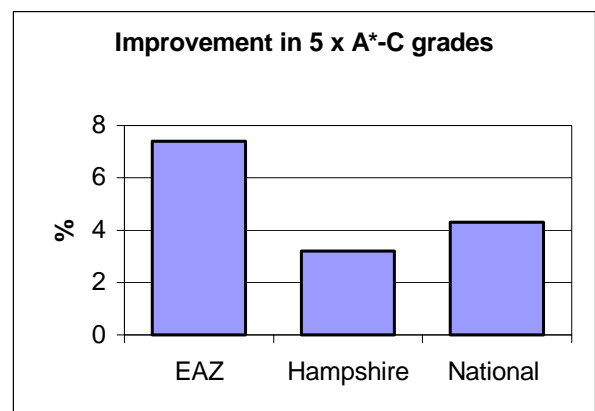
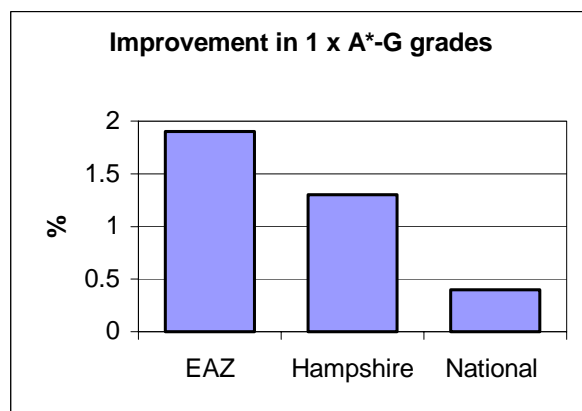
Action by the zone

The zone:

- worked closely with secondary headteachers to initiate specific activities in Key Stage 4
- focused on improving literacy at Key Stage 4, timetabling more successful staff to teach Key Stage 4 pupils, and supporting coursework through after-school clubs
- used local businesses to raise the profile of subjects, through innovative work placements or additional funding for resources.

Data on progress

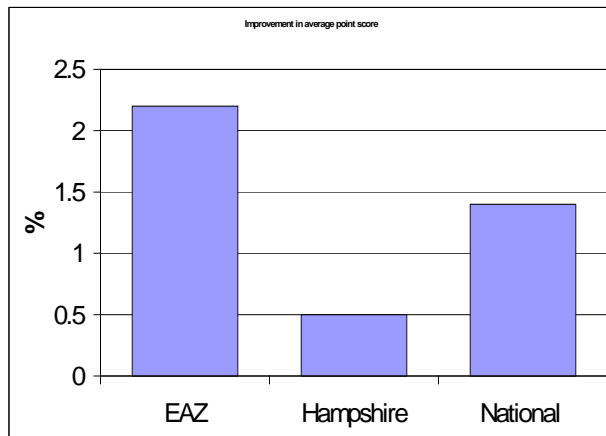
The charts show zone improvement in GCSE results between 1999 and 2002 compared with LEA and national figures.



Inspection findings

Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved at a greater rate in the zone compared with the LEA and nationally, even though the zone has no specific programme for raising standards at Key Stage 4. Instead, it has made a decision to devolve funding to schools to enable them to focus on their own priorities. The standards attained at Key Stage 4 vary between the two schools; there are also differences in their approaches. In one school, standards are improving more rapidly at Key Stage 4,

notwithstanding the lack of targeted support from the zone. The use of alternative qualifications in both schools at Key Stage 4 is at the early stages of development.



The schools are using zone funding satisfactorily to support identified groups, including organising revision courses, arranging mentoring and participating in programmes aimed at raising aspirations. There are different reasons for improved standards in the two schools. Both have more stable staffing compared with other zones. One school has created greater stability by using zone funding for management incentives to encourage teachers to stay at the school. At the other school, funding has been used to support pupils more directly, for example through extensive mentoring in Year 10.

Many issues remain for the zone. Attendance declines as pupils get older and this has a direct effect on standards, yet this has not been given sufficient attention. The zone has not initiated sufficient sharing of effective practice between the two schools to help raise standards. The monitoring and evaluation by the zone are insufficiently focused on gauging the effect of the funding of activities aimed at raising standards.

Case Study 5: Work-related learning

Speke Garston Education Action Zone, Liverpool

Overview

Increasingly, schools are reviewing their Key Stage 4 curricular provision so that it is more relevant to the full range of their pupils' needs. This frequently involves: consideration of the range of accredited courses provided other than GCSE; disapplication of some subjects for certain pupils; time out of school to follow courses with alternative training providers; and extended work placements.

These approaches are having a positive effect on the attendance, motivation, attainment and staying-on rates of many pupils. Ofsted school inspections indicate that one in seven schools make extended provision for work-related learning. There are concerns about the currency of alternative accreditation because the full effect of the attainment of pupils with these qualifications cannot currently be included in school performance tables.

In round 2 zones, a few schools are introducing work-related learning more consistently than before. There have been very positive links with local businesses that enable pupils to experience the world of work and get involved in purposeful projects, resulting in experiences that have a positive effect on standards. These link well to National Curriculum programmes of study in a range of subjects.

Twenty round 2 EAZs considered that they provided a satisfactory or better programme to develop work-related learning. Seven zones recognised that their programme was unsatisfactory; ten were at an early stage of developing the programme; and eleven zones had no programme.

Background provided by the zone

The two distinct communities of Speke and Garston are linked geographically by an economic core containing the city's largest concentration of manufacturing industry and by a common range of economic, environmental and social deprivation indicators.

Speke, one of the most deprived wards in the country, is a community where many are affected by high unemployment, low self-esteem and poor motivation. Positive change is taking place, assisted by a regeneration and education programme and by a growing number of local employers and inward investors who are ensuring that local jobs are offered to local people. The core issue is the ability of young people to access these jobs. They are competing with youngsters, many of whom have better qualifications and key skills.

The starting point was the agreement of aims; this led to the development of programmes to meet the needs of pupils, teachers and private sector partners. Work-related learning is a feature of all projects in all key stages and, importantly, supports the delivery of a more appropriate curriculum, developments in teaching and learning techniques, improved motivation, confidence and achievement, and the growth of trust between education and the business world.

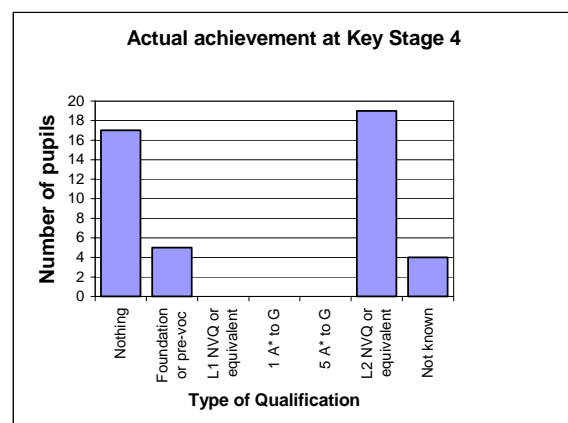
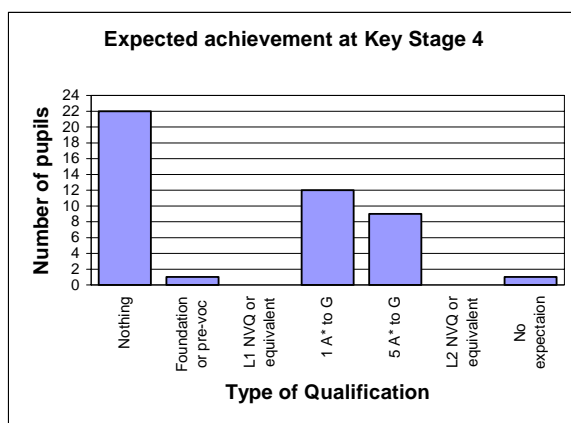
Action by the zone

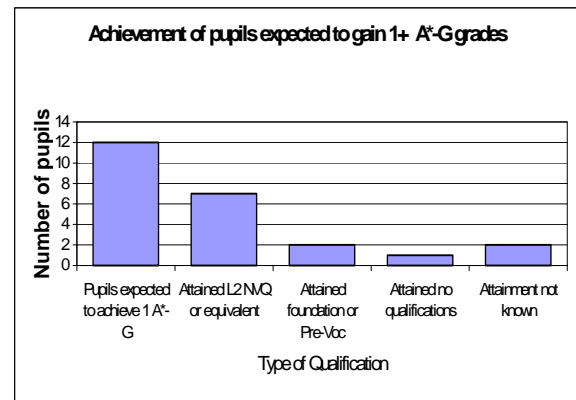
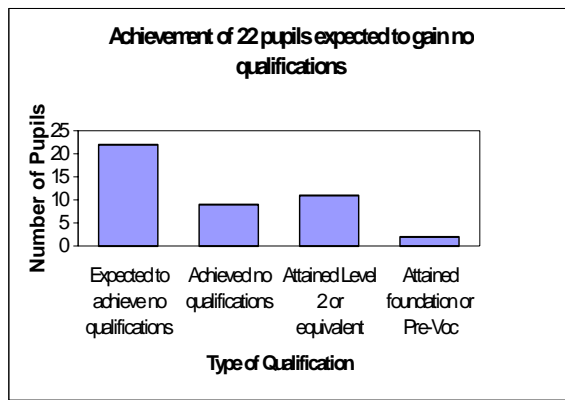
The zone:

- worked with schools to create an approach to work-related learning which means that it is not limited to Key Stage 4 and is an integral part of the curriculum
- sought to identify starting points for applications to the world of work, with activities being supported fully by local businesses
- ensured that projects were thoroughly planned, with baseline data collected at the start and learning gains measured at the end.

Data on progress

The charts show expected achievement compared with actual achievement in 2002 for those 45 pupils following an alternative curriculum involving aspects of work-related learning.





Inspection findings

The zone is providing a series of valuable experiences of the world of work at all stages, although less so at Key Stage 3. It is making very good use of local businesses, who are committed to providing more opportunities for schools and local people. There are improvements in attendance, attainment and the destinations for many pupils, especially where programmes are tightly focused.

At Key Stages 1 and 2 the programme is well-linked to the curriculum, for example: the 'K'nex Challenge', a set of Key Stage 2 activities linked to levers and pulleys in the science curriculum; the Jaguar programme where pupils use the company's education centre to develop their literacy and numeracy skills; and the Marriott Junior Masterchef programme. They have all had an effect on the quality of learning and improved standards. Another key aspect of this work in primary schools is the role played by zone staff in working alongside teachers to plan, model, and assess the programme, ensuring that the good practice becomes embedded in their teaching.

Although low attainment at Key Stage 3 mirrors the national picture, there are few specific activities directed to this stage.

Where provision is well managed, targeted Key Stage 4 pupils are provided with good opportunities to follow a more relevant curriculum, both in school and with other providers. Disaffected pupils are well supported by the Speke Young Persons Opportunities project. The majority of these pupils complete a good mix of GCSE certificates, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and other accredited awards. The work-related elements of this alternative curriculum improve pupils' motivation and social skills and are highly valued by them. Many improve significantly on their projected school achievement. Although these activities are expensive, they are cost-effective because other provision would be more expensive. In future, secondary schools will have to share their cost.

Case Study 6: Dealing with disaffection

Hastings and St Leonards Education Action Zone, East Sussex

Overview

Across the country, the great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, in half the secondary schools that are making poor progress in raising attainment, unsatisfactory behaviour and negative attitudes are significant problems. Some pupils misbehave because they cannot deal with the work they are given, or with aspects of school organisation, or because they are under pressure from their peers. Poor attendance often results and frequently the subsequent disruption leads to poor motivation and lack of progress. Such pupils often find it difficult to engage with the curriculum they are offered, their aspirations are low, they receive little support from home and they find school irrelevant to their needs. Schools make progress in dealing with disaffection where they identify pupils most in need and develop a more appropriate curriculum and learning environment to meet individual needs.

In 22 of the 48 zones, disaffection was an issue identified in school inspection reports, although it featured as a significant weakness in only 3% of the 922 schools.

Twenty seven of the zones considered they were making good or better progress in dealing with pupil disaffection, and eight judged their progress to be satisfactory. Very few zones reported unsatisfactory progress in tackling disaffection; seven said their progress was at an early stage, and five had no specific programme to deal with this problem.

Background provided by the zone

When the zone was set up, 50% of 17 year olds were not in full-time education, compared with 71% that are nationally. The area had the highest under 18 crime rate in East Sussex; 13 out of every 1000 teenage girls were pregnant and there was a high number of transient families. Attendance was poor, and one third of the permanent exclusions within the LEA were from schools in the zone. Some 6% of pupils left school without any GCSE certificates and there was a lack of parental support to improve behaviour.

Eight personal advisers were placed in the five zone secondary schools. Pupils referred to the advisers were assessed and they agreed an action plan with the pupils and their families. The project works with 50 different agencies and also uses business mentors to support Key Stage 4 pupils. The 'Soft Landings' team has developed the post of 'inclusive learning tutor' working with primary and Key Stage 3 pupils and their families. The team supports transition; its work has now been extended into 12 schools, supported by the Children's Fund.

Many of the zone's programmes address disaffection, including: the attendance project that employs 'inclusive learning tutors'; 'pupil progress chasers', who focus on decreasing the number of pupils leaving with no qualifications; and family learning, supported by a curriculum development officer.

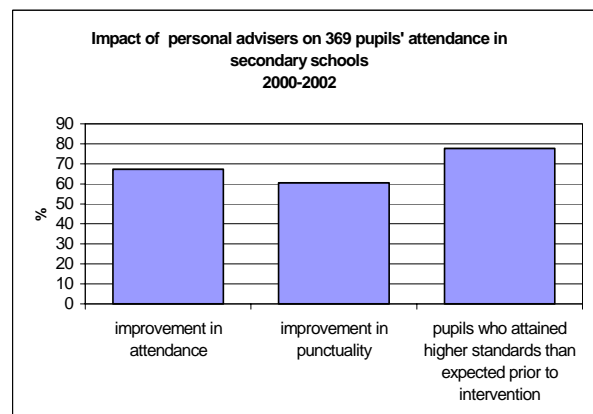
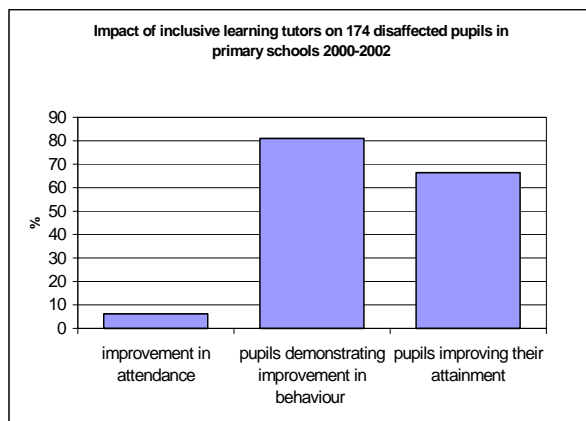
Action by the zone

The zone:

- funded additional staff to provide intensive support for selected pupils and families, taking care to involve them in regular meetings to discuss causes of disaffection and to bring about progress
- used and developed existing links between professionals in the area and created new roles to support primary pupils
- measured the effect of the initiative and sought additional funding to sustain and further develop the work.

Data on progress

The charts show zone data demonstrating the effect of 'inclusive learning tutors' and personal advisers.



Inspection findings

The zone has identified that a small proportion of pupils in its schools are profoundly disaffected, and the symptoms have also been identified. Deep-rooted issues have been tackled effectively in some cases by providing intensive support for these pupils. The zone has succeeded in appointing, training and managing a number of

high-quality staff to the posts of 'inclusive learning tutors' and personal advisers to work in schools. These staff each have a small budget, and have been successful in re-engaging disaffected pupils, creating links with families and brokering multi-agency links. They are having a positive effect on reducing disaffection, raising attainment and promoting inclusion.

Each school has an individual support worker. The programme is very well integrated with the other work of the schools. Individual pupils and schools are very well targeted with appropriate support. The programme is well thought out and its funding has been planned carefully to ensure future sustainability from external sources.

Monitoring and evaluation have been an integral part of the programme and successfully demonstrate its effect, for example in the qualifications attained and improved attendance and behaviour for the pupils concerned. Current resources directed by the zone towards disaffection are not sufficient to meet the large scale of the schools' actual needs. Following the recent introduction of 'pupil progress chasers', designed to support underachieving secondary pupils, further guidance on how to monitor their effect is needed.

Case Study 7: Behaviour management

Downham and Bellingham Education Action Zone, Lewisham

Overview

Nationally, pupils' behaviour in primary schools continues to be very good. Behaviour which is unsatisfactory overall is found in 1 in 12 secondary schools. A small number of pupils can be extremely demanding. In secondary schools there has been a slight increase in exclusions between 2001 and 2002, following a reduction in previous years. Boys remain four times more likely to be permanently excluded than girls. Although there has been a reduction, pupils of some minority ethnic origin, especially Black Caribbean boys, are still being excluded disproportionately.

Action to counter problems in behaviour is most effective when teaching has clear routines and expectations, and there is consistency in the treatment of individuals. In some cases, schools have introduced in-school provision as part of their strategy to improve behaviour and this has been effective when it has focussed on improving learning as well as behaviour. The task of improving behaviour is made particularly difficult by unsupportive parents, high pupil mobility and staff turnover.

Behaviour is a common issue identified in school inspections in 33 of the 48 zones, although it is a significant weakness in only 7% of the 922 schools in all zones.

Nineteen round 2 zones considered they had made good or better progress in improving behaviour; eight judged they were making satisfactory progress and very few considered they had made unsatisfactory progress. Of the remaining zones, five considered that progress was at an early stage and 14 had no specific programme to improve behaviour.

Background provided by the zone

From the outset the zone recognised that the task of raising levels of aspiration and achievement among pupils, parents and the community was complex. It considered the quality of teaching and learning to be crucial in improving achievement. It also sought to address many of the other key elements of social inclusion including: promoting educational aspiration among pupils and parents; regular attendance; and managing and improving challenging behaviour.

A key aim is to offer a programme that provides family support to parents and schools and focuses on pupil behaviour. Progress is being made through a range of initiatives: family-focused professionals working across many schools provide counselling, including therapeutic interventions, and classroom support; a number of programmes to address behaviour management in classrooms and in playgrounds; professional development for teaching and non-teaching staff; and a comprehensive

programme to engage and support parents to develop good behaviour management strategies that will be sustained beyond the lifetime of the zone.

The behaviour management programme underpins almost all of the other programmes, including 'accelerated learning', literacy, numeracy and out-of-hours activities.

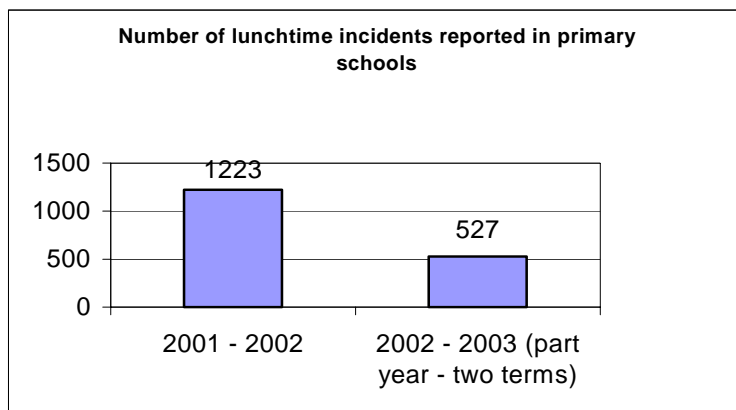
Action by the zone

The zone:

- focused on the management of lunchtime behaviour in primary schools and trained lunchtime supervisors
- developed individual programmes of support for transient pupils through sustained links with an identified pupil and member of staff, involving outside professionals where appropriate
- developed academic and pastoral tracking of individual pupils and work with schools on different learning styles.

Data on progress

The chart shows the number of lunchtime incidents reported in primary schools following zone training of lunchtime supervisors and the funding of play equipment.



Inspection findings

The zone-led behaviour primary school management programme focuses largely on behaviour outside the classroom, and does not place sufficient emphasis on the management of behaviour in classrooms. In the main, the programme supports selected primary schools, where there is evidence that it has improved behaviour and its management. The most significant area of improvement has been during

lunchtimes, where incidents in some primary schools have reduced by as much as 40%. Lunchtime supervisors have been trained and incidents of boys' aggressive behaviour have declined. This has promoted a calmer start to afternoon lessons and, together with additional support from classroom assistants, has allowed teachers to make more academic progress with targeted groups of pupils.

Good use is made of outside agencies, including art therapists, educational psychologists and counsellors, who are also having a good effect on the behaviour of targeted pupils. There is evidence of improvement in attainment at Key Stage 2 in the core subjects in schools that have received intensive support, and in the movement of targeted pupils down or off the SEN register.

The zone behaviour management programme in secondary schools is less explicit. While there is a strong inclusion strand, the development of behaviour management is mainly left to the secondary schools, with financial support from the zone. The strategy lacks the collective impetus of the work in primary schools.

Lewisham is an area of high pupil mobility and the zone has a programme that addresses this issue. Some schools have developed an induction programme to support mobile pupils. As a result, they settle more quickly and receive good support from staff. The zone is also piloting individual pupil tracking, by using a commercially tailored software package, that allows staff to make regular diagnostic assessments of the pupils' ability and progress, and to identify other factors that may be inhibiting further achievement. This tracking is developing well, and the LEA is extending the programme to all schools.

Case Study 8: Improving teaching and learning

Greater Yarmouth Education Action Zone

Overview

The quality of teaching in the core subjects nationally in primary schools continues to be a strength, and is significantly better than the quality of teaching in the foundation subjects. Key Stage 4 teaching is good or better in nearly four fifths of schools compared with three quarters at Key Stage 3. Teachers' planning is effective in most primary and secondary schools but assessment continues to be a weaker aspect, and remains only good or better in one third of schools. Teaching assistants in primary schools continue to make a positive contribution to teaching and pupils' learning.

The positive picture of the quality of teaching is in jeopardy in some urban areas of the country because of difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. Teacher mobility is increasing, with up to a third of teachers in primary schools across the country moving during the year. The match of teachers and other staff to support the curriculum has deteriorated and is unsatisfactory or poor in one in five secondary schools. Staffing difficulties are experienced widely in both phases but continue to be most severe in schools in disadvantaged communities, including EAZs. In these areas, the proportion of poor teaching is much higher in lessons taught by temporary and supply teachers.

Forty round 2 EAZs considered they had a satisfactory or better programme in place to develop the quality of teaching and learning. Six of the zones had a programme in its early stages of development and the remaining two zones judged that their programme was unsatisfactory.

Background provided by the zone

An initial audit of standards of attainment and teaching and learning across the 33 schools in the zone indicated a need to look at programmes that would address the following elements: low staff and pupil self-esteem; high exclusion rates; low standards of attainment; low teacher participation in professional development; weaknesses in leadership and management; and areas of weak teaching.

A project called 'Challenging Education', based on critical and thinking skills was initiated. This offered three days of intensive training to headteachers, classroom assistants, associated LEA staff and governors. Follow-up courses and additional input on literacy, numeracy and gifted and talented pupils have also taken place. A co-ordinator has been employed to monitor progress and give extra training to schools. The outcomes have been:

- improved test results at all key stages
- improved standards of behaviour
- enhanced confidence, motivation and self-esteem of both staff and pupils
- improved quality of teaching
- no schools now in special measures and all schools making good progress
- working relationships between schools have improved as a result of cross-phase training.

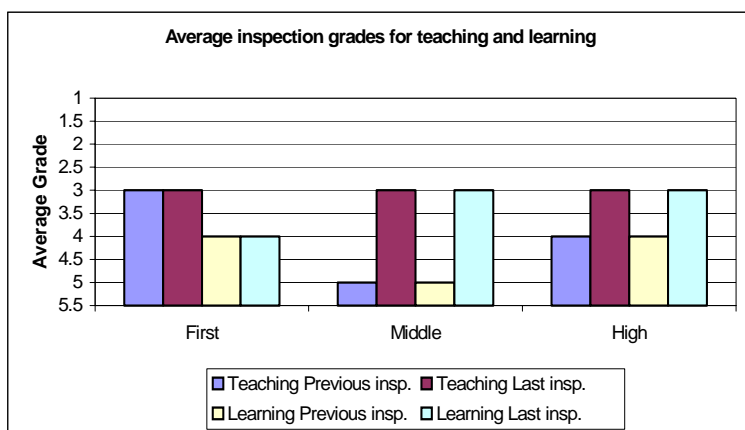
Action by the zone

The zone:

- carried out a thorough audit of teaching and learning in schools using Ofsted inspection reports, and identified weaknesses
- carried out research into international models of improving teaching, learning, self-esteem and behaviour, decided on a model with zone schools and systematically trained all teaching and non-teaching staff in the schools
- appointed a co-ordinator to monitor and organise subsequent support and training to schools.

Data on progress

The chart below shows the last school inspection grades for teaching and for learning compared with the previous grades of those zone schools which have completed the 'Challenging Education' training programme and whose last inspection occurred during the life of the zone.



Inspection findings

Careful research was carried out by the zone into how it could bring about improvement in teaching and learning. Focusing on how children learn, improve their behaviour, and develop self-esteem, a group of headteachers and lead teachers from six schools visited programmes in the USA. They became the key staff who deliver the cross-phase training for the 'Challenging Education' programme to teaching staff, teaching assistants, governors and LEA staff. This process has been effective in developing these key staff.

Adopting the programme has proved worthwhile. Its generic framework allows pupils to consolidate learning styles as they transfer between zone schools. The notion of setting challenges for the pupils and allocating roles and responsibilities is generally enjoyed by them. It focuses lessons more on pupils' practical involvement.

The programme commands the interest and respect of teachers and it has provided them with new ideas and skills. It is straightforward to deliver and becomes another strategy to ensure that lessons focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding of the pupils. Furthermore, it can have a positive effect on pupil behaviour.

The effect of the programme on the quality of teaching and learning across the zone is, however, uneven, and post-training support and guidance for the programme are not directed rigorously enough to ensure that it contributes to raising standards still further. While some challenges are well conceived and effectively taught, many pupils are still underachieving because the challenges are not consistently well enough designed or managed in the classroom.

Case Study 9: Leadership and management

Wythenshawe Education Action Zone, Manchester

Overview

Nationally, leadership and management are good in three quarters of primary and secondary schools, but are unsatisfactory in 1 in 12 primary schools and 1 in 20 secondary schools. Almost two thirds of primary and secondary schools have achieved good or very good progress in improving the school since their last Ofsted inspection.

Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are effective in half the primary schools. There has been a notable improvement in the quality of monitoring and evaluation in secondary schools, where nearly two thirds of schools have good strategies. Most co-ordinators in primary schools also engage in classroom observation. Headteachers and senior staff have become better at analysing data. The targets schools set are often cautious and do not sufficiently set about adding value to pupils' prior attainment. Even in schools where there are difficulties retaining staff and those with high levels of pupil mobility, the quality of leadership and management throughout the school can be very high. It is effective in these circumstances owing to high expectations and consistent implementation of systems, including those that support and guide pupils.

Twenty six of the 48 zones considered they had a satisfactory or better programme to improve the leadership and management of their schools. Only three zones said they had an unsatisfactory programme; six had no programme; and in 13 zones the programme was at an early stage.

Background provided by the zone

Wythenshawe EAZ is situated adjacent to Manchester airport. The key issues relating to leadership and management facing the 29 schools in 2000/01 were: the inadequate use of data to inform future planning; the lack of rigour in self-monitoring and evaluation; the low quality of support relating to inclusion; institutionalised low expectations; and the lack of effective best value service-level agreements.

The zone embarked on a five-year programme to tackle these issues. In partnership with the private sector, a database of pupil attainment has been established whereby progress can be tracked from the classroom, using computers procured as a contribution in kind. Through on-line assessment and with support from the zone's 'quality development teachers', planning is now improved. At whole-school level, value-added targets can be set, measuring the actual difference made with individual pupils' progress.

The zone has produced school improvement software for use in all its schools. As part of the 'full-service schools' concept, schools manage their own services to enhance the quality of support relating to inclusion. The zone is introducing a programme to raise expectations, based on the surveys of individual schools' organisational culture and effectiveness. In partnership with the private sector, the zone has arranged for schools to have wider access to service-level agreement providers.

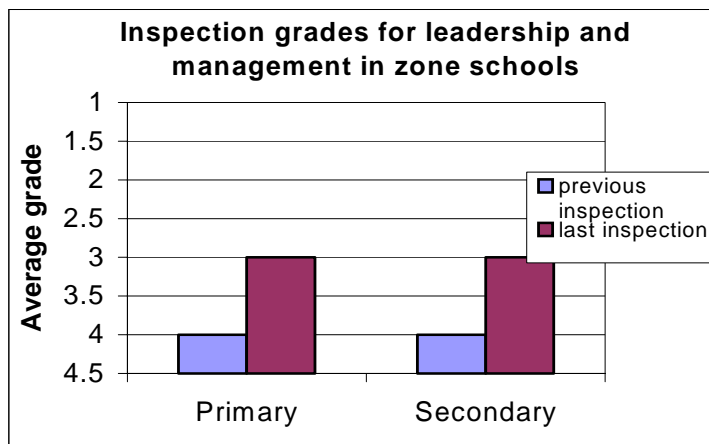
Action by the zone

The zone:

- researched leadership and management training models, consulted with schools on a model, and trained all teaching and non-teaching staff
- investigated commercially available pupil tracking systems and introduced a system in all zone schools
- supported schools with other management strategies, including a 'full-service schools' network, best value brokerage, and federations of schools.

Data on progress

The chart below shows Ofsted school inspection grades for leadership and management in zone schools that have been inspected since the start of the zone, compared with their previous grade.



Inspection findings

The overall quality of leadership has improved during the life of the zone, as measured by Ofsted school inspectors. Zone headteachers report that they have more sense of direction for their school and feel part of a shared mission. The zone has provided a good range of management tools that support many schools well in their management of pupil data, professional development, and future direction. These tools are creating worthwhile opportunities to focus on school improvement issues. The introduction of an individual pupil database was an appropriate investment to monitor progress, measure added value and act as a planning tool to set aspirational targets. However, some schools lack confidence in the data.

Headteachers initially worked with a management development agency in raising self-awareness, in order to become more effective managers. The training provided by the agency is highly valued and is being extended to other staff. Many zone staff provide good models of leadership and management that are respected by school staff.

Overall, the development of management through the use of the tools sponsored by the zone has a much stronger focus than support for leadership. There is room for more collaboration with schools in the training for middle managers and other key post-holders, including summer school leaders, literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, new post-holders in the zone, and those with responsibilities in specialist schools. Training in leadership and management is not sufficiently targeted at the pressing needs of the zone or of individual schools, and the expertise of very supportive business partners is not used enough to aid the development of school leaders and managers.

Case Study 10: Raising pupils' self-esteem

Time to Succeed Education Action Zone, Greenwich

Overview

As part of their everyday work schools generally seek to develop pupils' self-esteem, but there is no national measure to gauge their success. In schools that identify the need to raise the self-esteem of pupils, few take care to ensure that this is an explicit aim of their work or have developed assessment criteria to measure its effect.

When pupils are aware of the progress they are making, they develop more positive attitudes to their learning and a greater sense of self-worth. Some schools consider that certain areas of the curriculum, including the arts, contribute more to this area. Monitoring of involvement in out-of-hours learning also provides evidence that pupils develop greater confidence, and this has a subsequent effect on standards. Schools increasingly make use of business and learning mentors to support pupils. Where they are skilled in dealing with young people and work closely with teachers, they help raise the aspirations and self-esteem of targeted pupils.

Progress in raising self-esteem was judged to be good or better by 30 zones. Very few reported that their progress was only satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Seven zones said that they were at an early stage in their work on the issue, and eight zones had no specific programme.

Background provided by the zone

A detailed audit of strengths and weaknesses in school and pupil performance at the start of the zone identified a common theme of low expectations and aspirations among the pupils, their families, and to some extent the teachers; this led to low levels of attainment. The consultation exercise with schools focused on self-esteem and the ways in which the zone could counter low self-esteem. The zone developed activities and interventions focusing on pupils' confidence in their own capability, their sense of inclusion and belonging, and raising motivation and aspirations.

One result is the Young People's Conference on Global Citizenship, which is an annual event that brings together pupils from zone schools and beyond, including some from Europe and Ghana. Its aim is to encourage them to broaden their perspectives and challenge their assumptions.

Another is the Greenwich Festival of Writing, which runs across the school year and is led by a team of professional authors. It developed a framework for teachers to encourage writing and initiated a writer in residence scheme. This scheme allowed authors to work in zone schools for half a term. Pupils were then asked to write a story to enter in a competition involving zone and other Greenwich schools. The

'Primary Matters Project' was designed to tackle racism and promote justice and equality through drama activities, and was used only in predominantly white primary schools. As a result of the project, a resource pack was produced for use in other primary schools. A zone questionnaire shows that pupils have improving attitudes to school.

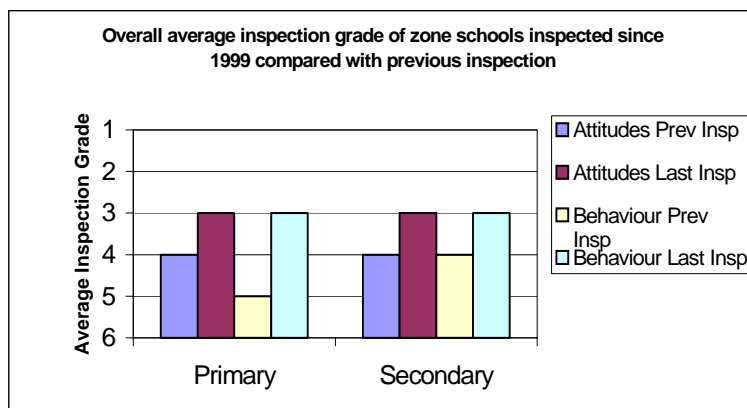
Action by the zone

The zone:

- tackled specific issues within zone schools, such as racism or low levels of literacy, through projects designed to improve self-esteem
- worked in close collaboration with schools and engaged with parents, many of whom may have had a poor experience of school themselves, through projects that encouraged them to work with their child and be proud of their achievements
- improved communication with parents and made them aware of local opportunities for their children
- created worthwhile residential opportunities for pupils.

Data on progress

The chart below gives inspection grades for pupils' attitudes and behaviour in those zone schools inspected since 1999, compared with their previous inspection grades.



Inspection findings

Attitudes and behaviour in zone schools have improved during the life of the zone, as judged by Ofsted inspectors. There is no specific zone programme that focuses on the development of self-esteem, although the zone considers it to be a high priority. The zone improves self-esteem through a number of initiatives. As well as those mentioned above, they include programmes aimed at building up positive relationships with schools, making all involved feel proud of their environment, the helpful provision of personal computers to selected families, valued residential experiences to develop confidence and motivation, and the effective use of learning mentors. The majority of these activities, however, have little direct effect on the development of self-esteem and are not targeted carefully enough at those pupils most in need.

The elements of the activities that could contribute to the development of self-esteem are not sufficiently identified by the zone and there are inadequate means of measuring the effect of the activity on improving self-esteem. Many pupils are involved in a residential experience where they have benefited, mainly in developing their confidence and motivation through working as part of a team. The Festival of Writing which culminated in a high-profile launch of a publication about the locality, effectively celebrated the work of those pupils who had their work published.

Overall, the range of activities has failed to improve attendance in many schools and there has been little effect on those pupils who are the hardest to reach. The zone funding has been successful where it is directed at underachieving pupils with barriers to learning in primary schools, who are supported by learning mentors, where there is an emphasis on developing the pupils' self-esteem. One secondary school had instigated useful well-targeted work itself in raising self-esteem, using zone funds, but this effective practice has not been disseminated to other zone schools.

Conclusions

When Ofsted inspected round 1 zones all of them had some effective elements in their programmes. All had established useful partnerships with local businesses and other education providers. Relationships with schools were generally good. There were common weaknesses, notably that:

- zones usually had too many initiatives, and many were not linked clearly enough to areas that needed improvement;
- the quality of leadership of zones was variable;
- the monitoring and evaluation of zone activities were under-developed and not given a high enough priority;
- improving attainment in secondary schools did not have a high enough profile.

Both the strengths and the weaknesses of round 1 zones are reflected in this study of ten round 2 zones.

Effective, and sometimes very effective work was seen in this survey of action to tackle difficult issues. The lessons learned are that success is more likely when:

- the zone identifies important common issues clearly, and works effectively with all schools in agreeing a policy for jointly tackling them
- expert zone staff augment the delivery of national strategies and help schools to pursue them more rigorously and intensively
- the local community is involved in the zone programme
- the programme is very well embedded into the schools' own work
- there is careful targeting of those pupils most in need.

Although some success was evident, overall, the headway made by zones, and the schools in them, was too variable. In the majority of zones there was not enough deliberate and sustained attention to tackling difficult common issues. As indicated by the responses of all the 48 round 2 zones, there were some significant gaps in zone plans in this respect.

Some progress was made by schools despite the lack of targeted support from the zone. Generally, other initiatives, including the national strategies on literacy and numeracy and the specialist schools programme, have been a much stronger lever to raise standards and promote inclusion.

Only a minority of round 2 zones have been able to overcome fully the problems that limited the progress of round 1 zones.

Only a few have managed to get to the heart of the issues within their schools and local communities and are having a significant effect across all phases. Most are spreading the support across the zone too thinly and not concentrating enough on schools facing significant challenges. As a result, progress in raising attainment within zones is often uneven, and in secondary schools it is slow, in particular at Key Stage 3. All zones have been more effective in primary schools, where the staff and school population are often more stable, communication with parents is more regular and improvement can be more tangible. Many zone secondary schools struggle to create an ethos for learning in a context in which some parents place insufficient value on educational achievement.

The analysis of need at the outset of the zones' work was sometimes not thorough and sharp enough. For example, zone action plans often paid insufficient attention to issues identified in Ofsted school inspection reports. Of the schools in the 48 round 2 EAZs, over 45% had reports identifying issues relating to assessment; 40% had issues relating to ICT; 40% had issues to do with monitoring and evaluation; and 39% had issues about attendance. Key issues like these often did not receive enough attention. A greater number of zones could have been expected to have given Key Stage 2/3 transfer a higher profile, bearing in mind the low standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 3. Very often zone secondary schools in particular have struggled with significant staff turnover and high levels of pupil mobility and many zones have not done enough to support them in meeting these challenges.

Monitoring and evaluation have been slow to develop. Zones usually had insufficient data and other bases for evaluation from the outset to be able to judge the effectiveness of their programmes to tackle the difficult issues they have identified.

Schools have not always had sufficient ownership of and commitment to the zone's programmes. In most zones in the survey, a number of schools were not fully enough involved in the activities, sometimes regarding their involvement in the zone as another unnecessary plate to spin. Most zones have found it difficult to get the senior management of all schools fully involved and they often fail to challenge schools to account for the outcomes of the funding and support they receive.

Zones have also struggled to bring about improvement in poorly managed schools because they have lacked the authority to require change. Such schools need significant support but there has often been a history of limited involvement and intervention from the LEA that persists where a zone has been created.

Finally, although good practice exists in pockets of all zones, it has not been shared as widely and deliberately as it could have been. In the majority of zones there has been insufficient dialogue with the LEA about zone initiatives and their sustainability, and only in a minority of cases have innovative and successful programmes been adopted by the LEA.

Recommendations

Zones should:

- ensure that the priorities identified in their programmes take greater account of the issues arising from Ofsted school inspection reports
- give more support to the lowest-attaining secondary schools to develop the skills they need to respond to the multiple challenges they face, in order to ensure that the resources available are directed effectively to bring about improvement
- direct more attention to Key Stage 3, where many endemic problems exist
- support secondary schools to use the full range of primary school data more effectively so that the momentum of pupils' progress from Key Stage 2 can be sustained
- support schools in developing ways of dealing with the causes of discontinuity in pupils' education, including mobility and staff turnover, and where re-integration of pupils is an issue as a result of poor attendance and exclusion
- ensure from the outset that they have appropriate ways, including baseline data, of evaluating the effectiveness of their programmes, including those designed to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.