AN AREA APPROACH TO ADDRESSING WHITE WORKING CLASS UNDERACHIEVEMENT AND COMMUNITY COHESION

A focus on Colmers School and Sports College and other schools in the Edge Partnership, Birmingham Local Authority

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June 2009

ACKNOWELDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank each and every person from Colmers, the Edge schools and the wider community for giving us their time and speaking honestly and openly in providing us the information we required. Without this, the project would not have been possible.

We feel the schools we visited outside of Birmingham deserve a particular mention. These were Redbridge School (Southampton), Robert Clack School (Barking and Dagenham), Middleton School (Rochdale) and Cleeve School (Gloucester). This gave the Edge staff an opportunity either to be affirmed in what they were already doing or enabling them to think anew in working with White young people.

Thanks to the Project Team- to Sue Iqbal for both helping to gather the necessary information from schools she worked with and endless 'project management' conversations and ideas and to Pete Brayshaw for helping to research the views of parents at Colmers and Satpal Boyes for research into Colmers feeder primaries. All this was invaluable.

Finally, as with previous work on White underachievement, our thanks to Mike Donovan, Head: Transforming Education, for providing the funding for this project and for his continued sponsorship for this area of work.

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PROJECT BRIEF

The purpose of this project was to build on previous work on White underachievement. This began with a report, five years ago, entitled '*Underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham*'. This was followed up by '*Addressing underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham'* in 2008.

In the current project, we were asked to research the work of Colmers School and Sports College in order to get a better understanding of what success looks like in serving the needs of the White disadvantaged learners. In particular, we were asked to consider the school's current position and context, the methods and practices the school employed to achieve its success as well as its community and contextual factors involved.

Beyond this, we were asked to consider the wider context of the Edge Partnership, of which Colmers is a member, in order to understand the work of the schools and other community organisations and individuals in order to explore the collective ownership of needs and issues and good practice within the Partnership.

In addition, we were asked to look at effective practice further afield and to identify and highlight research findings from other local and national sources in responding to the needs of White disadvantaged learners.

In terms of recommendations and next steps, we were asked to advise on the desirability of a Network plan to address achievement and community cohesion, replication of current practice and wider community involvement in raising achievement and community cohesion.

RESEARCH

We were asked to gather views and perspectives of a range of stakeholders. This consisted of the following components:

Colmers School, - we gathered views of:

- Staff- through a questionnaire and one-to-one conversations
- Students-by looking at the PASS (Pupil Attitude to Self and School) survey and through a focus group with ex students
- Governors- through one-to-one conversations
- Parents- through focus groups and questionnaire
- Business links- through feedback which had been provided to the school
- Feeder schools- one-to-one meetings with schools and Colmers staff who liaise with them

The Edge Partnership - we attended meetings of the Partnership. In addition, we held individual meetings with the schools in order to gain a better understanding of their work.

Wider community - we met with representatives of the following organisations in order to gain a better understanding of their work and potential for making a further contribution to addressing underachievement and community cohesion:

- Bournville FE College
- Colmers Leisure Centre
- Connexions
- Dave Schwan- Frankley Guitar Group
- Edgbaston constituency Youth Forum
- Four Dwellings adult education group
- Frankley Church Community Project
- Lift Community Trust
- Local Authority Youth Service
- Longbridge Resource Centre
- Richard Burden MP for Northfield
- Worth Unlimited

The research team comprised Karamat Iqbal and Sue Iqbal with additional contribution from Pete Brayshaw of Positive Parenting and Satpal Boyes.

WHITE UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Key points

1. White disadvantaged pupils are the largest underachieving group in Birmingham. Out of 7002 Birmingham pupils in 2008 who did not achieve 5A*-C, including English and Maths, 3560 were White or White Other. This was more than all other ethnic groups put together.

2. According to research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, White pupils are least resilient in the face of disadvantaged context. According to the same research, eligibility for free school meals is strongly associated with low achievement but significantly more so for White British pupils than for other ethnic groups

3. According to the Birmingham's Brighter Futures research, White boys and girls enjoy going to school the least of all City's pupils, least likely to attend school (86% in 2006-7) and least likely to think it important to get a post 16 qualification.

4. According to the National Audit Office, a higher proportion of White young people are NEET (not in education, employment or training) than is seen amongst most ethnic minority groups

5. The picture does not seem to be improving. For example, within Birmingham, in terms of 5A*-C, over the past 3 years, White boys on free school meals were at the bottom of all pupil groups and White girls on free school meals, although better achieving that boys, were least achieving of all girls.

National and local context for White underachievement

Generally, there is not a supportive context which would encourage or support conversation or developments about White underachievement. Indeed, the word 'White' is seen by many as controversial and sensitive. White liberals, many of whom are responsible for education and wider policy matters in local and national government, are often reluctant to talk about the subject for fear that they would be accused of being racist. Therefore, the few references which may be made or policy interventions in this respect tend to use euphemisms such as 'multiple disadvantage' when talking about White underachievement.

Birmingham is one of the few local authorities which are explicitly addressing White underachievement. Some five years ago it set up the White Achievement Group (it already had established Asian and African Caribbean groups) and commissioned a

report on White underachievement[1]. This was followed up by a second report[2] in 2008.

During 2008, the authority's Secondary Strategic Achievement Group carried out research to identify pupil groups who were underachieving from within the seven main ethnic groups. The criteria for this were as follows:

1. There are 5 or more pupils in this ethnic group in Y11 in 2007
2. 45% or fewer pupils achieved 5+ GCSEs including English and maths in 2007

The numbers for schools who identified particular underachieving groups are given below:

- Asian – Bangladeshi 15 schools
- Asian – Pakistani 35 schools
- Black – African 10 schools
- Black – Caribbean 35 schools
- Black – Somali 10 schools
- Black – other 6 schools
- White- free school meals 54 schools

Using funding from a number of different sources, each of the Local Authority secondary schools were invited to highlight their underachieving groups and identify possible interventions. In order to set the scene, a seminar was held on underachievement. This included presentations on a range of pupil groups including White. Subsequently, by far the largest number of schools identified White pupils as underachieving. One Adviser said "it's as if we have given schools permission to focus on White underachieving pupils. Also, because an Asian person had drawn attention to White underachievement, they feel it's ok to talk about the subject without any fear of being accused of racism".

On 22 April 2009, the Council's Scrutiny Committee decided to receive a report[3] on White underachievement (alongside Pakistani underachievement who are the largest ethnic minority underachieving group in the City). As well as a written report, there was a presentation by Colmers School, a Specialist Sports and Science College. This was possibly the first time the Committee had focused on the situation of White pupils in this way. It was a momentous occasion indeed to have a Headteacher from a mainly White school, Peter Jones, stand up and talk unashamedly about the needs of White pupils and the success of his school in working with them.

The Council had also decided to organise a national conference entitled "Raising the achievement of White working class pupils"; to be held on 21 September 2009.

Nationally, there is little acknowledgement of White underachievement and yet the data is compelling indeed in helping us to remind the extent of the problem.

[1] Underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham, Karamat Iqbal 2005, Karamat Iqbal (published as a glossy in 2008)
[2] Addressing underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham, Karamat Iqbal 2008
[3] Raising the achievement of Pakistani and White disadvantaged children, report of the Lead Link Officer

Recently, the government launched its strategy[4] on race equality. The document contained data on underachievement which pointed out that in 2007 as many as 83% of White pupils on free school meals had not achieved 5A*-C at GCSE including English and maths.

> *"Eligibility for free school meals is more closely associated with lower attainment for White British boys and girls than for children from minority ethnic groups at GCSE"*
> Department for Children, Schools and Families

> *White working class children are not the only underachieving group but they are the largest in number and by many criteria the greatest underachievers. Their lost potential is a moral tragedy; the direct and indirect costs are an economic disaster*
> Report of the Colloquium on White Working Class Pupil Achievement, held at NUT headquarters, Hamilton House, 2 May 2008

> *"The social class attainment gap is still very significant. Anyone who thinks that class doesn't matter has got their head stuck in the sand"*
> Lee Elliot Major, Sutton Trust

> *"Institutional racism misses the fact that in many parts of the country, the colour of disadvantage is White as well as black"*
> Trevor Phillips, Equality and Human Rights Commission

It is too early to say whether the national situation will change as a result of the recent Adjournment Debate[5] where Birmingham Northfield MP Richard Burden made a speech. More critically, the government minister responding agreed that the problem, of White underachievement, needed acknowledging. (See Annex 1 for the full text of the debate).

When we look at White British pupils on free school meals, the proportion achieving five A to C GCSEs falls to just 17 per cent. To put it another way, in 2007, 83 per cent. Of White British pupils on free school meals did not achieve five A* to C GCSEs. That is a horrifying statistic...*
Richard Burden MP Hansard 19.05.09

I agree that we need to acknowledge the problem of underachievement among White children from disadvantaged backgrounds and to make the issue more visible at national and local level.
The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Sarah McCarthy-Fry, Hansard 19.05.09, in reply to Richard Burden speech on White underachievement

[4] Improving opportunity, strengthening society, Communities and Local Government, 2009
[5] Adjournment debate, White disadvantaged pupils (Birmingham) 19 May 2009

UNDERSTANDING BEST PRACTICE- A FOCUS ON COLMERS SCHOOL, A SPECIALIST SPORTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE

Description of the school

Colmers is an 11-16 comprehensive school. It gained specialist sports status in September 2004. In 2007 the school was granted Higher Performing Specialist Status and adopted science as its second specialism. In recent years the school has become very popular amongst the local community. In September 2009 for example, it had 637 applications for 210 places. Consequently, the catchment area of the school has shrunk; it is now within one mile's radius of the school.

The majority of the pupils come from three primary schools. Over 86% of the pupils are White British with a small number from Black, Asian or mixed heritage backgrounds. Over 23% of pupils are on free school meals. Many students enter school in Year 7 with writing skills well below national average.

The area has had a long association with Austin Works, latterly Rover, at Longbridge. This association has had a significant impact on different generations of pupils at Colmers, many of whom expected to end up working at Longbridge after leaving school at sixteen, following members of their family who had worked there before them.

Following the closure of the Longbridge site, the area has suffered a great deal of unemployment. Many of the families have begun to consider wider future possibilities for their children. The school has a crucial part to play in this respect.

The success of the school and the difference it makes in the lives of its pupils and the wider community can be seen from these extracts from its most recent Ofsted report:

- *Colmers School is outstanding and fulfils its aim to continually improve on its previous best*
- *Leadership at all levels is outstanding.*
- *Students achieve exceptionally well to reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 11.*
- *Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding.*
- *Students are making exceptional progress because teaching is highly effective.*
- *Teachers form excellent relationships with students and this means the atmosphere in classrooms is superb.*
- *The extra-curricular provision is of a range and quality rarely seen.*
- *Staff clearly go the extra mile to ensure that the premises and accommodation are clean, bright and fit for purpose.*
- *Students say that staff are always there for them and are always willing to give up time to help them if needs be.*

- *Good use is made of performance data to track students' progress and inform intervention.*
- *Governors are extremely supportive and are fully involved in helping the school achieve its targets.*
- *Links with parents are strong and they hold the school in high regard.*

With the backdrop of these Ofsted findings, our aim in this report was to try and get 'under the skin' of the school's success, gathering evidence from a number of sources and, if possible, to make suggestions for further improvements.

Leadership and Vision

The school tries to help its pupils to have a 'future-focus'. This is based on the belief that 'kids will be what you want them to be' or 'what you let them be'. The aim of the school leadership team is for each pupil to achieve the best examination results possible as well as to learn to be good citizens. There is a culture which encourages everyone to strive for the best: an inherent belief that it is 'not just what you do but doing it well' that matters.

There is a commitment to promoting a 'can-do' culture which means appointing the right people for the right job. There is a strong belief that school is "not just about filling posts". The school vision is to encourage the pupils to "look smart - be smart". This has had full support of everyone in the school community – parents, pupils and staff- from the start.

The senior team strives for distributed leadership. They recognise the importance of keeping in touch with what is going on across the school without stopping people feeling responsible for what they are doing. Meetings are used for staff to share information about their work. The senior team takes a solution-centred approach so staff are expected to put right anything that goes wrong, come up with solutions rather than problems. This helps to build staff capacity and enables them to step in for each other if necessary. In the long run this is a key factor in managing succession planning within the school.

The school cares about its staff. Every effort is made to improve the physical environment for them while reminding them that children come first; their life chances are what it is about.

Underperformance is dealt with promptly. All staff are expected to develop the skills required to have difficult conversations so they can make necessary interventions. Within a supportive culture, staff whose performance is a cause for concern are offered the support and development they need such as mentoring, coaching and observing others at work. As for the senior team, its members become involved as and when necessary with the Head intervening as a last resort.

Staff are encouraged to support each other; *cover for each other, watch each other's back. Look out for each other*. One member of staff we spoke to pointed out: *we know we are as strong as the weakest link.*

The leadership makes sure that everyone has clear roles and responsibilities. If staff stray into another person's role then they are expected to have a conversation about it with the person concerned. People are encouraged to work out of their comfort zone especially for those who aspire to promotion, without any pressure being applied to those who don't have such aspirations.

Good use is made of 'Assessment for Learning'**.** Staff are fully aware that assessment is for identifying pupil need. The system is responsive to their needs and enables them to target students as individuals. It enables pupils to know what they need to achieve by the end of the lesson. The school knows that its systems are effective. For example, last year, individual staff predictions were rarely more than half a grade out. The school used the data to support any departments which were less accurate with their predictions.

The school does not become involved in every initiative possible. The leadership are effective at considering national initiatives and only engaging with those where they are convinced of the benefits; tailoring them to maximise progress at Colmers. Members of the leadership team have instigated the concepts of 'Tweak to Transform' and 'Working smarter not harder'. The leadership treat the school as the 'crown jewels. "We are precious about it; we mustn't do anything to undermine the school".

The school takes an incremental approach to implementation of change. Whenever possible, it is discussed through working groups and piloted beforehand. This way when new practices are implemented, it is not a shock.

The top team has a diversity of skills amongst its members. They complement each other's strengths. Between them, they have pastoral and analytical skills as well as being able to provide the school community with the stability of relationships which have been developed over time.

A good place to work?

When we began the project, we were informed that during the previous year not a single member of staff had left the school. (At the time of writing this report, we were informed that this was likely to be the case for a second year running.) So, we set out to understand this aspect of the school. As well as holding confidential one-to-one conversations with a range of staff we arranged for the staff across the school to complete the WorkWell diagnostic questionnaire. This tool from Birmingham Local Authority is designed to systematically gather staff views through 73 questions. The results are then categorised under six headings (as shown below).

In total, 72 staff voluntarily completed the questionnaire. A few of the key findings are presented here. Some of the findings are backed up by evidence gathered from other sources during the research.

- **Communication**: there were clear lines of communication within the school. Staff received the information they needed to do their job. People at all levels were listened to and were able to raise issues and problems.

- **Engagement and control**: staff felt valued and had opportunities to positively influence ways in which change was implemented at the school. Staff received good support from senior management and felt their contribution was valued within their teams.

- **Management**: there was a strong commitment to high standards. Senior management were sensitive to the mood of the school and actively promoted staff well-being. There was a strong commitment to continuous professional development for all staff with a balance between the priorities of the school and needs of individuals. Staff felt safe in the school and pointed out that pupil behaviour was well managed including any bullying. Elsewhere, they pointed out that staff bullying was not tolerated either. Like pupils' achievements, staff success was celebrated within the school.

- **Personal well-being**: staff got a sense of achievement from their work. They were aware of their own strengths and limitations and were resilient enough to cope well in times of pressure. People pointed out that they were in good health, including psychologically and stated that their stress levels were manageable.

- **School climate**: the school's aims were understood by all staff and everyone took responsibility for its success. Staff enjoyed working at the school and generally moved on for positive reasons. They supported each other and worked together harmoniously. There was a high degree of trust in the school. However, if differences did arise, they were resolved through open discussion. Staff reported that they were treated fairly and that the school was free from unfair discrimination.

- **Work life balance**: staff reported that senior management acknowledged that their personal commitments were important, enabling them to balance the needs of their job with their personal life. As far as possible, the school accommodated individuals' needs as carers and staff had confidence that their requests for flexible working would be given serious consideration. Staff reported job-fit and reported that on the whole their workload was manageable.

Staff feedback

A number of one-to-one conversations were held with staff. The focus was on those staff who had a particular understanding of the local community; based on their

outward facing role, they lived locally or were ex pupils of Colmers. The following are some of the comments from these conversations:

> *I like the school. Staff go the extra mile; kids know staff will bend over backwards*
>
> *Every child does matter here; we practised this long before it became a government policy*
>
> *Back up for teachers is far better here than elsewhere.*
>
> *We as teachers are well supported; it's 100%. There is a culture: 'we will back you'. If we are wrong, we are still supported; might be told to change afterwards but not in front of kids or parents*
>
> *We have a policy here: 'if you want to succeed at a level appropriate to you we will help you.' The pupils have a say in the targets set for them.*
>
> *We are a target based school. Whatever the target, low or high, if they achieve it we celebrate it just as we would for anyone else. We reward improvements- i.e. most improved pupil. We know that "success gives more confidence".*

Support staff

We spoke to a number of Support Staff in order to gain an understanding of their particular contribution.

In terms of the context for this, following the introduction of school workforce reform in 2003, schools recruited a wider range of staff to meet the requirements of the national agreement. Like other schools, Colmers has a significant number of support staff employed in order to support teaching and learning as well as a number of other roles.

According to Ofsted[6], "the key features of successful leadership and management in this area (i.e. in relation to support staff) were:

- a high level of trust, mutual support and openness among the whole staff
- inclusive teams which broke down barriers between teaching and non-teaching staff
- involvement of members of the wider workforce in school development planning so that they developed a clear understanding of priorities for improvement
- a shared understanding of the intended outcomes for pupils and the contribution that the wider workforce could make to their achievement"

[6] The deployment, training and development of the wider school workforce, Ofsted 2008

Ofsted recommend that schools should "ensure that leaders, managers, teachers and members of the wider workforce understand how they can work together to raise pupils' achievement and meet school improvement priorities".

A Great Place to Work!

> *We are thanked for our contribution. It's a great place to work; you wouldn't want to move*
>
> *I love working here; it's the ethos of the school*
>
> *I have a good work life balance; lots of interests outside. But I don't rush out at 4.30. I am often here much later*

The school has deep commitment to developing its staff and has a significant annual budget for this. There are five training days per year. Performance management plans enable the school to identify common themes for CPD (continuing professional development). If staff attend training they are expected to write it up on the school portal for all to benefit.

The WorkWell scores across the categories were around 8. Sue Iqbal, who was a key member of the Edge Project, is also Birmingham Local Authority officer responsible for WorkWell. Looking at the scores for Colmers, she pointed out that "any school that scores above 7 is a very happy place to work".

Furthermore, from our conversations with Support staff, we concluded that, in line with good practice recommended such as from Ofsted, they are an integral part of the school. We were led to the conclusion that they were fully involved in the teaching and learning process and were given opportunities to develop their understanding of pedagogy.

> *We as TAs get closer to children. Our role has 3 prongs:*
> *supporting pupils supporting teachers linking with parents*
>
> *I have lots of local knowledge*
>
> *We are a cohesive integrated staff team; there is no status demarcation. I can make suggestions for improvement. If I see a lesson not working, I can intervene. We spend dinner/breaks together- no them and us here*
>
> *We are integrated into the school- the school has only one team and we are all part of it. But it wasn't always like that. Teachers didn't used to like us in the classroom. There was an attitude: 'I am the teacher!' Now teachers and support staff are one team; there is no atmosphere. Staff room is for all of us*
>
> *All our professional development needs are met. Most teaching assistants have a specialism*

I know that other schools' support staff are not integrated like we are because at area meetings when I say 'our kids are doing such and such', my peers say 'how do you know that?'

We are able to make suggestions. I feel appreciated. Teachers have said: I missed you last lesson when you were not here.

Technicians are the blood of our department; I use them as a sounding board (teacher)

Levering[7] describes 'a great place to work' as a place where employees " *trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with* **"**. In the light of the above evidence, we concluded that Colmers was indeed a great place to work.

Over a quarter of a century, the Gallup Organisation[8] has studied, across the world, productive work groups and productive individuals using a number of core statements such as 'I know what is expected of me at work' and 'at work my opinions seem to count'. (See Annex 2 for the full list). Although we did not use the same statements, we are confident that had we done so, staff would have given a high score on overall satisfaction and agreed with the statements.

So what does this have to do with pupil achievement? The answer is everything, according to what has been described by Leithwood[9] as a backward mapping logic:

This logic suggests that the most immediate influences on pupil learning are the teaching and learning practices of teachers. These practices in turn are a function of the internal states of teachers (histories, beliefs, qualities, knowledge and skills) which are themselves shaped by external conditions (actions of the pupils, classrooms, school, government, wider society). Teachers' practices will improve to the extent that these conditions, actions and features, in aggregate, allow teachers to use their existing capacities well and to further enhance those capacities while at the same time having positive or at least neutral effects on their commitments, motivations and conditions of service. In other words, ***staff working conditions are pupils' learning conditions;*** *in other words, get the former right and the latter is sorted.*

The above logic was conceived by North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey[10]. According to the survey documents:

[7] Great Place To Work - What Makes Some Employers So Good and Most So Bad , Robert Levering
[8] First Break all the Rules, Buckingham and Coffman, Gallup 1999
[9] Successful School Leadership, what it is and how it influences pupil learning, Leithwood et al NCSL, DES 2006
[10] www.northcarolinatwc.org

What's important for high student achievement? - Supportive school leadership, sufficient facilities and resources; time for teachers to plan and collaborate; time for teachers to focus on students without interruption and additional duties; an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

What's important to retain teachers? - Overall perception of the school being a good place to work and learn; the ability of leadership to shield teachers from disruptions

According to the findings of their survey, almost nine in ten educators at the highest performing schools agreed their school is a good place to work and learn compared to two thirds in the lowest performing.

An inclusive school

Colmers pupils are spoken to as adults. Staff fully understand their background and the kind of daily reality they may be experiencing. Although, pupils are encouraged to leave their problems at the school gate, if a pupil were to come into school in distress for whatever reason and unable to cope in lessons s/he is given time to talk it over and helped as necessary. The school employs its own counsellor.

SEN (special educational needs) pupils are in every band which provides an opportunity for all staff to work with a full range of academic ability. There is also a policy of 'no withdrawal from lessons' resulting from a belief that each child should be taught by a specialist teacher. Individual pupils have a personalised plan of support.

All staff have SEN training including information on ASD and Specific Learning Difficulties and Behaviour Communication and Autism. The school makes effective use of its specialist support staff. In practice, this means Teaching Assistants (TAs) help to reinforce the work of the teachers through work with smaller groups and sometimes in 1:1 situations in order to make sure that each and every student is able to access the curriculum. The TAs are able to be the eyes and ears for the school. Because of their training, they are able to spot pupils who are struggling or who are exhibiting behavioural signs. This is then picked up by the relevant members of staff.

Most if not all the teaching assistants (TAs) are well trained with a number developing their own specialism and some achieving Higher Level Teaching Assistant status. A number who are experienced in their role are able to mentor less experienced colleagues.

The TAs are encouraged to share any teaching strategies which have worked with particular pupils. The information is circulated via e mail so that all staff are able to benefit from it. The senior staff member who is responsible for SEN provision has a list of strategies that help SEN pupils. The school has a strong belief in celebrating success. Wherever possible, TAs help to identify pupils whose work deserves such celebratory focus.

The school also has excellent relationships with a range of external agencies. These are used as referral points for pupils as necessary.

PASS

The school makes regular use of P.A.S.S. This is an electronic rating scale which provides a profile of the students' self-regard, motivation, attitudes to teachers and a number of other areas listed below:

- Feelings about school
- Perceived learning capability
- Self regard as a learner
- Preparedness for learning
- Attitudes to teachers
- General work ethic
- Confidence in learning
- Pupil attitudes to attendance at school
- Response to curriculum demands

The resulting data provides the school with an understanding of how its overall pupil population perceives themselves as well as a breakdown into Year groups, gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, the school is able to compare the results with previous years and identify movements up or down the scale.

Information gathered from the PASS survey is used to inform interventions which are responsive to both individual and groups of student needs. This diagnostic approach ensures that these interventions are effective.

The 2005 PASS survey pointed out that Colmers students lacked necessary self esteem and self confidence, didn't have the 'readiness to learn effectively' and lacked motivation if problems arose in their learning. The senior leadership decided that they would address these issues through regular weekly lessons entitled *Learning for Life.*

Learning for Life

The course aims to equip students for learning and for life. It aims to raise aspirations by emphasising pathways, helps to develop emotional intelligence, provides insight into the wider adult world and promotes leadership skills amongst the pupils.

All students are able to access the 9 modules of the programme which are broadly organised under the headings of:

- Identity- who I am; where do I fit in; where am I going
- Independence- survival skills; brain works; meeting challenges
- Interdependence- relationships; taking stock; world view

The structure of the course has allowed the school to integrate into its provision, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's Personal Learning and Thinking Skills. It calls them TRICs.:

- **T**eam learner- leadership; responsibility; communication; respectful
- **R**eflective learner- self aware; thoughtful; adaptable; self development
- **I**ndependent learner- determined; focussed; individual; organised
- **C**reative learner- problem solves; imaginative; curious; challenge seeker

The impact of the programme has been obvious in a number of ways. It has led to:

- Raised aspirations: increased numbers of students are aiming to continue their education beyond 16
- Higher standards of achievement: the students are equipped with correct learning skills
- Clearer career pathways: students are enabled to make informed choices
- Greater enjoyment and positive involvement: students enjoy their learning and are active in the process overall.

Learning for Life - is it any good?

The following comments explain the success of Learning for Life:

> *It got me thinking and made me question everything about life."* (Student)
>
> *It has helped me personally because since we have done this course my behaviour has improved."* (Student)
>
> *More confidence than I used to have. I think I've gained more knowledge on important life things. I've gained more questions about life and I will plan my life in order to answer personal questions* (Student)
>
> "[The intention of the course is]*… to create awareness. To enable young people to learn about themselves in order to develop and become citizens… not just be clever with good grades but who can think for themselves."* (Student)

The PASS data for the past 4 years confirms we are doing the right thing; we are targeting the right children. (It helps us to make sure that) *children do not slip through the net. Not anonymous so each child gets their own results. We are able to target individuals.* (Staff)

The programme has helped the school to raise aspirations of its pupils. The school has been able to reinforce future thinking: 'these are the life skills'; 'you will need these skills when you are older'.

On 1st March 2007, University Day, the single most profound moment for learning for life, all students came back with a buzz. 4 girls did not want to go but went to Aston University and came back elated full of ideas of what they wanted to do, fired up. Pivotal moment, spine tingling..... (Staff)

Now Y 7/8 kids talk about going to university and the university day is seen as a rite of passage as is the interview day (140 pupils go each year) (staff)

The school has excellent links with further and higher education colleges and universities. Representatives of these institutions come into the school which reinforces the message for the pupils: think college, think university. Examples in this respect include:

- Cadbury College organising interviews at the school for post 16 placements and encouraging pupils to stay in education.

- University/ interview days: all Year 10 get an interview. Photos are taken as pupils arrive and displayed in school. Pupils have to dress very smartly

- University students as mentors: to help pupils to aim high. This reinforces other mentoring such as that done by Y11 pupils mentoring Y9.

Foundations for responsibility and global citizenship

The school aims to provide the students with the necessary foundations for citizenship both in the local community and beyond. Early foundations are laid for this through its Code of Conduct. This is presented as a series of Rights and Responsibilities:

- to be allowed to work hard in lessons

- not to spoil the chances of others doing their best

- to attend a school that has a good reputation

- to behave in a way that further improves the school's reputation in the community

- to be supported by everyone when I am in need
- to be considerate to others whenever possible
- to be treated with respect by pupils and staff
- not to annoy or be rude to others
- to have my achievements recognised
- not to criticise the achievement of others
- to have the best education which will help me make the most of my abilities
- to support the staff in providing the best possible education for all

Wherever possible, the school tries to broaden its pupils' horizons so that they come to see their world as a bigger place than their own neighbourhood. The school has several international links including with schools in South Africa, Germany and Tanzania. Pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of social responsibility towards their community and have greater awareness of the international community. Their leadership skills are developed through the Junior Sports Leaders award- Level 1 of the scheme is completed by students in Y10 and Y11 during core PE time. Younger students are becoming increasingly involved, including Y7, and a growing range of subjects are taking part. As well as generally raising their level of understanding of leadership and teaching skills and behaviours, use is made of the Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) Award. Some students go on to do the Community award SLA Level2 which also links with D of E and work experience.

The school has found that some of the best leaders have been SEN students. They have gone onto sports leadership and have been successful at obtaining work at the Leisure Centre at the school's campus. A number of the students have successfully worked with and become role models for local primary pupils.

Pupil feedback on the school

In this respect, there is little that we can add to the Ofsted statements about students:

> *Students love being at school and are quick to point out how much the staff do for them, both in and out of school.*
>
> *Relationships between adults and students and between students themselves are exceptional.*
>
> *Students' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and regardless of their background or ability, they flourish in the school's secure and very caring environment.*
>
> *Students arrive in class wanting to succeed.*

However, we decided to gather together a group of ex-students in order to seek their views about the school. Their responses are shown below and indicate the high regard in which they hold the school:

How would you sum up your time at Colmers?

Outstanding, brilliant and enjoyable

The staff were supportive; they went the extra mile

Not just the front runners but everyone was helped

Even after we have left, if we struggle with college work we can come back to the school and get help

What was the most important thing you gained, apart from your exam results?

Relationships, opportunity to meet and work with a variety of people (people you wouldn't normally relate to)

Opportunities such as D of E, trips, chance to be in plays, dance, concerts, work experience and interview practice

School was good at providing subsidy (so no one would be excluded from activities)

Home-school relationships

(The school provides) *continuous feedback*

Card home to say if you did well- without you knowing about it

If parents raised an issue, the school acted on it

Parents trusted the school

Some staff are good at breaking down the wall

What can other schools learn from Colmers?

Facilities at the school

How the school presents itself i.e. reception

How pupils present themselves

Have you made a successful transition out of school?

We were shown various options

The school has instilled punctuality; helped us to understand how it would affect us

The school rewarded the hard workers; it didn't just concentrate on those who didn't pull their finger out

<u>If you were boss for a day....</u>

Provide a 6th Form at Colmers

Provide a swimming pool

Improve the staff in other schools

Help other schools to enable young people to understand the importance of education

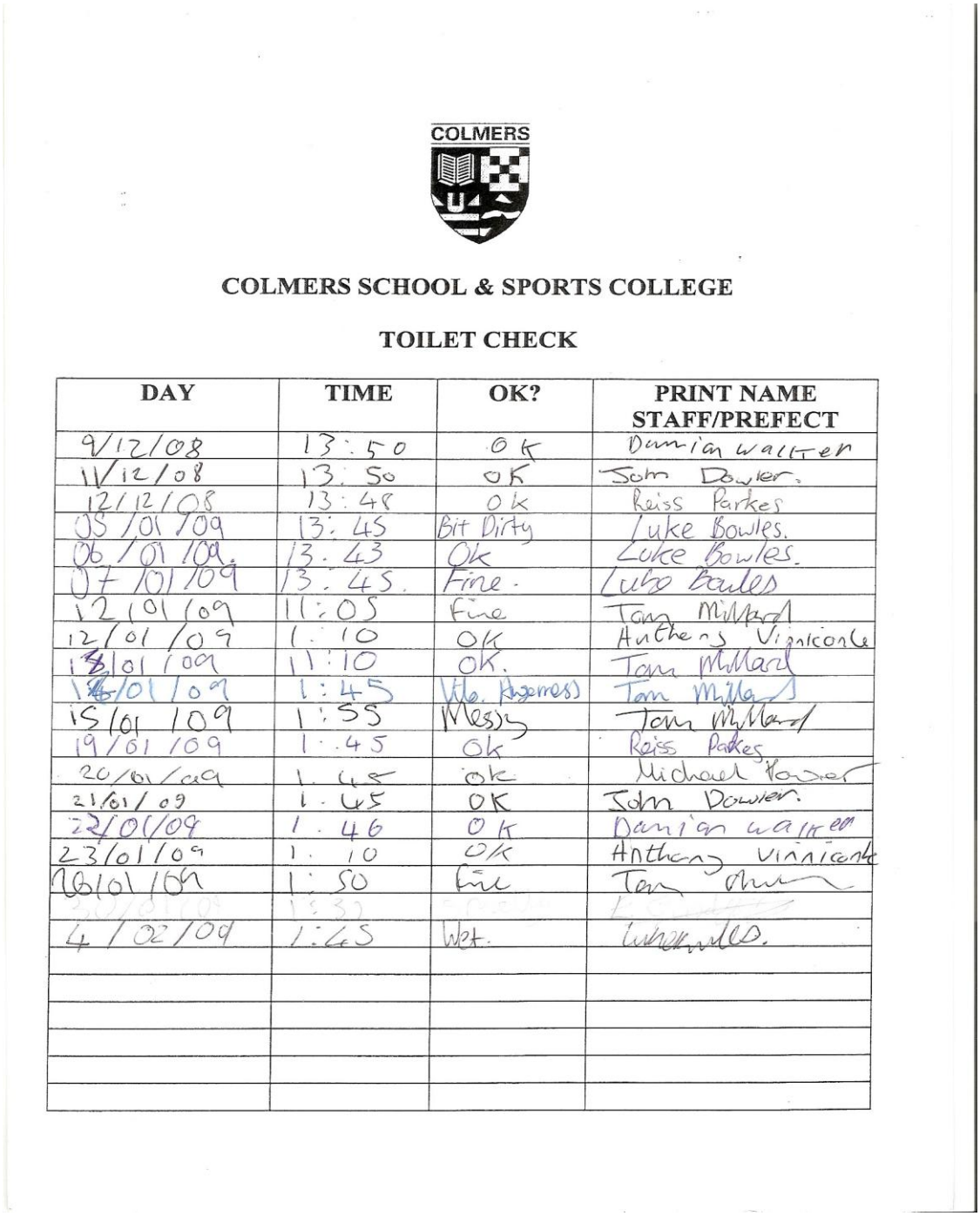
There was a hierarchy between academic and vocational; would be better to have the vocational option earlier

Our overall impression was that here was a group of students who had been well served by the school. They happily gave their time at the request of the teacher who had arranged the focus group discussion. Furthermore, when the focus group came to an end, they were happy to stand around talking to the teacher who they were clearly pleased to see again and tell him what they were up to.

Clean toilets, just like in a posh hotel….

When our project began in the Autumn 2008 term, during the first visit I was struck by the 'toilet check' notice on the door of the boys' toilet in the School Reception area. This is the kind of notice one usually finds at posh hotels and conference facilities but rarely in a school environment and certainly not on the door of toilets for pupils. Actually as far as pupil toilets are concerned in schools, I know very little about them as on school visits as an Adviser I am often advised to stay well clear of pupil toilets and use ones set aside for the staff or visitors.

So during our work at the school we kept an eye on the Notice on the door to see how frequently it had been checked. See for yourself! According to one member of staff we spoke to, "*the previous head had begun his transformation of the school by cleaning the pupil toilets".*



COLMERS

COLMERS SCHOOL & SPORTS COLLEGE

TOILET CHECK

DAY	TIME	OK?	PRINT NAME STAFF/PREFECT
9/12/08	13:50	OK	Damian Walker
11/12/08	13:50	OK	John Dowler.
12/12/08	13:48	Ok	Reiss Parkes
05/01/09	13:45	Bit Dirty	Luke Bowles.
06/01/09.	13:43	Ok	Luke Bowles.
07/01/09	13:45.	Fine.	Luke Bowles
12/01/09	11:05	Fine	Tom Millard
12/01/09	1:10	OK	Anthony Vincent
13/01/09	11:10	OK.	Tom Millard
16/01/09	1:45	Vile. Hopeless	Tom Millard
15/01/09	1:55	Messy	Tom Millard
19/01/09	1:45	Ok	Reiss Parkes.
20/01/09	1:45	ok	Michael Foster
21/01/09	1:45	OK	John Dowler.
22/01/09	1:46	OK	Damian Walker
23/01/09	1:10	OK	Anthony Vincent
26/01/09	1:50	Fine	Tom Millard
4/02/09	1:45	Wet.	Unwanted.

And, by a complete coincidence, Hannah Frankel[11] recently had a feature on this subject in the TES. Here are a few quotes from her article:

"If we show these kids some respect and provide them with the kind of facilities we would want for ourselves in our homes and offices, that might encourage them to respect the facilities, each other, and the adults in charge of their care."

"When asked what one thing would make the school better, the pupils were unanimous. The school toilets were totally gutted two years ago at a cost of

[11] Number 1 Priority, Hannah Frankel Times Educational Supplement 1 May 2009

£42,000. The boys opted for a football theme, including a pitch etched into the floor, while the girls wanted pink cubicles with stars painted on the vanity units."

"Apart from that, the refurbishment has been a big success. The pupils are more hygienic because they enjoy using the brightly coloured liquid soap and are also much better behaved in school."

"It is a powerful indication to children and parents that teachers value and respect the welfare of their pupils,"

Transition from primary to secondary

We contacted three of the main feeder schools in order to explore the transition for the pupils from primary to secondary. In the end, we were only able to gather feedback from two of the schools.

Before visiting the schools, discussion was held with Colmers staff responsible for transition arrangements from Y6 to Y7.

Many of the families of new pupils are often known to Colmers because of the strong ties that different generations have with the school. Therefore, the school, through its Home-School Link staff, already knows particular families because of older siblings. A play scheme is organised during the summer which enables the prospective pupils to get to the school. Any children identified as being 'vulnerable' from the transition meetings are given an opportunity to attend the play scheme along with some of the current Y7 pupils. There are also a number of joint activities organised between Colmers and the primary schools which help with the transition process. These include writing projects, shared expertise and activities in science, P.E. and French.

Once at Colmers, children's progress is monitored regularly. During the October 'monitoring fortnight' any children who have had a number of negative mentions, or low effort grades, are seen as underachieving and are highlighted. This process is then repeated through the year with senior staff and pastoral leaders meeting parents and monitoring students.

A close relationship is maintained with parents at this stage in pupils' schooling. Parents are followed up if they do not attend parents' evenings. Where parents have a concern or worry they can come to the school and see a member of staff without making an appointment first. This enables parents' concerns to be dealt with swiftly. There is an E-portal for parents. Parents are also sent a reminder text the day before an exam.

PASS provides children with an opportunity for self assessment and helps to highlight pupils with low self esteem or confidence. Early on in their education at Colmers, children are encouraged to run charity events and aspire to become prefects. The reward system, TRICs and the Attendance Lottery are some of the other ways the school uses to provide a solid start for Y7 pupils and 'egg on' those pupils whose attendance is in need of improvement.

From our discussions with the feeder schools, we were informed that a number of the pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy was below average. This was a particular problem for boys. Many children lacked wider life experiences thus needing a greater input of enrichment activities.

Children don't arrive with basic skills; they have to be taught these skills

The schools provided some insight into the children and the wider community. This included a greater prevalence of one parent families; sometimes as many as 40% of the children. Some children also suffered from a lack of motivation, aspiration and a sense of purpose. As a result of unemployment, many children came from homes where they were the only ones getting up to go out in the morning.

Other issues which the schools faced in the community included:

- The children come in with a low baseline.
- The social and emotional issues the children bring when they are living in the context of a split family. For example during a school week they can be living with a different parent
- Some parents finding literacy hard
- Some parents having a negative attitude to school because it did not work for them.
- Larger numbers of SEN children

The feeder schools pointed out that in the midst of these challenges practices which made a difference included:

- Setting up a programme of intervention to address low baseline and teaching of basic skills
- Good values and a positive ethos
- Positive support of the children
- Good teaching and learning.
- Additional resource investment in literacy and numeracy
- Social skills groups for identified children
- SEAL through the school
- Lunch time groups run by TAs and SENCO
- Work with families e.g. inspire workshops and workshops on ASD and speech and language
- Parents support group
- The Malachi Trust[12]: Because there were so many families with problems they needed a neutral person who could act as a mediator. Malachi working with

[12] Malachi Trust was profiled in 'Addressing underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham', Karamat Iqbal 2008

about 10 families looking at ways to support these families with housing, mental health and other issues. Malachi will also work with children who have social and emotional issues.

The schools pointed out that there was a need to raise aspirations in the community.

Parents look at you blankly when you say your child can get to university.

If a community hasn't got self worth, children won't have self worth. How many of their parents have had success at school? Raising aspiration is a community problem, schools need to work together to raise aspirations.

It is more powerful if we all do the same thing and share it for the strength of the community; community cohesion rather than being insular!

Employer feedback

The school has excellent relationships with employers. These links are used in a variety of ways. For example, each year an interview day is organised for Y10 pupils. Following are some of the comments from employers who helped to deliver a recent such event:

Very well organised with enough time to see each student

Excellent- absolutely clear what was expected and information received in good time. Very well organised

Excellent as ever. Excellent food and the 'prefects' were lovely!

As usual, 1st class organisation

(In response to the question 'could it be improved?') No! I only wish this experience was available when I was 14/15. I'm sure that the students will have an easier and more informed passage into the world of work as a result of this. Plus, I've had a thoroughly good time doing this!

Spotlight on attendance

The school has been successful at improving on its previous best in pupil attendance. The school has employed its own Education Social Worker to maintain this momentum. The figures for 2007/08 were 93.2% (92.2% for the previous year). This was above average for attendance levels for Birmingham Local Authority schools.

Part of Colmers success is because it has over the years had a strong pastoral structure. If children are not in school by 10 am parents are sent a text

message. The school employs its own home school links worker and counsellor.

The success of the school in this respect has resulted from its firm stance on attendance. It has seen it necessary to unauthorise absences for some pupils whereas previously this would have been overlooked. It has sent a clear message to its parents:

Colmers is an "outstanding" school and parents will recognise that if they want their child (ren) to attend this school, they need to know that we expect a high standard of commitment and discipline regarding attendance.

With a few exceptions, parents have been supportive of the school's efforts. Some have even welcomed it. The school knows it is best to introduce changes gradually, sensitively and with proper explanation. It has been successful in this respect. The school also pays particular attention to pupils it has identified as potential NEETs (not in education, employment and training) at the point of leaving compulsory education.

The school recognises that occasionally it has a challenge on its hands in terms of attendance for certain groups such as White pupils on free school meals. It continues to strive to raise the level of attendance with a whole school focus on this written in to the 2008/09 and 2009/10 School Improvement Plans. This includes a review of processes and practices, training and support of teaching and non-teaching staff and harnessing the power of technology – including lesson by lesson registration, text messaging to parents and early interventions based on current data from the MIS system. The school also realises that it can learn from some of its neighbouring partners within the Edge such as Shenley Court who have developed effective area strategies on attendance.

Governors

We spoke to a number of people on the school governing body. Their comments below speak for themselves!

It's a special school...

It's a specialist school; you could say it is a 'special' school. It's the teachers who make it special

With an effective leadership...

School is well led. The TLR (teaching and learning responsibility) issue was handled well. There was transparency. Staff understood what was being proposed.

The current head has done well. He has been able to build on what was there already. He said he will not fill the previous head's shoes but his own shoes instead. And he has delivered.

With dedicated and approachable staff...

Staff go the extra mile...It comes from within. They do anything to ensure success; breakfast club, after school activity.

It's a friendly school; you can talk to teachers if you want to

It's a nice school. (What makes it nice?) Staff can be approached. The head can be approached; always has a smile on his face

Friendliness makes the school; you can feel it when you come through the door

If you ring and leave a message, staff get back to you…they do listen

I can speak from a parent's perspective. The school has an open door policy for parents. There are no barriers for parents.

Staff panto… (2 nights at the theatre)...The hours they will have put in must have been loads; certainly beyond the call of duty

We do our job; we expect the school management and staff to do theirs. They deliver

A great reputation...

The school has a great reputation. At open evenings, there are that many parents who come that it's over subscribed

The school reputation is there; you just have to mention the name. The school has made a name for itself; it sure has!

We get lots of job applications for vacancies

We are oversubscribed

We had an open evening for the new intake. For 210 places we had some 800 people in the room

I like the school so I like to advertise it

It takes years to build a reputation (and a moment to lose it). School is not complacent.

With clarity of purpose...

From day one the children know the boundaries. It's a fair and well disciplined school. They know what will/not be tolerated.

Kids respect the staff and staff respect the kids

Pupils know what their target is; staff know what their target is

There is agreement on the direction we (as a school) want to move in

With an effective governing body...

There is a nice atmosphere at the governing body; not like some you read about where they are at each others' throats. Here, the relationship between us and the school is excellent

We as a governing body question if we need to. We are actively involved in the decision making. For example, once we met till 10pm discussing blazers

It's a strong governing body; no vacancies

We are a critical friend of the school; we see it necessary to hold management to account whenever necessary

We back it up with money; as a school we are aiming for smaller classes

We have an outcome focussed approach. We have a good school

We see ourselves serving the community. We are here for their benefit. We are responsible to them

I don't mind not getting paid; the money should go to the pupils.

People usually stay as associate governors when their term ends

What would you change?

I wish there was a 6th form so the children could carry on their education here

Would be nice to have a 6th form

If money was no object, we would have a 6th form

It might benefit the school to have a PTA (parent teachers association). It ought to be explored; who knows it might benefit the school. Also in the summer, we could do fetes and sports days. It would be a way of bringing the whole community together

PTA might also help…might help to provide an additional communication between parents and school

Perhaps a box at parents' evenings would be good idea for them to put any questions, suggestions etc

Consultation with parents

As part of a wider project looking at what makes Colmers School and Sports College successful Pete Brayshaw, from Positive Parenting[13], was asked to get in touch with parents to ask them about their relationship with the school and its staff.

24 parents were contacted. This resulted in 11 parents attending two focus group meetings. Whilst there, they completed a questionnaire and then talked more widely on the topics in the questionnaire. All participating parents were given a book token as a 'thank you'.

Questionnaires (see Annex 3) were also sent to parents who did not attend the focus group meeting. 5 were returned, thus giving us a total of 16 completed questionnaires.

Summary of findings

A majority of the parents had a highly positive view of the staff and the school. They thought the school worked well with parents and supported their children in their education and also offered them a wide range of extracurricular activities.

As well as their involvement in their children's education and their relationship with the school, we explored with the parents their aspirations for their children. Almost all parents thought further education was important for their children and were active in supporting their children's education through homework and regular contact with school.

Questionnaire responses

Most parents thought their child was doing well at the school. A number of them offered suggestion as to how the school could improve in its work.

Most parents reported that they were involved in their child's homework. Almost all of them were in regular communication with the school about their child's progress.

Most parents thought the school supported their children well or very well in their learning and that the school was very good at letting them know about their child's progress. They also thought the school supported their child well in non educational activities such as sport, music and art.

[13] Positive Parenting were profiled in 'Addressing underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham', Karamat Iqbal 2008

The majority of parents rated as 'very important' school reports and letters. These kept them informed of the progress their child was making in his/her education. Some thought message by text was also helpful. Email as a method of communication had a mixed response from them.

Most parents thought staff were always available. They pointed out that staff got back to them in response to phone calls and did so consistently, warmly and despite being busy. Most also thought school staff were very friendly, helpful and were fair in their treatment.

Parents agreed that discipline in the school was fair and consistent.

Almost all parents thought it important or very important for their child to continue education after Year 11.

What parents valued about the school and its staff:

Staff are friendly, supportive and fair to parents

Staff support the needs of children

Reward cards and other 'special' letters home work well with the children

Discipline at the school is consistent and fair

If extra support is needed the school is, usually, good at getting (relevant) other agencies in to help

Report cards work with the children and give parents up to date information on progress

Reports, letters home and texts are also valuable in keeping parents updated

The school actively works with parents to support their child

(Staff feedback on parents:

- *Parents prefer the direct contact from the school. They don't want some external agency chasing them as the first contact. They would say: if there was a problem, why didn't you contact us* (comment from staff member with deep knowledge of the parents)
- *Parents/community- we are seen as a helpful place*
- *Parents are supportive as long as we explain things and are reasonable*

THE EDGE PARTNERSHIP AND ITS WIDER COMMUNITY

The EDGE Partnership of Schools represents a cross section of schools in Birmingham The schools form an approximate ribbon shape which stretches from Lordswood Girls School in Harborne, an inner suburb approximately four miles from Birmingham's City Centre, out to Hunter's Hill School in Blackwell, a village in north Worcestershire lying outside of the city boundaries. In between, the EDGE schools tend to be located in some of the most disadvantaged areas within Birmingham, serving such areas as the Longbridge, North Woodgate Valley, Turves Green and Bartley Green.

Within the partnership there is a wide assortment of schools, with some 11-16 and 11-18 schools, co-educational and single sex and a variety of specialisms e.g. Humanities, Science and Sport.

There are three schools which work with children with specific needs:

- Baskerville (ASD)
- Victoria (Physical Disabilities)
- Hunters Hill (SEBD)

Details of other schools in the partnership are:

- **King Edward VI School, Five Ways**, one of the city's grammar schools which is a part of the King Edward's Foundation and which takes pupils from diverse backgrounds from across the communities of Birmingham and beyond
- **Four Dwellings High School**, with the city's second most economically deprived intake and a significant number of pupils from the inner city black and minority ethnic communities
- **Colmers School and Sports College** is close to the former Longbridge plant (the school and its work is fully detailed elsewhere in the report).
- **Turves Green School for Boys** predominantly serves the outer city council estates of Northfield
- **Turves Green School for Girls** predominantly serves the outer city council estates of Northfield
- **Shenley Court School** serves a challenging catchment area nearer to Selly Oak and southern Northfield
- **Lordswood Girls School** takes pupils from Birmingham and Sandwell, including some areas of significant economic disadvantage

Through attendance at Partnership meetings and conversations with individual schools, we were able to get a sense that all schools believed in, and worked together in a spirit of, collaboration for the benefit of their students. They recognised the added value of the Partnership for their school. A number said to us: *we get more from the Edge than we put in.* One school said, *when we needed help, they were there for us, now we can do our bit within the Partnership.*

Amongst the Edge schools we found respect for their pupils' background and a real understanding for their daily realities. This enabled the schools to make an appropriate response to their needs- not 'over-the-top-feeling-sorry' kind of response which can sometime encourage pupils to allow their context to be used as an excuse for underachievement; nor a response which completely disregards their situation and expects them to behave as advantaged middle class children but one with the right balance of challenge and understanding. Based on a mindset that 'every child matters', the schools, to varying degrees, seemed to be living out their belief that one size does not fit all and that every child requires personalised education and have probably done so long before such ideas became national initiatives with capital letters.

Between them, the leaders of the Edge schools have a deep understanding of their contexts and are able to expertly "negotiate a path through the intricate web of demands and expectations"[14] they encounter. This understanding by them and their staff, which they consider to be essential, has been gained through years of experience in such contexts as well as being able to draw upon their own life stories as many of them come from the same White working class communities as their pupils.

Schools told us of the low aspirations and a lack of valuing education amongst their communities. Some told us that it wasn't just boys but some girls also had a problem with low aspirations. We discovered that there were significant numbers of pupils where no one worked in their family. Some schools compensated for this through early careers education. Whatever the challenge they are presented with, many are of the view that "context is no excuse for low achievement". Even better, they are often able to see such situations as opportunities which can be used to the community's advantage. Although, the Edge schools, like others in the country, are invariably focussed on priorities such as the numbers of GCSE grades their pupils achieve, we formed the opinion that they are also interested in the broader purpose of education such as that which is outlined in the RSA Charter for education[15] and which appears to sum up the spirit of the Partnership, its purpose and method of working.

A number of the individual schools are already working in partnership with their immediate community. Through such partnership and multi-agency working, a number of them have been able to improve attendance to levels above the average for Birmingham. A number have also significantly reduced NEETs through prevention strategies.

In terms of post-16 education, 6th forms in the area were able to encourage many young people to stay on in education who would otherwise not carry on at all. In terms of higher education, Newman College appeared to be popular in the locality; especially its non traditional entry routes.

[14] Positive Leadership (context as opportunity) 2009 NCSL
[15] Education for the 21Century RSA 2009

A number of the schools attract pupils from beyond their immediate community. This presents challenges for them when wishing to impact on the pupils' lives beyond school. For example, it is not easy to organise enrichment activities or find ways to ensure that the good work of the school would be carried on once a pupil has left the school i.e. "will the foundations already established be built on effectively? "Will the students' particular needs continue to be met?"

The community role of the Headteacher

Some five years ago the wider community context within which schools exists was acknowledged in the document on Headteacher Standard[16]. Under the section 'strengthening community', it was stated:

> *Schools exist in a distinctive social context, which has a direct impact on what happens inside the school. School leadership should commit to engaging with the internal and external school community to secure equity and entitlement. Headteachers should collaborate with other schools in order to share expertise and bring positive benefits to their own and other schools....Headteachers share responsibility for leadership of the wider educational system and should be aware that school improvement and community development are interdependent.*

The 'partnership working' and 'community role' of school leaders have been emphasised yet again in the document *21 Century Schools*[17]*.* It is expected that they will help to raise standards in the wider community as well as those on their own roll.

In the light of models of community leadership developed by the NCSL[18], the Edge has great potential for community regeneration[19]. Where else is a there a group of leaders who work together cohesively and who represent hundreds of staff between them and whose work impacts day in day out on thousands of young people and their families across the generations? Frank Field summed up the significance of schools in a recent interview: "*once the British people absorbed their values from the church. Now the only institution in a position to instil a blueprint for decent living is schools"* (Sunday Times magazine 25 1 09)

The wider Edge community

As well as attempting to understand the work of the Edge schools, we contacted a number of individuals and organisations which exist to serve their communities. They are referred to below and details of their work are provided (Annex 4)

Between them, they have helped us to gain an understanding of the wider community context within which the schools do their work as well as to explore the

[16] Headteacher Standards, DfES 2004
[17] 21 Century Schools, DCSF 2009,
[18] Community leadership in networks, NCSL
[19] Regeneration through community leadership, NCSL

potential for taking a community approach in addressing underachievement and community cohesion, as stated below:

- Informal education which helps to address some of the softer skills (Lift Community Trust, Local Authority Youth Service, Worth Unlimited);

- Leisure pursuits (Colmers Leisure Centre, Dave Schwan- Frankley Guitar Group and Choir);

- Lifelong learning with its tremendous potential for providing second and third chances for local people as well as impacting on attitudes of school children (Bournville FE College, Four Dwellings adult education group, Newman College of HE);

- Community and political participation and advice (Edgbaston constituency Youth Forum, Frankley Church Community Project, Longbridge Resource Centre, Connexions) and

- National representation (Richard Burden MP for Northfield who took the issue of White underachievement seriously and successfully instigated an adjournment debate 19 May 2009).

Almost all of the people we spoke to seemed to be unaware of the levels of White underachievement. They appeared to be surprised that anyone would contact them and bring them into the frame for addressing underachievement and community cohesion. However, we were left with a strong impression that if a community approach was taken in this respect, then all of them would be interested in playing their full part. Furthermore, it is likely that there are probably many more individuals and organisations who would have a contribution to make in this respect than the ones whom we were able to contact in the limited time we had.

From our conversations we were also able to gain an insight into poor resourcing which limits the potential of individuals and organisations to make a difference to their community. We give one example to illustrate this point.

> *We are given £7 per child for our childcare service. For 8 children this brings in £56. We pay £52 to the worker we employ. This leaves us with £4 to spend on the children. Invariably this means we provide a poor service in an area where the children only know deprivation.*

In conclusion; as a corporate unit, the Edge have a desire to become more 'outward facing' and are creating opportunities to establish links with the wider community and its organisations. For example, at the time of writing this report, we were informed that an Open Day was being planned for July 2009. An invitation had been extended to organisations across the community through the constituency offices.

However, there is another side to this coin. On the one hand the school leaders concerned have to become more conscious of their wider community role. At the

same time, the wider community has to realise that schools are central to community development and, given the opportunity, the difference they make could be even greater. Recognition of this contribution by the wider community such as through Local Awards for educators may be just what is needed to give people concerned the respect and encouragement they need.

COMMUNITY COHESION AND THE EDGE PARTNERSHIP

The Education and Inspection Act 2006 requires the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion under a new duty which came into force on 1 September 2007. It has formed part of Ofsted inspection criteria from September 2008.

Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, speaking in Parliament on 2 November 2006 spoke of community cohesion in the following words:

> *By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.*

In terms of schools' contribution as inspected by Ofsted, promoting community cohesion is considered from three broad perspectives:

1. **Teaching, learning and curriculum** — helping children and young people to learn to understand others, to value diversity whilst also promoting shared values, to promote awareness of human rights and to apply and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action — for example through the new 'Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK' strand within citizenship education.

2. **Equity and excellence** — to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, striving to remove barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and working to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups.

3. **Engagement and extended services** — to provide reasonable means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations: including links with different schools and communities and the provision of extended services with opportunities for pupils, families and the wider community to take part in activities and receive services which build positive interaction and achievement for all groups.

'Community' is seen to have four dimensions:

1. The school as a community
2. The community within which the school is located
3. The UK community
4. The global community

During Ofsted inspections, the views of pupils and their knowledge and understanding about their community and the way the school promotes cohesion within it, form an essential part of the evidence base for the judgement on how well the school contributes to community cohesion. Inspectors are expected to explore within discussions with pupils how effective they feel the school's work has been in

this respect by assessing their knowledge and views of the diversity of their local and national communities. It is seen as essential to ascertain pupils' views on how well they get on with different groups within the school and local communities and what the school has done to promote good relationships and mutual understanding.

Community cohesion within the context of the Edge

It is worth reminding ourselves that the backdrop for community cohesion was the riots in the northern towns at the turn of the century. This led to the Cantle Report which pointed out that different ethnic groups in our society lived 'parallel lives'. An earlier response to this situation was the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. This asked public bodies including schools to 'promote good relations between different ethnic groups'. The Community Cohesion Duty imposed on schools is a more recent response.

The Edge schools operate in a community context which is not always conducive to promotion of community cohesion. For example, during local council elections there is a significant support for the far right political parties who are opposed to diversity and multi-cultural nature of our city and society. It is worth pointing out that many schools end up having to compensate for some of the negative attitudes their pupils bring into school as one person said: *race is rarely and issue with our pupils; it's with parent*s

During our research we formed a general impression that the Edge schools do a very good job in this respect; especially given the hostile environment in which they work. They certainly help to create the necessary pre-conditions for community cohesion by instilling in the young people they work with certain positive attitudes which are essential for citizens of a diverse city, society and world. One example of this work is provided by SLAM (special learning and mentoring) as outlined in a testimonial from Bernie Smith, Headteacher at Four Dwellings (Annex 5). Another testimonial, from pupils at Turves Green Girls School, outlines the benefits of this programme (Annex 6). Similar work is done at Colmers through its programme 'Learning for Life'. This is now being rolled out to other Edge schools.

While a couple of the schools have a local catchment and serve mainly White populations, many of the others have multi-racial school populations drawn from across Birmingham. A number of the schools pointed out to us the parochial nature of some of their local White students: *when our pupils say, I'm going uptown, they mean Northfield (*the local shopping centre) *not Birmingham City Centre.* Young people are also territorial. Many are unwilling to go out of their own neighbourhood into other (gangs') territory. A similar comment was made by a teacher in another part of Birmingham. *Castle Vale is <u>the</u> community for our young people. The rest of the city is a foreign place; another country.*

It is equally likely that there are black and minority young people who live most of their lives in mainly non-White parts of Birmingham and who have a similarly restricted experience of the city.

In the light of this, there appears to be an obvious need for addressing community cohesion through broadening young people's horizons, not just within the Edge but across Birmingham. Indeed, as was argued by one person, sometime places like the South West Birmingham are more open to people are who different from them because they are weak on bonding and more open to bridging[20]. One way or another the world of the outer city has to be brought into contact with that 'other world' which exists within the inner city and schools are probably the best agency to at least make a start.

Diversity, identity and White pupils

There has been very little said and done on this subject. However, what has been said is pertinent.

In May 2006 the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) established the Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review Group, headed by Keith Ajegbo, former Headteacher of Deptford Green secondary School, Lewisham. To aid the team, the DfES commissioned a research project, based on a literature review and case study research. The following are some extracts from this research which are relevant to the situation of White pupils in British schools.

> *Teachers often referred to diversity and ethnicity in a way that focussed almost exclusively on minority ethnic groups and their cultures. White ethnicity, and the extent of diversities within this, was not considered. Pupils' responses also tended to give examples of the non-White when asked about diversity and identity*
>
> *Most of the case study schools did not specifically explore White British diversity or White British identities*
>
> *Some indigenous pupils' experience of identity issues in the curriculum is that they have a deficit or a residual British/English identity. Indigenous White British pupils in multiethnic schools also seemed less confident to talk about their White British heritage in lessons*

Michael Shaw pointed out in the Times Educational Supplement (6.2.2004) that government officials were hesitant in addressing the needs of white pupils "because they feared it could be perceived as racist". In the recent programme, 'Great White Hopes' (Radio 4 23 12 08), Professor David Gilborne said: "Historically, White identity has been a problem. Focussing on it would play into the hands of racists". With views such as these from people who are often advising the government on these matters, it is not surprising that little has been done on this issue. In our view, the Edge, in collaboration with its wider community partners such as those involved in informal education could make a useful contribution in this respect.

[20] Close knit communities are said to be *bonded* within and less likely to be interested in *bridging* with those who are different from them. The reverse is also true. That is, those like parts of the South West Birmingham where there is less bonding within may actually be more open to people who are from other backgrounds

Community cohesion potential of the Partnership

The schools' ethnic minority presence ranges from very small numbers to as much as three quarters. As a partnership of schools, this provides a richer opportunity for work on community cohesion than it might be assumed and also compared with many other parts of Birmingham.

Between the schools there is a diversity of pupil background. In terms of social class, this ranges from few pupils to as many as 60% on free school meals. In terms of ethnicity, Lordswood Girls has nearly three quarters of its students from minority ethnic background, Victoria has nearly half, Baskerville and Four Dwellings have one third and Shenley Court and Hunters Hill Technology College each have about one fifth of their pupils from such communities. King Edwards Five Ways also has a rich heritage amongst its pupil population.

The sixth forms within the Edge make a particularly significant contribution in this respect where students are encouraged to be more outward facing towards their wider communities. Also, the schools which attract pupils from outside the area have a great deal of potential for addressing community cohesion.

Based on our limited understanding, it is likely that all of the schools may be doing more than they realise towards community cohesion. For example, when asked what they were doing about community cohesion, one Headteacher said: *we haven't done anything; where do we start?* A few moments later, the same Head said: *we have been doing it for donkey's years- ethos, values, respect, tolerance*

Furthermore, in our view, the relationships which the Edge has in place would be an excellent basis for doing much more in this respect and in the process adding value to their core purpose of education.

In conclusion, community cohesion cannot be imposed on people from the outside. It is about relationships. Like in any other situation people cannot be told to love one another. It requires an incremental approach:

Class ➲ school ➲ neighbourhood ➲ ward ➲constituency ➲ city ➲ world beyond

There is probably no better agency to drive this work than school as many have already laid the foundations for it through their curriculum and partnerships locally and internationally. Also, it is a contradiction in terms to expect each school to address Community Cohesion in isolation. This would be better done on an area basis by the Edge schools through working groups, training days and policy development.

GOOD PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH WHITE DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

Until recently there was very little published which focussed on the needs of White disadvantaged communities. There are now at least three such documents; Ofsted[21], NUT/NCSL[22] and National Strategies[23]. Based on these, given below are features of successful schools in working with White disadvantaged pupils.

Leadership and management

- Shared vision within the school with an emphasis on high aspirations and high expectations;
- An ethos which demonstrates commitment to every individual and which treats staff and pupils with fairness, trust and respect
- Clearly maintained boundaries, with high expectations of behaviour and attendance consistently applied and supported by rewards and sanctions;
- Strong, inclusive leadership and effective senior leadership teams;
- Head teachers and senior managers set high expectations for pupils and staff.
- Leaders draw on characteristics which have been labelled as '*intelligences'* – contextual, professional and social. The leaders also appeared to show personality traits such as self efficacy, internal locus of control, consciousness and rapport.

Teaching and learning strategies

- Rigorous monitoring systems which track individual pupils' performance against expectations; realistic but challenging targets; tailored, flexible intervention programmes and frequent reviews of performance against targets
- Highly structured step-by-step framework for teaching, starting with considerable guidance by the teacher and leading gradually to more independent work by the pupils when it is clear that this will enhance rather than detract from achievement

[21] White boys from low income backgrounds; good practice in schools, Ofsted 2008
[22] Successful leadership for promoting the achievement of White working class pupils, NCSL/NUT 2008
[23], Social Class and Achievement Case Studies- focused on the achievement of White British pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, The National Strategies 2008

- Good communication systems ensured that teaching staff were alerted to any problems they needed to take into account.

- Underperformance tackled as soon as it was identified, additional staff employed to give extra support to pupils where necessary and impact of the intervention strategies used evaluated regularly.

- Pupils expected to complete all homework and time and accommodation provided for them at school if home circumstances were difficult.

- Teachers demonstrated what constituted 'really good work' and how this could be achieved and reminded their pupils that sometimes they had to be brave to try to overcome difficulties on their own.

- Teachers took account of pupils' individual interests and preferred ways of learning.

- Curriculum linked to support programmes that sought to raise aspirations

- Genuine engagement of pupils in setting individual targets, reviewing progress, shaping curricular and extra-curricular activities and making choices about the future

Supporting pupils to become independent learners

- Staff had good understanding of the factors which might contribute to pupil's underachievement; provided additional support for them where necessary

- Staff sensitive to individuals' home contexts whilst at the same time being firm that home circumstances should not be used as an excuse for failure.

- Support staff and teaching staff worked in partnership. Key adults, including support staff and learning mentors, who were flexible and committed, knew the pupils well and were sensitive to any difficulties which might arise in their home

- Consistent support provided to develop pupils' organisation skills and instil the importance of perseverance; pupils encouraged to leave any anti-school subculture 'at the school gates'

- Schools made sure that pupils' basic skills and concepts were secure as a strong foundation for further learning.

- Schools made imaginative use of information and communications technology and used it to increase the attraction of the support programmes.

- Strong emphasis was placed on seeking and listening to the views of the pupils

- Good range of emotional support provided for pupils to enable them to manage anxieties and develop the skills to express their feelings constructively

- Strong partnerships created with a wide range of agencies to provide social, emotional, educational and practical support for pupils and their families in order to raise their aspirations.

Promoting pupil personal development and well-being

- Emphasis placed on developing all aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda for the pupils across curricular and extra-curricular activities.

- Schools made good use of programmes such as SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) and Behaviour for Learning.

- Strong emphasis placed on establishing a clear sense of community where everyone felt 'accepted', with something of value to add to the life of the school and the neighbourhood.

- Pupils encouraged to take part in school performances, sports teams and other activities and to become involved in local community projects, such as youth clubs and summer schools.

- Flexibility provided in the curriculum which offered pupils a variety of curricular pathways, made sure that pupils and their families understood what the pathways were and the underlying rationale for each one.

Engaging parents and carers

- Schools had explicit focus on working with parent/carers, moving from developing relationships with them to their involvement as partners in learning;

- Schools had creative and flexible strategies to engage parents and carers, made them feel valued, enabled them to give greater support to their children's education and helped them make informed decisions about the future

- Schools recognised the critical importance of involving parents and carers in their children's education, whilst acknowledging that, for some, this was very difficult because of their own negative experience of school.

- Schools had staff, such as heads of year, whose main responsibility was to maintain close contact with families.

Using resources efficiently

- Schools made flexible use of resources in attracting and directing additional funding and materials to activities which would improve outcomes for pupils

- Schools used any additional staffing to reduce class sizes in the core subjects and to provide additional help for specific groups of pupils.

- Schools had formed good links with organisations that had long and successful experience of working with disaffected or vulnerable young people.

VISITS TO SCHOOLS OUTSIDE BIRMINGHAM

It was decided to visit the following four schools in order to observe their practice in addressing underachievement amongst disadvantaged White pupils. A couple of them were known to the project team for sometime while the others were discovered more recently as a result of their inclusion in national documents.

In total, 11 staff from across the Edge took part in the visits.

Redbridge Southampton

This was one of the schools featured in the NCSL/NUT research on leadership of schools serving White working class communities.

Overall effectiveness of the school	Grade 1

- An exceptional school that is at the very heart of its community.
- The Headteacher and deputy Headteacher provide exceptionally innovative and determined leadership
- The quality assurance of teaching and learning is exemplary
- A key to the school's success is the outstanding curriculum that meets the needs of all students exceptionally well

Cleeve, Gloucester

The school was featured in the recent Ofsted report on White working class boys.

Overall effectiveness of the school	Grade: 1

- Cleeve School provides an outstanding education for its pupils.
- Teaching is outstanding, as is the rigorous tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress.
- The Headteacher and his excellent senior team provide outstanding leadership.

Robert Clack, Barking and Dagenham

The school has a longstanding reputation for working with White disadvantaged pupils. It was featured in teachers' TV programme on the subject.

Overall effectiveness of the school	Grade: 1

- This is an outstanding school.

- The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding.
- The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of students extremely well.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed by an outstanding and tireless Headteacher and a particularly strong senior team.

Middleton, Manchester

The school has a longstanding reputation on working with White boys in particular. It has had prominent coverage in the TES over the years.

Overall effectiveness of the school Grade: 1

- This is an outstanding school.
- The school's success in developing its students' confidence is reflected in their outstanding personal development and well-being.
- The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.
- The curriculum is excellent.
- The provision for the care, guidance and support of the students is outstanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In response to the task set, it is recommended that

    a. there should be an Edge plan to address achievement and community cohesion

    b. practice developed within the Edge schools should be shared more widely with schools elsewhere in Birmingham (it is already being shared amongst the Edge schools) including the Partnership as a model for others to follow

    c. ways should be found to encourage wider community contribution to raising achievement and community cohesion

In addition, it is recommended that:

1. There is awareness-raising for the whole community in order to encourage ownership of problems and possible solutions in relation to underachievement. The Learning Potential[24] module could be a useful tool for this purpose.

2. There is improved understanding of underachievement by all policy makers within the LA and the local community whose work impacts on education. There is a clear role for Edge schools here.

3. There is a joined-up area education plan which is drawn up by all the parties in the community – nurseries, primary and secondary schools, FE, youth service, HE, adult education, statutory and third sectors including faith groups. Explore issues surrounding education and training needs of adults and their possible benefits on work of schools

4. A paper is produced to promote greater understanding on Disadvantage and Education, with reference to White underachievement, to be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation (with running notes)

5. The Edge schools to help raise staff awareness of White disadvantaged pupils through joint CPD Days. There are implications here for ITT providers.

6. Birmingham Local Authority to produce a White achievement action plan, similar to those which exist for Asian and African Caribbean pupils

[24]The Learning Potential is a module within the School Improvement Planning Framework, produced by the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA). See Annex.

7. There are Local Authority sponsored/ hosted seminars on White underachievement to give the issue greater legitimacy and encouragement for those who are involved

8. The Local Authority and Edge community to work in partnership to produce resources and materials on diversity and identity to enable schools to address these issues with White pupils

9. 'Education Outliers' - stories and case studies to be collected from within the Edge and other Birmingham schools to celebrate and learn from the example of disadvantaged White pupils who succeed against the odds

10. Edge schools are encouraged and supported by the Local Authority in making increased use of Investor in People and WorkWell

11. Edge schools to consider putting themselves forward for awards and recognition e.g. Leading Edge, IIP (including IIP Champion), Great Places to Work[25] and TES School Awards

12. There is further exploration of:

    a. Building social capital and resilience to assist work of schools

    b. 'Community Parents' scheme

    c. Setting up a Parent Resource Centre

    d. Supplementary schools targeted at White underachieving pupils

    e. Community Awards for those working in local schools

    f. Raising aspirations and Careers Education earlier i.e. starting at primary school as it is too late to leave it to secondary school

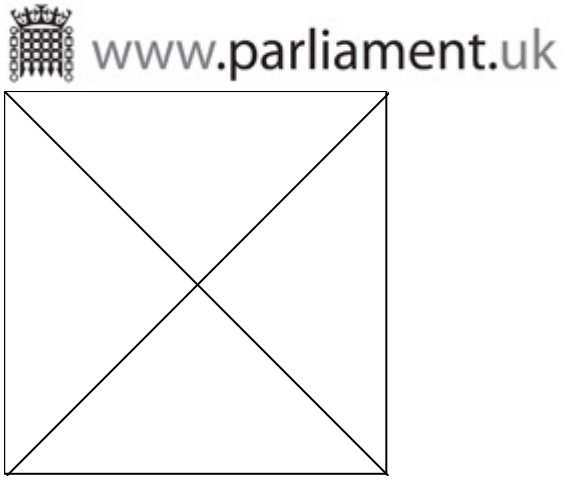
    g. Extra funding to address disadvantage

    h. Taking young people out of their comfort zone and take them out of their neighbourhood to elsewhere in South West and other parts of Birmingham (other ethnic groups)

    i. Greater opportunities for Edge staff to participate in cross-school coaching and shadowing

Karamat Iqbal
Extract from An area approach to addressing underachievement and community cohesion 2009

[25] http://www.greatplacetowork.co.uk/



Downloaded Thursday 18 June 2009

19 May 2009

White Disadvantaged Pupils (Birmingham)

1.28 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): When people talk about Birmingham, they often refer to its diversity. Diversity means many things, but I am in no doubt that Birmingham's ethnic, cultural and religious diversity are great strengths in so many ways. If we are to address both the opportunities and challenges that diversity brings, we must understand the diversity of diversity.

The ethnic mix of my part of Birmingham—an outer-city suburb south-west of the city—is not, in comparison with other parts of the west midlands, very multicultural. Yes, there are more people from new communities now than there were 20 years ago, but the make-up of my constituency is still more than 90 per cent White. The dominance of White communities in Birmingham, Northfield obviously says something about the colour of people's faces in the area, and it may even say something about the likely religious make-up of the area, but it does not say very much about the diversity of the area in terms of class, life chances, income and opportunity.

Nowhere is that more evident than in relation to education. That is why I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce this debate, arising from a report on the underachievement of White disadvantaged pupils in Birmingham. Although the report, branded "Brighter Futures", was commissioned in 2005 by Birmingham city council with funding from the Learning and Skills Council, it was not published until the end of last year. However, its message remains relevant today, in Birmingham and at national level, and particularly in White working-class communities such as

the one that I represent, which are often at the edge of our great cities up and down the country.

White pupils are the largest underachieving group in Birmingham and across the UK. That may seem a strange thing to say when, according to the Department for Communities and Local Government report, "Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society", published in February 2009, 49 per cent of White British pupils who were not on free school meals achieved at least five A* to C GCSEs in 2007. That was exactly the same as the national average for all pupils, but it was the figure for those who did not receive free school meals. When we look at White British pupils on free school meals, the proportion achieving five A* to C GCSEs falls to just 17 per cent. To put it another way, in 2007, 83 per cent of White British pupils on free school meals did not achieve five A* to C GCSEs.

That is a horrifying statistic, but it is all too often masked when figures for White British pupils are presented as a whole and therefore averaged out. If we stop talking about proportions and start talking about real numbers, the picture is even more disturbing. Why? Because quite simply there are a lot of White pupils. According to Karamat Iqbal, the author of the report that I am introducing today, in Birmingham 2,496 pupils out of a total of 4,795 who did not achieve five A* to C GCSEs in 2007 were White. The numbers are even worse when English and Maths are included, and they are disproportionately bad among boys.

I say this not to deny that there are huge needs among other ethnic groups or that those groups require effectively targeted action, because they do. I say it simply to show that we must do more to address the huge impact of poverty, disadvantage and inequality within White communities or predominantly White communities. Part of that impact is obviously material. Poor housing, low incomes and family worklessness are bound to affect the practical ability of pupils to take advantage of educational opportunities to build their own futures, but it is about more than that. Disadvantage also undermines the resilience of communities and depresses aspiration in a destructive cycle.

Again, according to the report's author, disadvantaged White pupils are the least likely to enjoy going to school, the least likely to think that it is important to get a college qualification and the least likely to think that it is important to go to university. How important is all that? In my view, it is very important. According to the report of the independent Social Mobility Commission in January 2009,

> "There is good evidence that success in education leads to improved life-chances. Therefore, improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children has to be central to any policy strategy to increase their upward social mobility."

I know that it is hardly earth shattering to note the impact of poverty on aspiration, educational achievement and life chances. The point is what we do about it. All too often, the sheer size of White communities and the tendency of institutions to consider proportional disadvantage between ethnic groups can end up averaging out

deprivation statistics relating to White ethnicity. As a result, the scale of specific problems of deprivation in those communities is masked.

What needs to be done? The first thing is to acknowledge the work put in day in, day out, by teachers and other staff, by parents and by so many people to address those issues on the ground. Just the other week, I saw what is being done to inspire pupils' passion for engineering and technology at the city learning centre in my constituency. It is based at Frankley high school, but it is a collaborative project involving a number of different schools, with welcome support from the Government. We should also acknowledge, in relation to both Birmingham city council and national Government, that a number of different initiatives have been and are being implemented that offer the prospect of addressing some of the problems of underachievement in deprived White areas more imaginatively than has been the case in the past.

However, more needs to be done to address the issues both nationally and locally. We have to be confident enough to debate this issue openly. A specific recommendation in Karamat Iqbal's report is that the White ethnic category should always be subdivided according to eligibility for free school meals when statistics are compiled to inform education policy. The report makes several other recommendations, and I encourage my hon. Friend the Minister and other colleagues, both in this place and outside, to examine them. It stresses the need for a national strategy backed up by action at local authority level, including in Birmingham, with the involvement of parents and the wider local community and collaboration between schools.

Beyond the recommendations in Karamat Iqbal's report, I emphasise the importance of addressing the realities of deprivation in White working-class communities when initiatives to tackle worklessness during the current recession are brought in, whether through the mainstream budgets of councils and Government agencies such as primary care trusts, regional development agencies, the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus, or through the use of targeted funds such as the working neighbourhoods fund.

It is good that super output areas are increasingly being used instead of local government wards to identify pockets of deprivation, but there is still a problem. In the Birmingham city region area, as much as anywhere, super output areas—those local areas that are used to target deprivation—are all too often grouped together into priority wards when resources are allocated. In Birmingham, where we are talking about wards of between 15,000 and 20,000 people, the averaging effect of that causes massive unfairness to the deprived White communities who live near, but not in, more affluent areas.

Today is an anniversary: it is exactly 17 years since I made my maiden speech as the new MP for Birmingham, Northfield. The focus of that speech was deprivation in Britain's outer cities. Column 185 of *Hansard* for 19 May 1992 records that I said the following:

> "Unless and until we tackle the problem of poverty in our outer ring estates, we shall have increasing problems with racism. We must reject any attempt to stir up resentment against people who live in the outer ring or inner ring. We shall not achieve anything until we address the problem of poverty in the outer ring and empower the people who live there to contribute to their own destinies."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 185.]

Yes, the Labour Government have made many improvements since 1997, but many of the problems that I highlighted in my maiden speech sadly still exist, and the racism that those problems breed is still being peddled by groups such as the British National party, which preys on the real problems that people face at this time of recession and their real fears for themselves and their families. In this week of all weeks, and today of all days, we should remember that it also preys on people's alienation from the political process. The truth is that the simplistic solutions laced with hate that the BNP and their friends peddle are blind alleys that offer nothing to our communities, but it is up to us to show in practice that there is a different way. Doing far more to respond to the reality of underachievement among White pupils in disadvantaged areas must be an essential part of that.

1.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (Sarah McCarthy-Fry): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) on securing the debate, and I certainly agree that it is well worth having such a debate. My hon. Friend works hard to ensure that people in his constituency and around Birmingham get the opportunities that they deserve. Indeed, he has been working hard to achieve that ever since he entered the House, as evidenced by his quote from his maiden speech.

Before I move on to the specific issue of White disadvantaged pupils, which my hon. Friend raised, let me cover some more general points. Of course, no barrier should prevent a child from learning—whether that barrier is a disability, a special educational need, how much their parents earn or their occupation. There should be no barriers of gender, class or ethnicity. Black or White, boy or girl, advantaged or disadvantaged, every child should be able to make good progress at school, and that is what personalisation is about. That is an ambition that everyone can share.

We have made significant progress over the past decade. On poverty, about 15 per cent. of children come from homes that are poor enough to be eligible for free school meals. In primary schools, 20,000 more free school meal pupils now achieve level 4 in maths at the end of key stage 2 than was the case 10 years ago. In secondary schools, the chances of an FSM pupil getting a good maths GCSE have increased from 25 per cent. to 35 per cent. over the past four years.

However, there is more to do to tackle the gap between disadvantage and achievement. We know that that gap starts early—even before the age of 22 months—and it is vital that we address it as soon as a child starts their learning experience. By key stage 4, the odds of a non-FSM pupil achieving five good GCSEs

are three times greater than for an FSM pupil, so we need to sustain support through primary school and on into secondary school.

I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are taking steps to tackle the problem vigorously. During the early years, we are ensuring that families get the specific support that they need from our 3,000 children's centres. For children at school, we are modernising the curriculum by strengthening our focus on personalised learning, improving parental engagement and encouraging schools to work together to improve standards. Across our wider children's services, we are ensuring that health, mental health and social services are even more accessible and better co-ordinated through strengthened children's trusts.

Let me move on to my hon. Friend's concerns about children in Birmingham from disadvantaged backgrounds. Let me first give some evidence of the progress that has been made in dealing with all children from disadvantaged backgrounds, before coming in a moment to the specific case of White children.

At key stage 2, data for 2008 showed that Birmingham's FSM gap for English had decreased by two percentage points, from 19 to 17 per cent., from 2005, while the gap for maths had reduced by three percentage points, from 18 to 15 per cent., over the same period. At key stage 4, data for Birmingham show that the gap between non-FSM and FSM pupils who get five A* to C GCSEs has narrowed from 25.3 per cent. to 23.5 per cent., although that is still way too large.

My hon. Friend is particularly interested in the case of White children. I note his concern that we risk masking the combination effect of disadvantage and ethnicity at local level by publishing data that show only one or other of those two effects, but not both in combination. He is correct that we do not publish data on the attainment of White children who are eligible for free school meals for every local authority, but that is simply a matter of manageability. Doing that for every underperforming group and every local authority would require us to publish an additional 150,000 items of data each year. However, we can supply such data on request for a given local authority, and I would be happy to give my hon. Friend the data that he requires. We also publish national attainment data by a combination of characteristics. Specifically, we publish data by gender, ethnicity and FSM—three characteristics in combination —in table A1 of the annual statistical first release.

My hon. Friend referred to a report produced in conjunction with Birmingham city council and published last November, which dealt specifically with the underachievement of White British pupils, and I welcome the contribution that the report makes. I agree that we need to acknowledge the problem of underachievement among White children from disadvantaged backgrounds and to make the issue more visible at national and local level. That is why, from January this year, we are requiring local authorities for the first time to set targets for the progress and attainment of children who are eligible for free school meals, as well as for those from underperforming ethnic groups, so that they get the help that they need.

Where those targets are insufficiently challenging, national strategies advisers have held detailed conversations with local authorities over the past few months, examining the scale of the issue, discussing local strategies to raise attainment for disadvantaged pupils and working with authorities to set more stretching targets for those pupils' progress and attainment.

I agree that a national strategy is needed to narrow the attainment gaps between disadvantaged young people, whatever their ethnic group, and their more advantaged peers. That is why we published "Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment—Everyone's Business" this March, as well as the accompanying evidence report, "Deprivation and Education". I commend those reports to my hon. Friend. Together, they spell out the progress that this country has made in reducing attainment gaps over the past decade. More importantly, they signalled our future policy direction.

Among the highlights of the strategy are: an extension of free early learning and child care to around 23,000 of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds a year; tailoring learning experiences in school to children's needs—for example, through the use of one-to-one tuition; a new school report card, which will focus schools on the progress of all pupils and on narrowing the gaps not just in academic attainment, but across all five Every Child Matters outcomes; an expansion of extended services to disadvantaged families; and a full review of the relevant school funding—the £3 billion that we allocate under the direct school grant for disadvantage—to ensure that it is properly targeted to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.

I agree that we need a focus on community cohesion, the importance of which is reflected in the new duty on maintained schools, which came into effect in September 2007. That duty recognises, and builds on, the good work that many schools are already doing to promote community cohesion. Since September 2008, Ofsted has inspected schools against that duty. The issue needs to be everybody's business.

I agree that we need to know what works. Sharing examples of best practice pushes forward positive change. Our Extra Mile project, which focuses on engaging children from deprived communities in their education, is based on approaches that we have seen make a real difference for disadvantaged pupils. The project currently runs across 23 schools, but it will be rolled out to another 60 secondary and 40 primary schools later in the year. Case study material will be published at the end of the summer term and made available to all schools and local authorities.

Further examples of good practice in supporting disadvantaged communities are included in the "Breaking the link" document, in the recent Ofsted report "White boys from low-income backgrounds: good practice in schools" and in the National College for School Leadership publication "Successful leadership for promoting the achievement of White working class pupils".

I agree that we need to engage parents and the wider community in the work of schools. Parents are the single most important influence on a child's attainment, and we are taking forward a range of measures to strengthen parents' engagement in their children's learning. Our parental engagement strategy will: ensure that parents get more regular information about progress and that their voices are heard; legislate to ensure that there are strong children's trusts in every area, with schools, children's services and the voluntary sector working closely together to improve outcomes for children and young people; intensify the focus on personalised learning and on tracking the progress of every child through one-to-one tuition and catch-up programmes such as Every Child Counts; and legislate to ensure that there is a children's centre in every community, so that all children can get off to a good start in life.

We recognise the significant impact that the community has on a young person's aspirations and attainment. Our Inspiring Communities programme will support people in deprived communities as we look to raise the achievement of young people, broaden their horizons and build self-esteem. The programme is designed to put local people— parents, neighbours, businesses, teachers, voluntary groups and councils—in the driving seat to harness their collective knowledge, energy, resources and enthusiasm. Expert help and funding of up to £450,000 will be made available to up to 15 neighbourhoods over the next two years for the design and delivery of projects and activities. The deadline for applications is 3 June 2009.

My hon. Friend made the point that we need to provide opportunities for disadvantaged White pupils to celebrate their culture and identity. Experience in our Extra Mile project reveals successful strategies for developing an atmosphere in which that can happen. Our Extra Mile schools go out of their way to bring in local heroes, characters and successes as role models, so that people can see that success is possible for people from their walk of life. They teach pupils what they need to know about ways of talking, writing and behaving in the wider world, so that they have the repertoire to succeed in formal and unfamiliar situations. They educate for equality. They define non-negotiable standards of behaviour and a culture of mutual respect, which plays well with local parents, who value the twin traditions of discipline and personal caring. They apply that culture to teachers as well as pupils.

Extra Mile schools provide cultural opportunities beyond the budget of local families, so that pupils get a taste of sports, arts and activities from which they would otherwise be excluded. The schools are socially attuned. New teachers tour the catchment area before they start to teach, take time to talk about local concerns with pupils each day and learn how to meet, greet and converse in ways that are not patronising. They empathise with the local community and local values. In the knowledge that poverty can induce feelings of emptiness and hopelessness, the schools work harder than others to provide rewards and incentives to pupils. Their notice boards are invariably plastered with honours, rewards, mentions, certificates and prizes. All those are successful strategies that can be used in any school serving a disadvantaged community, whether it is predominantly White or more ethnically mixed.

In Birmingham, our national challenge programme provides extra support to the schools serving its disadvantaged communities. We have agreed a plan with Birmingham city council to provide it with a significant amount of national challenge funding—£2.8million—in the academic year 2008-09. That will help 30 Birmingham schools to meet their wide-ranging set of specific school improvement solutions, as defined by their national challenge adviser. Those include one-to-one support for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in schools that serve disadvantaged communities; a focus on the wider Every Child Matters outcomes; and support for the schools' senior and middle leadership teams, which is intended to raise the effectiveness of the school and, crucially, its aspirations for its children.

Richard Burden: On the point about the national challenge, does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that local authorities should modify their departmental funding streams to ensure that different areas of policy merge together in the right way? The point I am getting at is that if a major regeneration scheme is going on where there is a national challenge school it should not be impossible to get the departments that deal with the regeneration to talk effectively with the departments that deal with children and families, and to get them working together to the benefit of the people in the area.

Annex 2

Productive work groups and productive individuals

Core statements, Gallup Organisation

Overall satisfaction: how satisfied am I with my place of work?

I know what is expected of me at work

I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right

At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day

In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work

My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person

There is someone at work who encourages my development

At work, my opinions seem to count

The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important

My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work

I have a best friend at work

In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress

In the last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow

Annex 3

Colmers School relationship **Parents Views on the Parent School**

As part of a project looking at what makes Colmers School and Sports College successful, Positive Parenting, as an independent charity, have been asked to get in touch with parents to ask them about their relationship with the school and its staff.

This form will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be seen by the school.

Please answer all the questions as it will help give us a better understanding of what happens with all parents and the school.

The views on this form will be used with information given by other parents in a report to the school. No comments will be identified as from you or your child.

About your child(ren)

How many are boys or girls? Boy ☐ Girl ☐

Which years are your child(ren) in? Year 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11☐

Looking at how well your child does at learning

How well do you think your child did at primary school? *(Please circle a number)*

Not well at all Very well

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

How well do you think your child is doing at the school? *(Please circle a number)*

Not well at all Very well

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Is it important to you if your child carries on with education by going to sixth form, college or university?

Not at all really Very much

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Looking at you and your child

How involved are you with your child's homework?

Not at all
Every day

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How often do you communicate with the school about your child's progress*?*

Never often — Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Looking at what the school does

How well does the school support your child in learning? *(Please circle a number)*

Not well at all — Very well

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How well does the school let you know about your child's progress at school?

Not well at all — Very well

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How well does the school support your child by providing sport / drama / music /dance /art / and other activities?

Not well at all — Very well

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How important are the following to you?

Please circle a number

School Reports

Not at all — Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Comments

Letters home Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Text messages Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Email messages Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

School staff always available Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Friendly school staff Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Helpful school staff Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Treated fairly by school staff Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Teachers helping children Comments

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Fair and consistent discipline Comment

Not at all Very

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please let us know anything else which affects your relationship with the school and its staff

What else could the school do to improve on the education it provides for your child and the school's relationship with parents?

Annex 4

Edge schools and its wider community

Listed below are a number of organisations who are active in the Edge community. In one way or another their work impacts on educational achievement and community cohesion. This may be directly or indirectly. Below, we have outlined some of the information which we gathered during our research and which we thought may be of interest to schools.

In some instances we have decided to say very little. This is either because we don't know much more than what is presented or to have given any more would be stating the obvious such as in the case of statutory services.

Bournville FE College, provides a range of post 16 education for school leavers and more mature adults

Colmers Leisure Centre is located on the Colmers School campus and provides a range of leisure facilities for the local community. Its facilities are used by the school during the day

Connexions is located in Northfield and provides employment related drop in facilities for local people. It also provides funding for community projects such as Lift (see below) as a part of preventing young people becoming NEETs.

Dave Schwan- Frankley Guitar Group was started in the Frankley area in 2003, with the main purpose of building relationships with local people, especially men. It began with 25 men. They work on songs which are then performed at the club or at concerts.

> *It is not typical of most clubs where the person with the loudest personality or instrument dominates the evening. Everyone has an equal chance to perform. However, participants are not required to perform. They can just listen or perform with others. It is a very relaxed atmosphere.*

A number of the members are also involved in the church which is led by the group's leader, Dave Schwan. As off shoots of the guitar club, they have started the Acoustic Cafe, karate club and women's choir.

The groups between them support an African orphan. This, according to Dave Schwan, gives them a larger purpose than just music.

Edgbaston constituency Youth Forum: the Forum brings together a number of organisations whose work impacts on the needs of young people in the constituency.

Four Dwellings adult education group began with a number of local mums whose children were at the school. They embarked on studying BTEC in applied

sciences. The initial plan was to complete the course in two years but they had such thirst for knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm that they were able to complete the course in one year. Participation in the group has given greater confidence to the members as well as having a positive impact on their children.

Frankley Church Community Project was established some 15 years ago to work with the whole community of Frankley. They support many community services including debt advice, a Credit Union, a Lunch Club, Guitar Club (see above). It is based at St Christopher's Church Centre.

Frankley Neighbourhood News is a useful tool for communicating information with the local community. From time to time, local schools have made good use of it.

Lift Community Trust is a small voluntary organisation that operates from the Haven Centre on the Welsh House Farm Estate in Quinton, Birmingham. The organisation has an ability to react to public need quickly and flexibly. Its work centres on the themes of Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Programme, NEET, holiday clubs and Intergenerational projects.

Local Authority Youth Service aims to provide young people with enjoyable opportunities and challenging experiences together with information, support and guidance in order to enable them to achieve and develop their skills, abilities, self esteem, values and identity in their transition to adult life. The main focus of the Youth Service is on young people in the 13-19 age range.

The characteristic contribution made by the service includes experiential learning- learning by doing and reflecting; participation in decision making- taking and following shared decisions and non-directive relationships- between young people and youth workers based on mutual respect.

Longbridge Resource Centre (LARC) is concerned with the provision of employment advice and guidance. This includes help with writing CVs, job interview preparation and access to internet and general IT facilities.

Newman College of HE provides a range of courses including routes of entry which are suitable for local people who do not have a traditional education history.

Richard Burden MP for Northfield became MP 17 years ago and has a deep interest in the needs of disadvantaged communities as pointed out in his inaugural speech:

> *"Unless and until we tackle the problem of poverty in our outer ring estates, we shall have increasing problems with racism. We must reject any attempt to stir up resentment against people who live in the outer ring or inner ring. We shall not achieve anything until we address the problem of poverty in the outer ring and empower the people who live there to contribute to their own destinies."*—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 185.]

Worth Unlimited is a national organisation with a significant presence in Birmingham and is active in Turves Green. It is one of a handful of Christian organisations to receive significant funding from the DSCF for its personal development programme "World Worth Living In" which is now being used across the country in a number of different youth work contexts.

Annex 5

SLAM! - A RECOMMENDATION

At Four Dwellings High School, Quinton, we believe so much in SLAM! because it has a clear intellectual and philosophical basis which has evolved through experience, application and a real determination to make a difference. We began using SLAM! to develop prefect training (Youth Marshalls as we call them)and used the SLAM! training programme to coach the Youth Marshalls, who then coached the next group Youth Marshalls. From here, and having myself gone down a 'SLAM! journey', the school began to see a host of applications and uses for the programme. In our case, specifically:

- Supporting our response to the National Challenge via numeracy and literacy coaches
- As a delivery vehicle for enterprise education with the student-coaches leading active learning coaching sessions
- As a means for us to raise aspirations and target higher rates of participation in further and higher education
- To work with our 16+ group (who follow a specially developed course to reflect their status as former NEETs, or as young people who have not gained qualifications up to the age of 16 or young people who have not been able to make the transition to a college. The course includes preparation for qualifications such as CoPE).

However, I can also see how else we can use SLAM! as it grows in the school. We were a pilot school for the new National Curriculum, and the SLAM! programme and ethos readily fits and supports the delivery of the skills based curriculum. We are also thinking of SLAM! as a key player in the school's interaction with the community and extending the role of our vocational and community centre, Quinzone. We can see how SLAM! will help us expand our youth club provision (an additional, second centre for this, offering an internet café facility will open in January, 2009 and this will be followed by a Catering Academy), real life work experience, community services and activity camps via a series of local social enterprises based on SLAM! coaching and principles.

SLAM! is simple, easy to diffuse, fun, bespoke and gives real ownership to students and communities.

Behind the work of the SLAM! programme is a belief that communities and individuals living in specific areas are well placed to solve the local problems of that area – such as we experience in Quinton. In addition, cutting dependency on welfare, promoting self help, and emphasising bespoke, sustainable and organic solutions are crucial if schools, disadvantaged communities and individuals are to flourish. SLAM! looks to work across the multi-stranded issues facing communities today, including offering solutions to:

- Low literacy and numeracy
- High teenage pregnancy rates
- Worklessness
- Anti social behaviour
- Lack of community cohesion
- Low employability skills
- A lack of appropriate attitudes to work
- Low aspirations and confidence.

The idea of SLAM! is to create a trained cohort of people who can act as agents 'on the street' to deliver credible, relevant, quality assured peer-coaching. Here are some brief examples that I believe could work or are working in Quinton:
UNEMPLOYMENT: train, via SLAM!, some currently unemployed residents of an area so they become more skilled and have developed positive employment attitudes and then employ these residents as Jobs Coaches to coach other unemployed residents so they become ready for work and more employable. The Jobs Coaches can also work with schools to develop employability skills and attitudes within NEETs, pre NEETs and other pupil groups.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY: train, via SLAM!, some current local women who were, or still are, teenage mums. After their training, employ them as 'Health Coaches' or similar, to engage with local girls who are at risk of becoming teenage mums. The coaching would not just focus on sexual health but also on employability skills and attitudes so that aspirations are raised.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: develop youth clubs for evenings and activity camps for school holidays so that young people have somewhere safe and engaging to go outside of school hours. By using SLAM! young people can be trained to become 'Youth Coaches', 'Leadership Coaches', 'Sports Coaches', 'Music Coaches' etc and thus lead the Youth Clubs and Activity Camps. By having a strong presence of trained young people, this reduces (though does not remove) the requirement for an adult presence and thus enable adult supervision to be spread out over more evenings and thus allowing there to be more youth clubs. There is also the possibility, as perhaps with the Safe Haven project in Quinton, Birmingham, of offering these ideas in alliance with the police. National surveys indicate that young people are requesting more organised activities, and we see SLAM! as being ideal to meet this demand.
Incidentally, Jessica Shepherd of 'The Guardian Education' section is visiting Four Dwellings soon to see our work in this area.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: schools that are faced with challenging pupil cohorts, may turn to SLAM! to create groups of pupil-coaches within schools who can be used to deliver numeracy coaching, literacy coaching, leadership coaching, employability skills coaching and community links. These approaches are being developed in schools in Birmingham which I know well e.g. Turves Green Girls School and Lordswood Girls School, and further afield in Plymouth, Liverpool, Cornwall and Birkenhead.

Therefore, SLAM! might take one of the following exemplar forms, all of which I think will unfold here in south west Birmingham:

1. within a school or community, a trained group of young people who can coach other young people in such areas as employability attitudes and skills, soft skills, leadership, sport, music, and enterprise
2. within a school or community the capacity to offer real services within and external to the school/community so that young people develop enterprise and business skills e.g. offering sports coaching to local junior schools as a social enterprise, or gardening services, or numeracy and literacy coaching. This might lead to the development to a series of mini-enterprises offering services such as 'gardening angels', and 'sport angels'
3. within a community the capacity to offer youth led voluntary services such as youth clubs which will help tackle anti social behaviour
4. within a community youth led activities for young and older people such as activity camps for the 11-15 year olds during summer holidays or activity days for older members of the community
5. within areas of high deprivation and worklessness the capacity to sustainably coach those lacking in employability skills, attitudes and confidence via employment coaches who come from the community and are paid to develop the skills and then pass them on – rooting within the community the foundations of the solution. This might include retired people with a lifetime of personal and professional skills who can be harnessed to solve local issues of low skills and aspirations.

In Quinton, we are also interested in developing SLAM! into an equivalent of the HOPE scheme which is based at Tottenham Hotspur FC. HOPE (Health Old People Exercising) looks to develop young people as sports coaches who can visit elderly citizens and care homes to boost their fitness, and develop cross-generational relationships.

Thus, SLAM! offers a cost effective and integrated approach for schools and organisations to deliver a range of educational benefits including:

1.**Every Child Matters** – Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Well Being
CEG – Self Development and Career Exploration
2.**WRL 1-9** – develop and apply enterprise and employability skills; use experience of work to extend understanding of work; learn about the way business enterprises operate; relate own abilities, attributes and achievements to career intentions; undertake tasks and activities set in work contexts; learn from personnel from different sectors; experience of working practices and environments; engage with ideas, challenges and applications from the business world
3.**Enterprise** – enterprise capacity; financial literacy; economic and business understanding
DCSF – knowledge and understanding of the world of work; enhance the delivery of the national curriculum; raise levels of achievement in schools; improve behaviour, attendance and motivation of pupils; contribute to the development of the school workforce
4.**Skills** – numeracy; literacy; SEAL; enterprise awareness and assessment; creativity and entrepreneurship; vocational course support; COPE/ASDAN
5.**Staff professional development**
6. **Other** - Combating teenage pregnancies; promoting healthy living and lifestyles.

In effect SLAM! is peer-coaching. It is peer-coaching though that is sustainable, bespoke, flexible and cost effective and which looks to offer a bottom up solution to issues by working with the communities and making them a real part of the solution. Leaders within the community – young and not so young – not only lead activities but coach and train the next generation/group of leaders so that activities are passed on from one cohort to the next. I also see an international dimension to SLAM! and our community cohesion based work. Four Dwellings has links with schools in Australia, China and Malaysia, and all these schools face similar challenges in their communities as we do, and also have the potential to develop such bottom up solutions as we find so useful.

SOME EXAMPLES OF WHERE SLAM! IS BEING USED

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY	LOCATION	CONTEXT	USE OF SLAM!
FOUR DWELLINGS	QUINTON	65% FREE SCHOOL MEALS; 21% 5 GCSEs A-C INC MATHS &ENGLISH; A NATIONAL CHALLENGE SCHOOL	LITERACY COACHING NUMERACY COACHING PREFECT TRAINING ENTERPRISE EDUCATION, EMPLOYABILITY ATTITUDES AND SKILLS PERSONAL, LEARNIG AND THINKING SKILLS SECTION OF THE NEW NATIONAL CURRICULUM SOCIAL ENTERPRISES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY EG SPORTS COACHING TO LOCAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS LEADERSHIP
TURVES GREEN GIRLS	NORTHFIELD	SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATES ON URBAN FRINGE	WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION PREFECT TRAINING STUDENT VOICE LEADERSHIP
SHENLEY COURT	NORTHFIELD	SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATES, LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS	WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENTERPRISE EDUCATION STUDENT VOICE PERSONAL, LEARNIG AND THINKINF SKILLS SECTION OF THE NEW NATIONAL CURRICULUM
LORDSWOOD GIRLS	HARBORNE	MIXED CATCHMENT	STUDENT COACHING WITH OTHER SCHOOLS ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

			LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE COMMUNITY
LORDSWOOD BOYS	HARBORNE	MIXED CATCHMENT	STUDENT COACHING WITH OTHER SCHOOLS WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENTERPRISE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT RAISING ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT
NEW HEYS	SPEKE, LIVERPOOL	54% FREE SCHOOL MEALS; CONSIDERABLE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	COACHING LINKS WITH LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS ENTERPRISE EDUCATION YEAR 6 TO YEAR 7 TRANSITION EMPLOYMENT ATTITUDES AND SKILLS
KILGARTH	BIRKENHEAD	SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS EXCLUDED FROM MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS	COPE QUALIFICATION RAISING SELF ESTEEM EMPLOYMENT ATTITUDES AND SKILLS
MAGHULL	MAGULL, LIVERPOOL	NORTH LIVERPOOL COUNCIL ESTATES	INTERNAL COACHING COACHING OF LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS – YEAR 6 – YEAR 7 TRANSITION ENTERPRISE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP EMPLOYMENT ATTITUDES AND SKILLS WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
PENRYN COLLEGE	FALMOUTH	REMOTE, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT	ENTERPRISE EDUCATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN THE COMMUNITY NEETS' DEVELOPMENT
FALMOUTH	FALMOUTH	REMOTE, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT	LEADERSHIP ENTERPRISE EDUCATION 6TH FORM DEVELOPMENT
JOHN KITTO	PLYMOUTH	59% FREE SCHOOL MEALS; 22% 5 GCSEs INC MATHS AND ENGLISH; A NATIONAL CHALLENGE SCHOOL	6TH FORM DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP NUMERACY COACHING LITERACY COACHING WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
TREVIGLAS	NEWQUAY	RURAL CATCHMENT AREA, LOW INCOME, COUCIL HOUSING IN PORTH	LEADERSHIP ENTERPRISE EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

I have been particularly keen to build bridges with local independent schools eg King Edward's School and universities eg the **University of Birmingham.** The latter is already developing SLAM! as part of their service to undergraduates and as part of their community engagement work, and we hope to link up with them on a number of projects such as numeracy and literacy coaching and raising participation in HE. Many of our students live on the local social housing estate, **Welsh House Farm,** which is listed in the bottom 5% most deprived communities in the country. The youth community groups on Welsh House Farm will be using SLAM! as a way of engaging with the youth community and developing their attitudes, skills and sense of worth. The aim at Welsh House is to coach a group

of young people who can lead youth activities such as football, art, music, leadership and offer support to the significant Somalian minority on the estate.

I would be delighted to discuss SLAM! more with you if that would be helpful and can highly recommend it, and its creator, Duncan Chamberlain who has been doing innovative and sustainable work at the grass roots in the community of south west Birmingham.

Bernie Smith

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Annex6

Turves Green Girls' School & Technology College

'Educating Girls for the Future'

RC/PA/HEAD/C Foxall

"A good school with outstanding features" Ofsted Report May 2007

Birmingham City Council

22 April 2009

Mrs S Iqbal
Forward Partnership Limited
'Shunem'
43 Moor Green Lane
Moseley
Birmingham
B13 8NE

Dear Mrs Iqbal

Thank you for letter regarding our SLAM group.

I think all schools should set up a SLAM group. This is because the skills learnt through SLAM are not covered in much detail during lesson time. When I eventually go onto higher education and gain full-time employment, I will need a wider knowledge to help me achieve. The activities in SLAM teach you to be more independent and helps you to look at how you work with other people. During the activities I have learnt how to delegate, organise, manage my time, meet deadlines and work in a service capacity.

The school will also benefit from the partnership. We have already organised comic relief, built links with the PTA and acts as a body which liaises with the local authority over issues in the community. The group will now seek to train school council and make them better at their jobs. The Special Needs department wants us to develop a programme of paired reading, which will start after Easter. In the summer term, we will devise a programme to support Year 6 pupils by visiting primary schools to help them with transition.

I would advise pupils to join SLAM because it prepares you for life. It is fun to work with our friends and develops strong teams. The challenges we have tackled are all very different so we get a lot of experience thinking about different issues. I strongly recommend SLAM as an extra-curricular activity and I look forward to the future challenges I will face. Our aim is to be given a problem and then find a solution. SLAM has increased my confidence and has made me more of a team player.

I hope this letter encourages schools to take on SLAM and thank you for the opportunity to write this letter.

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Foxall

CHARLOTTE FOXALL

Headteacher: Mr R Crookes, BSc (Hons), PGCE

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Specialist Schools Trust · Healthy Schools · Technology College · west heath cluster · This school has been awarded education extra for its out-of-hours provision · INVESTOR IN PEOPLE · engineering council · NQT