

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

New Start Partnership Projects

for
14–16-year-olds
in schools
1997–1999

A report from the Office of Her Majesty's
Chief Inspector of Schools

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INTRODUCTION

1. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) were commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to undertake an evaluation of the New Start initiative, based on first-hand observation of the work. The specific aim of the evaluation was to identify the unique contribution made by the New Start initiative to enhancing young people's involvement and achievement in education and training. The evaluation has focused primarily on the response of those young people of statutory secondary school age in Key Stage 4 (KS4) targeted by the projects, the quality of the education provided in out-of-school settings, and the extent to which the youth and careers services enhance young people's involvement in education and training. The aims and objectives of this evaluation are outlined in more detail in Appendix B.
2. The first 17 New Start partnerships, launched in September 1997 and funded originally for an 18-month period, were intended to counter the causes and consequences of underachievement and reduce the significant disengagement from publicly funded education and training among 14–17-year-olds. Government funding – a maximum of £250,000 per project – has been conditional upon the establishment of a genuine partnership between the agencies involved. These include: schools, local authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), Further Education (FE) colleges, careers service companies, the youth service, voluntary organisations and private providers. The lead partners for the 17 projects are either TECs, local education authorities (LEAs) or careers companies. A list of projects can be found in Appendix A.
3. Some aspects of the provision in all 17 projects have been observed, and HMI have made over 100 visits to secondary schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and other education support centres and colleges. Visits have also been made to observe work undertaken by the careers service companies, training providers and the youth service, including work carried out by voluntary organisations, and interviews have been held with regional and local co-ordinators.
4. The evaluation of New Start is part of a wider OFSTED inspection project that will report on steps taken by educational agencies to counter social exclusion. This report is one of a series that will be published on this theme.

SUMMARY

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall impact

- Since the introduction of OFSTED's cycle of Section 10 inspections of all schools, most secondary schools have developed a range of strategies to counter underachievement, especially where they have been identified as failing. Few, however, have yet been able to take advantage of any of the innovative approaches experimented with by the projects in New Start phase one.
- The 17 New Start projects have operated in a small number of participating secondary schools to develop new provision for usually a maximum of 20 disaffected and underachieving young people, mainly in Years 10 and 11.
- The New Start funding has enabled project workers to give more individual attention to these young people, to form new relationships with them, to analyse their needs and to develop a new range of activities in and out of school.
- There is substantial evidence from schools and employers of a very positive impact on these young people's motivation, self-discipline, skills and confidence. Most of the Year 11 students participating in the projects took their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations where they had earlier been expected to opt out of examinations altogether.
- Eighty per cent of those leaving Year 11 went on to FE, training schemes, employment, or remained at school in the sixth form.
- It is too early to predict longer-term success, but the results so far have been strong enough to support a case for work to be replicated in secondary schools where there are significant levels of disengagement and underachievement.

Students' attainment, response and assessment

- Standards and progress were satisfactory or better in about half of the vocational work seen. They were high in projects where aims had been clearly defined and where achievement was linked to recognised national qualifications. However, in about half the sessions, standards and progress were unsatisfactory.
- Most young people are highly positive about their involvement in New Start projects and have responded well to the opportunity to learn in a wider range of contexts. Their attitudes towards learning, behaviour and attendance have correspondingly improved.
- The majority of students involved in the New Start

initiative have acquired the self-confidence necessary to seek advice and guidance from a range of agencies and to use this in developing personal action plans.

- At least half of the schools involved have consistently monitored the progress of students on New Start projects and also have evidence for improvements in students' academic performance.
- The provision of enhanced careers education and guidance in most projects has enabled students to make better-informed decisions about their future progress into FE, training or employment.
- Standards and progress in basic and key skills were unsatisfactory in three-quarters of the projects.

Teaching and mentoring

- About 90 per cent of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. This included about 20 per cent that was good. Good work was characterised by the quality of planning, the match of provision to the individual needs of young people, the use of specialist staff, and the ability of teachers to provide students with interesting and challenging learning experiences.
- Three-quarters of the projects paid insufficient attention to the development of students' basic and key skills. Only one-quarter of the projects used specialist teachers for these projects.
- Teaching was unsatisfactory where teachers were operating outside their sphere of expertise or were ill-prepared to cope with the particularly challenging problems presented by the young people. The teaching of basic and key skills was often poor when undertaken by non-specialists.
- There were excellent examples of additional support being offered by pastoral staff in schools to young people suffering the consequences of serious personal problems and likely to drop out of education completely, sometimes as early as in the first year of secondary education.
- The use of mentors was central to most New Start projects. However, suitable mentors were often in short supply, and their training and preparation were inadequate for this demanding task.

Curriculum

- Few schools in the projects made positive use of the new possibility of disapplication from individual National Curriculum subjects for these students.
- In most projects, young people are offered elements of a common curriculum. Additional group work paid particular attention to personal development, direct involvement in practical and vocationally

relevant experiences, a greater emphasis on basic and key skills, and enhanced careers education and guidance.

- However, there are wide variations in the quality of the curriculum followed by young people in the projects and in the amount of time for which they are released to undertake this work.
- Young people referred to the projects have been given insufficient opportunity to gain access to nationally recognised qualifications in key skills or vocational work.
- Vocational experience, such as that gained through work placements, has played a key role in the projects. Young people have responded well to these responsibilities for working in real jobs.
- Courses provided to improve students' standards of literacy and numeracy have so far been inconsistent and of variable quality.
- New Start funding has been too thinly spread and provided over too short a time span to bring about durable modifications to the KS4 curriculum for schools suffering from significant levels of disengagement and underachievement.

Project management

- In most of the projects the research phase has been too extended and claimed a disproportionate amount of the funding. The consequent delay in implementation, sometimes by as much as a year, has prevented many of the projects from achieving their goals.
- Project managers and workers have deployed their skills and experience effectively to enhance the work of the school in raising achievement and giving more individual attention to disaffected students.
- The best projects have been based on close, collaborative work, involving schools, colleges of FE, the education welfare service, careers companies, youth services and other partners. However, the effectiveness of these partnerships has varied.
- The process of identifying those young people in greatest need of support and most likely to respond well to New Start projects has generally been well managed by schools.
- In a significant minority of projects, progress has been hampered by poor communication between the project workers, partners and key staff in schools.
- In most projects, the New Start partners, including the TECs, LEAs and careers service companies, have made additional resources available to support the

initiative, sometimes extending the project to the year 2000.

ISSUES FOR ATTENTION

- The New Start Advisory Group should take action to support the replication of the best aspects of these projects in secondary schools where there are significant levels of disengagement and underachievement, backed by a commitment to longer-term funding.
- A framework defining the range and quality requirements for this new provision, with a set of guidance notes, should be drawn up from the lessons learned in these pilots, to develop this work in the mainstream, and secure its proper evaluation through Section 10 inspections of secondary schools.
- This new provision should be linked to schools' behaviour support and development plans, and identified in LEA Education Development Plans.
- Prospective mentors should be carefully selected, thoroughly trained, and given sufficient professional support.
- These initiatives need to be supported by effective in-service training and development for teachers and project workers, to extend their skills and practice of working with disaffected young people.

THE INSPECTION EVIDENCE

STUDENTS' ATTAINMENT, RESPONSE AND ASSESSMENT

5. The young people in the projects come from many different backgrounds and represent a wide range of ability. There is no common explanation for their low levels of attendance, nor is it possible to identify a common point at which they began to disengage from the educational process. The young people all have highly specific needs. The progress they make, therefore, and the levels of attainment they reach, reflect their individual situations.
6. Evidence so far of improvement in levels of attainment has been slight because of the extended research phase undertaken by most projects and the slow start to much of the work. There were, nevertheless, clear indications that the most positive outcome of much of the New Start activity was its effect on students' attitudes to learning and its capacity for rekindling their interest in both present and future educational opportunities.
7. Often students demonstrated sustained commitment and newly acquired practical skills in vocational settings, and especially in work placements.

In the Sheffield Darnall project, a student carried out a series of maintenance tasks in a highly competent manner. His interest in the work and the well-deserved encouragement he received from the project manager, which included well-informed advice on future training possibilities, had encouraged him to continue his studies in college or on a youth traineeship.

In one project in the Midlands, based in a crèche, two young women with, by their own admission, very poor attitudes to school, were developing an increased sense of responsibility as a result of their demanding and responsible work. One of them had realised that she would need to gain academic qualifications if she wished to carry on working in this area and had developed a career action plan in readiness for a college course.

On a motor vehicle course in Portsmouth, New Start students working in a FE college were making excellent progress. The course tutor had established excellent relationships with the young people and had matched the work well to their needs. The quality of what they were producing could stand comparison with work produced by students following a full-time course.

8. Students, both within school and on out-of-school projects, usually find it highly motivating to work towards nationally recognised qualifications, particularly when accreditation is offered in modular form and assessed continuously throughout the

course as well as at the course's conclusion. Such qualifications include National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), units of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), City and Guilds Wordpower and Numberpower, and youth award schemes such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). In the best projects, such awards are publicly acknowledged by means of presentation events so that young people can benefit from the spur to improvement that recognition of their achievements can bring.

9. There was insufficient emphasis placed on basic or key skills in most of the projects. Students generally made slow progress in improving their numeracy and literacy. In many cases, poor behaviour and low levels of concentration militated against sustained improvement. Even when students were unable to write well, however, they frequently possessed quite a good vocabulary and were able to use sophisticated terminology in discussion. Skilled teachers were able to build on these qualities to encourage them to translate oral into written expression, although this was often dependent on the quality and level of one-to-one support that was available.

At Project Warrior in Portsmouth, for example, specialist teachers from a sixth-form college had been timetabled to work on key skills with New Start students in a youth centre. In this case, the skilled, patient approach of well-qualified teachers was bringing about noticeable improvements in young people's attainment.

10. The most discernible achievement on these projects was the progress students had made in forming positive relationships with adults as well as their peers, learning to be both self-aware and self-critical, seeking and accepting advice, and re-establishing connections with social support structures. The majority of young people involved in New Start projects were extremely appreciative of the close professional and personal relationships they had been able to establish with the adults working with them. They benefited considerably from the opportunity to work in small groups and a closely monitored environment. Given their often-chequered histories in relation to authority, their renewed commitment to learning and work in unfamiliar contexts was a considerable achievement.
11. About half of the projects had established a reliable method of tracking their progress and recording their levels of attainment but, in the others there was no fully developed method of judging what progress students had made or the quality of their work. Consequently, it was rare for students to know the criteria against which their achievements were being

measured or for them to have a clear idea of the progress they were making. Where evaluation criteria were included as an integral part of a qualification, for example, on ASDAN or NVQ courses, students were more likely to be aware of their attainment and rate of progress. Work-related learning experiences were often not assessed, and National Records of Achievement (NRA) or Progress Files were little used.

12. There was, nonetheless, some good practice to be found:

One Sheffield-based project kept detailed records for all students, held a weekly review and set out what had been achieved and what the future targets were. Another project in Hampshire kept parents informed of their children's progress through frequent, personal contact, by telephone if necessary, and had developed an excellent tracking and recording system for vocational and basic skills qualifications. The co-ordinator of a project in the south west recorded all interview data and kept learning agreements on file. Progress files were regularly completed for all students. The file of one special needs student contained an impressive range of certificates and challenge awards underlining the marked progress he had made.

TEACHING

13. Teaching was at least satisfactory in about 90 per cent of the New Start sessions, and about one in five of them was good. They included guidance, advice and counselling sessions as well as some subject-based lessons. Group sizes were usually small in order to provide good conditions for the specialised academic and social support required by disaffected students.
14. The best sessions were characterised by the contribution of teachers well-versed in their particular specialism, including basic or key skills, vocational subjects, or careers education and guidance. Teachers, youth workers or other project workers knew well the young people with whom they were working and were able to tailor the provision directly to their individual needs. The best teaching was as challenging as that seen in more traditional curriculum areas and the most successful teachers had an excellent ability to relate well to the young people, combining good humour and patience with high expectations of students' behaviour. Conversely, students made little progress when they were taught by staff who were not trained teachers and who found it difficult to establish the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.
15. While there was some variation, the best

vocational teaching seen in FE colleges achieved impressive results. The area of greatest variation was in the teaching of basic and key skills, where specialist expertise was too thinly spread. However, where numeracy and literacy specialists were involved, students often made rapid progress. Improved social attitudes, team working, independent learning, self-motivation, and the ability to plan for their future often represented the most significant advance for these young people.

CURRICULUM

16. There is a high degree of consistency in the features of the curriculum provided for New Start students across the 17 partnership projects. They include:

- a strong emphasis on personal and social education;
- consistent pastoral support, with priority given to more individual attention;
- practical vocational experience, supported by work placements;
- a focus on improving basic and key skills;
- enhanced careers education and guidance.

Personal and social education

17. In the hands of competent teachers or experienced youth workers, personal and social education has successfully raised students' self-esteem and enhanced their confidence. Small teaching groups and one-to-one support, often including individually negotiated learning programmes, have rekindled students' interest in learning, enabling them either to re-enter mainstream KS4 education, or, if this is no longer feasible, to prepare for post-16 education, training or employment.

In Sheffield, for example, youth workers functioned as personal advisers for the Year 11 New Start students. They sustained this role after the school-leaving date and through the summer holidays in order to give consistent support and advice to the young people at a time when they had to make important decisions about post-16 study, training or work.

Vocational training

18. Programmes also offer young people new opportunities for practical vocational training, frequently through liaison with local colleges of FE or training providers.

In a project in Bury, a group of Year 11 students, permanently excluded from school, could choose from

a range of vocational courses at the local college as part of an alternative education programme managed by the LEA. The majority were taught on the college's main vocational programme alongside full-time post-16 students. They also joined basic or key skills and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) groups at the college. All programmes led to national qualifications at different levels. Pastoral support for the groups of 53 students was provided by LEA staff with a youth work background who were highly skilled at working with challenging or disaffected young people. A careers adviser from the local careers company also worked with the group, and students were offered the opportunity for work experience related to their vocational courses.

A small core of young people remained who were unable to cope with the demands of college life and whose needs could not be met by this programme. They were taught as a separate group, still on the college site, and also took part in extended work placements. Every effort was made to bring them back into mainstream education at the earliest opportunity. This alternative education programme has been running for some years and the additional New Start funding has enabled the LEA project leader and the employers who support the scheme to improve the assessment of students' effectiveness in the workplace.

19. The picture is not always so positive, however. In one large project, co-ordinated by the local Education Business Partnership, Year 10 and Year 11 students from eight of the LEAs 11 secondary schools, spent two days per week on vocational programmes in the local FE college. Schools, however, had little influence on the nature, range and scope of the college-based provision and, in some instances, were unhappy with its quality. In one special school students received little pastoral support on their vocational course, and, in consequence, rapidly dropped out. In another school the importance of work placements was recognised, but these were poorly planned, with no training plans and diaries and no mechanisms for using work experience to enhance learning back at school.

Basic and key skills

20. There is a clear recognition in all partnerships that the absence of effective basic or key skills, often as a result of prolonged gaps in earlier schooling, has seriously impeded students' academic progress. All programmes included, therefore, some attention to communication and numeracy in their alternative curricula. Much of this work was, however, of poor quality. It was successful when it was taught by specialists, whether in school or college, who had carried out careful initial assessment of each student and devised interesting and relevant individual or

group programmes. Where the basic and key skills teaching was poor, the materials were not pitched at an appropriate level and there was a lack of progression. Staff teaching basic skills outside the school had poor links with subject teachers for English and mathematics and insufficient knowledge of National Curriculum programmes of study.

Careers education and guidance

21. Careers education and guidance is a key component of the curriculum in a majority of cases, whether in the form of enhanced provision for those students regularly attending school, or through specific contributions made by the local careers company to out-of-school projects. It has generally been a positive feature of New Start projects.

In one project a 'one-stop shop' referral point, staffed by the local careers service and supported by the TEC and the LEA, provided a detailed and individual information and guidance service for 14–16-year-olds on the New Start project, in addition to working with the older age group for which it was originally set up. This service was well conceived and highly valued by the young people who made use of it.

Curriculum design and funding

22. If the young people are of statutory school age, and are still reasonably regular school attenders, they follow a curriculum that has been adapted in relatively minor ways. If, on the other hand, the young people are highly irregular school attenders who find little to interest them in the mainstream school curriculum, or if they have been permanently excluded from school and are attending a PRU or some other alternative education provision, their curriculum is likely to be much more radically modified.
23. Within school, the additional funding provided by New Start has been used in one of two ways. Students in the target group, for whom the full National Curriculum is judged to be inappropriate, are offered an alternative timetable. This might include additional work experience, vocational programmes such as NVQ or GNVQ units, extra English and mathematics, short courses in modern foreign languages, design and technology and enhanced personal and social education. As yet, few schools have made positive use of the new possibility of disapplication from the National Curriculum for particular students.

In one Midlands school, students spent ten hours a week on an alternative curriculum that ran in parallel to the mainstream provision. The school went to great lengths to respond flexibly to students' needs and

monitor their progress. Since the launch of this parallel programme the school can point to lower truancy levels, improved behaviour, and higher levels of motivation among its Year 10 students.

24. In most schools, however, New Start funding has been set at a relatively low level and has been available over too short a period to be capable of effecting lasting change. In these schools the revised curriculum has been an additional package, often provided by outside agencies, and viewed by some teachers as a welcome means of containing problem students for a period of time each week. The pastoral strengths of this work have been significant, but it is not yet an integral part of the KS4 curriculum.
25. A small minority of schools have, by contrast, made use of New Start funding within school in a more creative way.

In Trinity Upper School, Northampton, for example, where inclusion in mainstream education was the priority for those students identified as disaffected, New Start resulted in an enhanced form of support through the use of education support assistants (ESAs). The progress of individual students was closely monitored and tracked. The ESAs also acted as classroom assistants where necessary. Work that was previously completed late, or not at all, now arrives on time and there have been marked improvements in students' attitude and behaviour.

Guidance, counselling and mentoring

26. Almost all projects have adopted guidance, counselling and mentoring in some form as key features of their approach. Young people value highly the extra individual attention they receive and have responded well to the programmes that have been negotiated for them. In many projects, for example, Project Warrior in Portsmouth, the Trinity Exclusion Project in Greenwich and Base 10 in Sheffield, youth workers have worked closely with the young people. The commitment of these youth workers, careers education and guidance counsellors and other professionals has brought about promising results. This success, however, has come at some cost. The case load of youth workers can be very heavy and the emotional strain of their continuous involvement extremely wearing.
27. Mentoring support has been developed in many projects. In some cases, slightly older people, some of whom might have been in a similar situation to the young people on the projects, are used as mentors. In other cases, mentors have come from business or the academic world. The expectation is that the mentors' experience of life, and possibly their success in their chosen field, will serve as an example to the young

people and that they will be able to make a long-term commitment to supporting them.

The Corby mentoring scheme has successfully demonstrated a direct youth work response to the disaffection of young people. Good project management and the strong sense of trust established between workers and young people have enhanced its effectiveness.

28. Mentoring has often been successful, but in many projects it was difficult to find sufficient suitable mentors, and there are considerable implications in terms of vetting potential mentors and observing child protection measures. It has often proved difficult to find suitable 'neutral' locations, and the busy schedules of mentors has sometimes prevented them keeping regular appointments.

29. A number of projects make extensive use of PRUs as part of their New Start strategies. They can call on specialist staffing, but the progress of students in these centres is often impeded by their irregular pattern of part-time attendance and the often-tenuous links with mainstream schools and FE colleges. One headteacher in a PRU, who was also managing the local partnership, felt that the main findings of the research phase reinforced much that was already known by those involved in PRUs about working with young people displaying strong signs of disaffection. Often there was a feeling that insufficient use had been made of structures and expertise that were already available. There were, however, examples where the expertise of those working in PRUs was used to good effect:

In one PRU, New Start money was used to buy in workers from a local arts project to develop a programme to improve pupils' confidence and self-esteem. In this example New Start functioned as a short-term measure to fund a piece of specialist work, which will continue after New Start under different funding arrangements.

30. Out-of-school projects often build on earlier work and are sustained by New Start funding.

In the Liverpool area, one PRU had been able to continue with a tried and tested curriculum package, which aimed to encourage young people to rely less on the staff for their programme of activities and become more self-reliant and independent. The key components were outdoor and residential activities and core National Curriculum subjects taught in small groups.

31. Despite these examples of good work, the quality of the curriculum offered to young people on the different projects has varied widely. The extended

nature of the initial research phase has had a negative impact on curriculum planning in a majority of schools, where the relationship between New Start work and mainstream provision has often been inadequately defined. The interesting and relevant developments that have emerged in some places have been largely attributable to work in train before New Start began.

32. Aspects of successful New Start curriculum provision include:

- well-planned personal and social education programmes;
- strong pastoral support and careers education and guidance;
- vocational experience and work placements;
- expert basic and key skills teaching;
- the provision of nationally-recognised qualifications, including NVQ, GNVQ and Part One GNVQ;
- where possible, GCSE qualifications;
- an analysis of each student's needs, an individually-tailored programme and, where appropriate, the close involvement of parents;
- a flexible use of the KS4 curriculum, using the freedom to disapply where advisable;
- the use of a wide range of staff with relevant qualifications in addition to teachers in schools and colleges (e.g., ESAs and project workers, youth workers, careers advisers);
- co-operation with FE and other out-of-school providers;
- outdoor and residential activities.

PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Co-ordination and identification of need

33. Overall partnership strategy has normally been overseen by a New Start co-ordinator, working within a framework established by the lead partner - usually the TEC, LEA, or careers service company. The projects vary widely in their scale. At one extreme, the Merseyside project involved over 500 programmes, almost 400 of which were school-based. Most projects were on a much smaller scale than this, and included just three or four schools in one area.

34. The detailed local implementation of New Start projects has usually been delegated to those bodies in closest contact with the young people who have been

targeted: schools, FE colleges, private trainers, youth services and careers companies. At this level, management was judged to be satisfactory or better in about eight out of ten cases. Responsibility within schools for co-ordinating the project has generally been given to a senior teacher, often a head of Year 10 or Year 11, head of KS4, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), or, more occasionally, a deputy head. The extra workload for co-ordinators has often been heavy, and sometimes excessive.

35. The extended nature of the research phase has invariably delayed the implementation of the New Start projects and there is a widespread view among the partners in the projects that the research findings have frequently duplicated information that was already available. About a third of the partnerships have compiled extensive directories and databases. The analysis of young people's needs and the programmes drawn up to meet them should be underpinned by sound statistical information. However, the link between the compilation of directories and action plans has not always been clear, and it will be a major task to ensure that directories are kept up to date.
36. The identification of young people to take part in New Start schemes has normally been through referral by schools or education welfare services, and the numbers involved from any one institution vary widely. Sometimes parents have taken the initiative in seeking help for their children, but in one area there has been considerable parental resistance to one of the projects which, they felt, would have labelled their children too openly as 'problem students'. Generally, however, demand has exceeded the capacity of the projects to cope.
37. There is substantial evidence that certain categories of students are more likely to suffer the consequences of exclusion, disaffection and under-achievement than others. The picture is a complex one, but young people from some minority ethnic groups, particularly male students, are disproportionately affected. Some of the 17 projects have made this aspect a focus of their action. In the West Midlands, for example, a consultation with parents on the attainment of young black people was attended by a chief education officer and a government minister. It raised a series of issues that underlined the deeply entrenched nature of the issue. Currently, New Start projects represent a partial response to developing a coherent, national strategy to counter these specific aspects of under-performance, but some good work was seen: for example, community-based work in one West Midlands project and an arts project which involved young black males, looked-after children, and Kosovan refugees.

38. The New Start research phase highlighted poor student-teacher relationships as being a significant factor in the disaffection of many young people, and this was also raised as an issue by many of the students interviewed during the evaluation. Schools, therefore, have a particular interest in developing programmes for underachieving and disaffected students, since they can make great demands on organisational, pastoral and teaching resources. There is an urgent need for well-targeted, whole school in-service training in this area.

General implications of New Start strategies

39. The degree to which New Start strategies are likely to be adopted more widely in schools and by other agencies dealing with young people in the target age-range varies widely. Relatively few institutions have yet given much thought to the wider applicability of New Start approaches; this is often because they feel that they are only extensions of strategies which they have already been using to counter underachievement.
40. There is little evidence so far that New Start is likely to have a dramatic impact on the practice of schools generally. Some headteachers expressed serious concerns about the project, mainly because of their lack of control over the quality of what was being offered to pupils outside school, and were aiming to bring the students back entirely within school-based provision and cut the ties established with other agencies. They also pointed to the short-term funding as one of the reasons why the project had been less than successful in their eyes, a point raised with striking regularity by almost all senior staff interviewed.

Multi-agency working

41. New Start has contributed to improving both the scope and quality of links between different agencies. There are many examples of close, collaborative work involving schools, FE, the education welfare service, careers companies and youth services. In the East Midlands and in the south west partnerships, for example, the contribution of education welfare officers has been central to the implementation of New Start projects. New Start has also encouraged wider co-operation between some schools, which see the scheme as a way of pooling resources to counter problems common to them all. In Sheffield, six schools and three community areas are co-operating in a shared response to the New Start initiative. Partnership working has gone some way towards breaking down these barriers, but they still exist, particularly when lines of communication are not clearly drawn and responsibilities are vaguely defined.

Project evaluation

42. All lead partners and project co-ordinators have evaluated the effectiveness of the projects running in their areas. They have usually produced interim reports, and frequently commissioned supplementary evaluation from external bodies to produce final reports. Nevertheless, there was insufficient day-by-day review of progress and practice of the projects in the schools.
43. Overall, there has been insufficient evaluation of the quality of the young peoples' achievements. Most projects had no clearly defined expectations and criteria for success. On the other hand, a number have, as one of their main aims, the development of a quality framework. For example, the Merseyside project has begun to identify the qualities of effective work with disaffected young people. A national approach towards establishing what is expected in terms of quality of work and setting out how judgements on quality are to be made should be drawn up as a result of these projects.
44. Project evaluation reports often provide evidence of improvement in students' behaviour and attendance. In one of the Tees Valley partnership projects, for example, the evaluation was able to show that average attendance rates for students who had been on the New Start programme for at least two months had improved from below 50 per cent (zero per cent in some cases) to over 80 per cent. Improvement was both more marked and more rapid with Year 10 than with Year 11 pupils, confirming the importance of early intervention. In general, however, the evaluation report tended to describe the structures that had been established rather than show how effective they had been in improving young people's attitudes towards education.
45. Aspects of successful New Start project management include:
 - the deployment of well-prepared, appropriately-qualified specialist staff and project workers;
 - the appointment of school and other local co-ordinators with the status to influence developments;
 - strong links with external agencies, particularly with regard to work-related learning.
 - good communication between all local agencies, including the young people and their parents;
 - thorough monitoring and evaluation.

RESOURCES

Staffing and staff development

46. A wide range of schoolteachers and staff from

different agencies are involved in New Start Projects. In many cases these include trained youth workers, careers officers, educational welfare officers, counsellors or qualified trainers and assessors as well as heads of years 10 and 11 and KS4 subject teachers. There are qualified teachers and lecturers teaching on vocational and basic and key skills courses, sometimes in schools and sometimes in other locations. Overall, in about four out of five cases, staff were appropriately qualified for the tasks which they were undertaking. The area of greatest weakness was in basic and key skills teaching where students were often taught by non-specialists. Some inexperienced youth workers and careers officers also found it difficult to work with students in formal educational contexts. In addition, some FE lecturers were unprepared for the demands made on them by teaching de-motivated and disaffected young people.

47. It was normal for school-based New Start work to be co-ordinated by the SENCO, although this tended to give the inappropriate message that disaffection was always associated with students with special educational needs. This work often placed additional demands on teachers who were already stretched.
48. Induction onto the project for staff was overall a weakness of the first phase of New Start, and only a small number of projects provided thorough preparation and sustained follow-up. Staff development needs identified include:
 - the development of a wider awareness of alternative KS4 curricula;
 - mentoring and counselling techniques;
 - basic and key skills teaching;
 - assessment of student progress;
 - strategies to make effective provision for students with severe educational and behavioural difficulties.

Accommodation

49. The quality of accommodation and resources devoted to New Start projects was generally satisfactory, although there were instances of work being carried out under unsuitable circumstances. In one case, for example, a vehicle repair/maintenance project was poorly equipped and this had a negative effect on students' achievement. By way of contrast, staff running a music project in the same building had managed to build up an impressive range of hi-tech equipment and were producing good-quality level 3 NVQ work. In one PRU, work took place in a poor, run-down environment, which did little to encourage a positive attitude among the young people working

there. In a number of cases, training premises or workshops were of poor quality. In one project the workshops were barely adequate in terms of health and safety requirements and depressing places to be in for long periods of time.

50. Generally, however, students benefited significantly from the opportunity to learn in different settings. Work in one well-equipped youth centre was successful because it made good provision in a location close to where the young people lived and where they felt secure. Students generally responded particularly well to the opportunity to work on up-to-date equipment on vocational courses in FE centres.

Funding

51. The 17 New Start projects have been centrally funded by the government to a maximum of about £250,000 for a two-year period. Most projects will have received additional funding from other sources, for example LEAs or TECs, but unless alternative

sources of funding can be found it is unlikely that the New Start projects will be able to take firm root. Some projects have received limited continuation funding by Government Regional Offices or their TEC sponsors. Project co-ordinators have all commented on the difficulties created by short-term funding arrangements. In addition, the money has often been spread thinly over a large number of local projects. One headteacher commented: "We did not realise what was involved; a small amount of money for a considerable amount of work." It will be important in any further phase of New Start to ensure that funding is aimed directly at improving opportunities for young people and less to research.

52. Many of these projects are expensive on staff, relying as they do on one-to-one or small group contacts. Project co-ordinators can obtain further funding through the Standards Fund, but LEAs do not have a good understanding of how the different headings might be used to fund New Start projects.

CONCLUSION

53. New Start strategies have succeeded in giving a higher profile to developing a range of approaches to be used by schools to deal with disaffected students. They have given extra individual attention and support to these students. There is substantial evidence that these measures have had a strong impact on the young people's self discipline, motivation, skills and confidence.
54. The best aspects of the work should be replicated in schools where there are significant levels of disengagement and underachievement.

Appendix A

The lead partners for the 17 New Start projects involved

Partnership

Teeside

County Durham and Darlington

Sheffield

Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham

Crescent (Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham)

Cheshire and Wirral

Merseyside

Black Country

Hereford and Worcester, Solihull

Northamptonshire

Cambridgeshire

Hertfordshire

South West London

South London

Kent

Portsmouth, Southampton and Hampshire

Devon and Cornwall

Lead partner

Tees Valley

Durham County Council

Sheffield Strategic Education Forum

Lifetime Careers Ltd

Oldham CCTE

Cheshire County Council

Career Decisions Ltd

Sandwell TEC

Hereford and Worcester CCTE

Northamptonshire CCTE

Cambridgeshire LEA

Hertfordshire TEC

AZTEC

SOLOTEC

Kent TEC

Hampshire TEC

PROSPER

Appendix B

The aim of the OFSTED evaluation of the New Start initiative was to report on:

- the identification of its unique contribution to young people's involvement and achievement and the quality of the educational needs analysis among the targeted young people;
- the match of the planned educational provision, including aspects of equal opportunities, to the young people's needs;
- the quality of the teaching, instruction and supervision and the support provided to staff;
- the standards of educational achievement and progress made by the young people in the work seen;
- the effectiveness of the monitoring, evaluation and review of the provision.