



**Office for Standards
in Education**

The Key Stage 3 Strategy: evaluation of the third year

HMI 2090
March 2004



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Introduction

The Key Stage 3 Strategy

1. The national Strategy for Key Stage 3 is run by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and supported by a national team. The aim of the Strategy is to raise standards in the key stage by improving teaching and learning, developing cross-curricular skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and helping pupils who enter Year 7 with attainment below level 4 in the National Curriculum to make faster progress.
2. The Strategy is based on four key principles:
 - **expectations:** establishing high expectations for all pupils and setting challenging targets for them to achieve
 - **progression:** strengthening the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and ensuring progression in teaching and learning across Key Stage 3
 - **engagement:** promoting approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation
 - **transformation:** strengthening teaching and learning through a programme of professional development and practical support.
3. The Strategy consists of strands covering English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and the other foundation subjects, including modern foreign languages (MFL) and design and technology. Work on behaviour and attendance is also being introduced.
4. Following preliminary work, the Strategy started in September 2000 with a pilot phase, which involved 205 schools in 17 volunteer local education authorities (LEAs). The pilot phase involved English and mathematics and, later, science and the foundation subjects. Some schools also began to pilot the ICT strand. In April 2001, 32 special schools were involved in a pilot phase.
5. The national programme in English and mathematics began in other secondary schools in September 2001. Funding was made available, for example to run summer schools in literacy and numeracy for those pupils in Year 6 attaining below level 4 in the National Curriculum. In Year 7, these pupils were also given specific help in English and mathematics to reach level 4 as soon as possible – the ‘catch-up’ programmes. Schools could also provide booster classes in English, mathematics and science for pupils in Year 9 who needed help to attain level 5. In addition, schools were offered consultancy, optional training activities and funding to provide mentoring to pupils in Year 8.

6. Schools were able to measure pupils' improvement by using progress or optional tests at the end of Year 7 and Year 8.
7. The schools undertook training to help them use and develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and were expected to run training in their schools to take this forward.
8. LEAs have nominated Key Stage 3 Strategy managers and appointed consultants in the subjects of each strand to help schools by providing training and support.

The report

9. This report covers the school year 2002/03. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited a total of 219 secondary schools, looking at provision for mathematics, English, science, ICT, MFL and other foundation subjects. Fifteen special schools were also visited. In addition, visits were made to talk to LEA officers and consultants, or to shadow the work of consultants. Training events for teachers of ICT, MFL and science were visited. The report also draws on evidence from Ofsted school inspections and inspections of LEAs.

Main findings

- The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy continues to extend as more subjects become involved. Most schools are implementing key aspects of the Strategy effectively. Teachers welcome the training and other support the Strategy provides and many are enthused by the developments it is bringing about.
- Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the Strategy is having an increasing effect, albeit uneven, on pupils' **attainment** in most schools.
- The full extent of the Strategy's effect on results at the end of Key Stage 3 is not yet clear, because the way the Strategy has been staged means that Year 9 pupils in 2003 did not benefit from three years of exposure to it. However, results in the national tests in 2003 improved, most significantly in mathematics and in the proportion of pupils achieving level 6 in science. The number of schools achieving the DfES floor targets in the core subjects at Key Stage 3 also rose significantly in 2003.
- The Strategy is helping to improve **teaching**. In particular, the use of specific objectives for learning and better planning are adding greater purpose and challenge to many lessons. Most schools have reviewed their schemes of work in line with the Strategy frameworks and guidance. Improvements in teaching are leading to better attitudes to work, especially, but not only, among boys.
- The Strategy is focusing on persistent weaknesses in **assessment** and prompting better practice, but there is a long way to go. Systematic, rigorous and productive attention to the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' work remains the exception rather than the rule, notably, but not only, in the marking of writing. In all subjects, feedback to pupils which helps them to improve is still too variable. cursory formative assessment and insecure summative assessments are significant problems in ICT. Two thirds of special schools have weaknesses in their systems for assessing pupils' progress.
- Implementation of the strands of the Strategy is at different stages.
- The impact of the Strategy is being felt in almost all the **English** departments visited. Better lesson planning is leading to greater purposefulness and pace. Pupils show improved skills of inference and interpretation in their reading. Many now write more confidently in a wider range of genres, with greater awareness of audience and purpose. The accuracy of writing has also improved, but many lower-attaining pupils still have significant problems with their writing. Teaching of the literacy progress units is good overall, but there is little consolidation of skills in other subject lessons.

- More attention to the development of **literacy across the curriculum** is evident, but the drive for consistency across subjects is faltering in some schools.
- The Strategy is bringing important benefits to attainment in **mathematics** in over half the schools visited. The benefits tend to be greater for higher-attaining than for lower-attaining pupils. Improvements in mental calculation are being maintained, with pupils being more willing to tackle unfamiliar problems and difficult arithmetical sums. The organisation and teaching of catch-up programmes continue to be problematic, with under half the pupils involved progressing to level 4 during Year 7. The use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics remains limited.
- After initial enthusiasm inspired by the Strategy, practical action to improve the use of **numeracy across the curriculum** has been limited.
- Most schools are actively developing their use of the Strategy in **science**. The Strategy is contributing to a rise in standards by inspiring the preparation of new, well-structured schemes of work and encouraging teachers to be more specific in setting objectives and more flexible in the activities they use. However, pupils are still not making the progress they could in scientific enquiry and in understanding key scientific ideas, and in most lessons there is insufficient emphasis on contemporary science. The range and quality of pupils' writing in science remain too limited.
- Nearly three out of five schools have satisfactory or better arrangements for managing the **foundation subjects** strand. In the Year 7 and 8 classes seen, the quality of pupils' work, particularly that of boys, is improving as pupils have greater exposure to the Strategy. Their learning skills are developing, notably in oral work, research and collaborative working. Their good response to well-structured lessons and varied, interactive approaches is leading to greater subject knowledge and understanding. However, a significant minority of schools have yet to embrace the Strategy as a means of raising standards in the foundation subjects.
- The **ICT** strand has improved planning in the subject and is helping to improve teaching. The impact on pupils' attainment is difficult to gauge at this early stage, in part because of the inadequacy of assessment systems in many schools. In the schools visited, pupils often produce good standards of work in some applications, but the quality is inconsistent and pupils with lower capability are generally not well supported.
- Training and support for schools involved in the **MFL** pilot have been good. The use of the new teaching framework is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes, among boys in particular. Pupils have better awareness of learning objectives and are applying their greater knowledge of form and structure to write with more spontaneity and at greater length. However, departments have made slow progress in using plenaries effectively and improving assessment.

- Some aspects of **transition from primary to secondary schools** are done well by most schools. The transfer of information is now managed well in half the schools visited, though it is still unsatisfactory in one school in six and distinct problems remain outside the core subjects. Overall, curriculum continuity remains a key weakness: it is good in only a quarter of schools and unsatisfactory in almost half. There is still much to do to enable more pupils to make appropriate progress from the start of their secondary education.
- **Management** of the Strategy by heads of department, key stage managers and headteachers is good or better in just over half of secondary schools and satisfactory or better in nine schools in ten. The quality of auditing, action planning, dissemination and review in individual strands remains patchy. Productive connections are not always made between developments in different subject strands and with the other improvement work in which the school is involved. Improving the work of Key Stage 3 managers so that the implementation of the Strategy as a whole is coherent and dynamic is crucial to its future success.
- **Staffing difficulties** continue to handicap the implementation of the Strategy in some schools, notably those short of specialist teachers of mathematics and ICT.
- The Strategy is having some impact in two thirds of the **special schools** visited. Over half of the schools visited felt that the training they attended had been inappropriate to their needs and a quarter have had little support from LEA consultants.
- Most **LEAs** support the Key Stage 3 Strategy in secondary schools well. Schools generally hold consultants in high regard and value the support and training they provide. LEA support has led to more primary and secondary teachers working together effectively. Other than in relation to numeracy and literacy, LEA support for cross-curricular work is less well developed. LEAs usually have effective strategies for disseminating good practice and they are increasingly making good use of data to target support and evaluate its impact.

Points for action

10. To step up the effectiveness of the Strategy, the national team, LEAs and schools should seek to improve:
 - the overall management of the Strategy in schools, including auditing, action planning, monitoring and evaluation, in order to establish a more vigorous and coherent whole-school approach
 - the continuity of pupils' work on transfer into Year 7, particularly in non-core subjects, in which information on pupils' experience and achievement is often limited

- the planning and organisation of the catch-up programmes for low-attaining pupils in English and mathematics
- the quality of assessment, for example by improving marking in English and other subjects, increasing the rigour of assessment in ICT and enhancing the approaches used in the foundation subjects
- the extent and consistency of deliberate attention to the use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
- the range and quality of writing in science, the progress made by pupils in acquiring key ideas in science and in undertaking scientific enquiries, and the use of contemporary science
- the extent to which schools make effective use of the Strategy to focus on improving attainment in the foundation subjects
- the relevance of training and the availability of support for special schools.

Management of the Strategy in secondary schools

The contribution of school managers

11. Leadership and management of the Strategy by headteachers, key stage co-ordinators and heads of department are good or better in just over half of schools and satisfactory or better in nine schools in ten.
12. In one in ten schools, leadership and management are weak. In some cases this is because the school has other priorities or because senior management are not committed to the Strategy. Some headteachers have not made key appointments or properly defined the roles of staff to ensure effective management. In other schools, strategy and systems to manage the work of departments are lacking. In some cases, senior managers do not have sufficient awareness of what constitutes good-quality provision and hence are not able to place sufficiently high expectations on their staff. They are not able, or willing, to ask hard questions.
13. There is still a need in many schools to take a more concerted approach to implementing the strands of the Strategy so that the benefits are applied across subjects and across the key stage. Supporting schools in this respect is a priority for the national Strategy team in the current year. Success in bringing about better co-ordination of the work will be in the hands of the senior managers in schools responsible for Key Stage 3. Up to now, they have often been preoccupied with managing developments in single subjects, and now need to focus on managing the Strategy as a whole.
14. Where the implementation of the Strategy has been successful, **headteachers** have been active in establishing the management of Strategy securely at school level, making key appointments and defining clear roles, including that of primary liaison co-ordinators. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Well-grounded priorities for action cover academic achievement, behaviour and the use of resources. Good links are made with other improvement work in which the school is involved.
15. **Key Stage 3 managers** are key figures in the effective implementation of the Strategy. One in six managers is not effective, and improving their work is a key to the success of the Strategy in the future. Good Key Stage 3 managers have clear expectations of how the Strategy will be implemented. They have strong lines of communication with departments and review and regulate their work regularly. They give effective leadership in areas such as lesson observation and departmental planning. Their work helps departments to focus on the key issues of teaching and learning. They make productive connections between developments in different subject strands.

16. **Good heads of department** are invariably committed to the Strategy. Among other things, they act with senior staff to monitor the work of the department well, for example by observing colleagues teaching and providing detailed oral and written feedback.
17. Aspects of the implementation of the Strategy which call for improved, concerted management in many schools include:
 - auditing, action planning and review
 - arrangements for training and dissemination
 - improving transition from primary to secondary schools
 - ensuring effective arrangements for helping low-attaining Year 7 pupils to achieve level 4 by the end of the year
 - making assessment more rigorous and productive
 - stepping up action on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Auditing, action planning and review

18. The best schools carry out detailed and rigorous audits of strengths and weaknesses and channel their results into appropriate action. In some cases, these audits are discussed with LEA consultants to inform the school development plan.
19. There has been improvement in relation to the ICT strand, where more schools are completing the audit in useful detail and linking it to a focused action plan. In science, more departments are using the evidence from the audit to identify their training needs and priorities for development. The best science departments are using evidence from the analysis of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching. Auditing and action planning in the foundation subjects are unsatisfactory, although improving somewhat. They are also inadequate in the MFL pilot.
20. Across the subjects, the time provided in schools to carry out and review audits and action planning is sometimes too limited.
21. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy are generally satisfactory or better in the core subjects, although further work is required in English. In the newer foundation subjects strand, monitoring and evaluation are generally inadequate. Few schools incorporate a review of the Strategy into their school and departmental annual planning cycle as a means of improving their monitoring and evaluation of its impact.

Training and dissemination

22. Creating the time to inform and involve teachers who have not attended initial training is a difficulty for schools. The dissemination of science training shows some improvement but continues to be an issue in many schools. Most schools encounter difficulty in allocating sufficient time for all staff to become fully acquainted with the ICT materials and guidance; this remains a particular problem for non-specialist teachers. The Strategy has continued to provide training and support for non-specialist mathematics teachers, but using this training and support well remains difficult in a significant minority of schools. Arrangements within schools for disseminating the training to teachers in the foundation subjects are often unsatisfactory.

Transition from primary to secondary school

23. In two thirds of schools, **induction arrangements** for Year 7 pupils are good, and they are rarely unsatisfactory in other schools. Most schools give pupils opportunities to visit in the summer term before they transfer, and in some there are regular visits throughout Year 6 and by younger primary pupils, so that over a period of time prospective pupils become increasingly familiar with what the secondary school has to offer.
24. Parents are often involved at an early stage through attendance at primary school parents' evenings by key secondary school staff, or through information evenings and other events at the secondary school. In the best practice, all the primary schools are visited by secondary school staff, including the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), where appropriate. The SENCO also sometimes attends the final primary annual review for pupils with statements.
25. The efficient transfer and effective use of **information from primary schools** are essential in ensuring pupils have the best possible start in secondary schools. In half of the schools the transfer of information is now managed well, though it is still unsatisfactory in one school in six. This is often because of the late arrival of data from primary schools, so that it cannot be used to guide the allocation of pupils to teaching groups.
26. Secondary schools are making better use of Key Stage 2 assessment results in the core subjects. However, in other subjects there is often very little transfer of information about what pupils have covered and achieved. This leads to disjunction or overlap between what pupils study in Year 6 and in Year 7. The transfer of information on pupils' ICT capability from primary to secondary school is not a requirement and remains rare, although there are increasing signs that schools and LEAs are planning to improve this, with two thirds of schools including improvement in transition in their action plans.

27. Where the management of information is good, secondary schools are active in initiating, maintaining and developing contacts and requesting supplementary information beyond common transfer forms and attainment data. Building on close links established with feeder schools over a period of time, senior staff visit early in the summer term and gather a range of information about pupils' interests and attitudes, as well as about their attainments. Primary schools often share their predictions and interim teacher assessments. The early arrival of this provisional information enables secondary schools to plan ahead and to ensure that all relevant teachers are informed. At this stage the LEA can play a key role in the effective collation and transfer of information. The involvement of the SENCO in gathering additional information about pupils with identified SEN is particularly valuable.
28. Almost all secondary schools use tests of cognitive abilities, reading, spelling and non-verbal reasoning during the first term of Year 7. Many schools report that the results of these tests help them to identify pupils who are under-performing. There are some schools, however, whose limited use of the additional information calls into question the point of gathering it.
29. Overall, the management of **curriculum continuity** as pupils move from the primary to the secondary phase remains a significant weakness. Continuity is good in only a quarter of the schools and is unsatisfactory in almost half.
30. The Strategy is beginning to change attitudes and practice for the better, with more success in some subjects, such as mathematics, than in others. It has actively promoted better curriculum links in a number of ways. In some cases, summer schools play an important part in raising pupils' aspirations and teachers' expectations. In others, close curricular links with feeder primary schools have come about through reciprocal visiting and frequent meetings to share schemes of work and agree assessment criteria.
31. Some schools are making good use of transition units designed to make a bridge between work in primary and secondary schools. Transition units have not, up to now, been widely used, and their use does not in itself guarantee effective curriculum continuity. Where they are used well, primary teachers take them seriously and secondary teachers appreciate what their pupils are capable of, and adjust their expectations accordingly.
32. In English, the transition units were used in summer 2002 in fewer than a third of schools visited. Many schools cited the late publication of materials and primary schools' long-term planning as reasons for not using them. In some LEAs, steps were taken to agree an approach across all schools in an area. Where the transition units have been used they are generally

regarded as helpful, although some schools have felt it necessary to amend them to provide greater differentiation of material and expectation. In mathematics, transition units were rarely used, partly because the late distribution in 2002 gave limited time for collaboration. There is very limited use of transition units in science, although some schools are developing common projects themselves, usually investigations that will continue from Year 6 into Year 7.

Intervention to help pupils catch up

33. The organisation and teaching of catch-up programmes in English to help pupils below level 4 on entry have improved; they continue to be less effective in mathematics. With respect to both subjects, not enough is being done by heads of department and at the school level to make sure that the benefits pupils derive from working through the catch-up materials are built on in mainstream lessons.
34. There is little systematic attention to the issue in science programmes and not enough to the teaching of ICT, where differentiation of activities to suit different levels of capability which pupils bring from their experience in primary schools is inadequate.

Assessment

35. Weaknesses in the provision and use of information on entry remain associated with wider inadequacies in secondary schools' practice in assessment, recording and reporting. These inadequacies have persisted over a long period. Assessment for learning, including well-focused use of marking, is not yet well enough established to promote progress systematically. Relatively few schools have a thoroughgoing, rigorous approach. The Strategy is responsible for some improvement, for example in mathematics, but there is a long way to go if practice is to become consistently better across the range of subjects. This issue will be a major focus of the Strategy from spring 2004.

Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum

36. Astute and determined management has led to better attention to developing literacy in subjects other than English, but progress in translating policy into practice is slow in some schools. Weaknesses in reading and writing continue to be a major handicap for too many pupils in their work across the subjects. While intentions to do something about this on a systematic basis are often more clearly evident than before, practical action remains inconsistent.
37. Headway in improving attention to numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is even more limited, and is not making use of the interest often inspired by the initial stimulus provided by the Strategy training and materials.

English

Key findings

- The impact of the Strategy is being felt in almost all English departments visited through improvements in lesson planning, including the use of specific learning objectives. These improvements are leading to greater purposefulness in lessons and providing more challenge for pupils.
- The quality of English teaching has been improved by the Strategy. The quality of teaching was good or very good in two thirds of schools visited and satisfactory in a third, with few unsatisfactory lessons. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are very good overall; features of teaching encouraged by the Strategy motivate boys in particular.
- The Strategy is having an increasingly positive, though gradual, impact on attainment in English in most schools visited. There was an increase of two percentage points in the proportions of pupils gaining level 5 and level 6 in the national test results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2003.
- Improvements in attainment in the schools visited included: better standards in pupils' speaking and listening where well-planned group work is extended to whole-class discussion; more effective skills of inference and interpretation in reading literary and non-literary texts; better grasp of terminology to describe and analyse language; and many pupils writing more confidently in a wider range of genres, with greater awareness of audience and purpose. Improvement in the accuracy of pupils' writing is greatest among higher-attaining pupils and, in some schools, significant problems with the presentation, accuracy and detail of the writing of lower-attaining pupils remain and they form a major barrier to achievement generally.
- The assessment of writing remains weak in too many schools. Close and consistent attention to features of language use is evident in assessment policies and marking practice in only a minority of schools.
- Specific strategies designed to help low-attaining pupils in Year 7 are in place in most schools. Teaching of the literacy progress units is good overall, with well-established routines, pace and challenge. Pupils make progress in lessons using the units, but there is little support for the consolidation and further development of their literacy skills in other subject lessons.
- Headway has been made in the development of literacy across the curriculum but it remains too slow in some schools, with insufficient consistency of approach across subjects.

- The quality of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Strategy remains a concern. The lack of an effectively implemented assessment policy in some schools inhibits schools' evaluation of the impact of the Strategy on attainment.

Points for action

- The progress made on using learning objectives as a basis for planning should be extended to ensure more effective use of assessment, marking and target-setting focused on specific action to improve attainment.
- The marking of written work needs further attention, in particular to ensure that close and consistent attention is given to improving features of language use.
- The progress made by pupils through the literacy units needs to be communicated to teachers in other lessons so that pupils practise and consolidate their skills and understanding.
- More coherent and consistent approaches are needed to develop pupils' literacy across a range of subjects, building on the good practice to be found in some schools.
- Monitoring and evaluation by schools of the Strategy's impact on teaching and attainment need to be improved.

Management

38. The implementation of the English strand is good in three out of ten schools, satisfactory in five out of ten and unsatisfactory in two out of ten. Some schools with high performance have not adopted the Strategy and continue to use their established approaches.
39. In the most effective schools there is committed leadership at senior and department level, based on the rigorous evaluation of current practice, leading to detailed and well-focused planning for improvement. These schools are often building on existing good practice in curriculum development and teaching. Good-quality training and continuing support from consultants have been helpful in most schools.
40. In the schools where implementation is less successful, leadership at senior or departmental level lacks clear direction and sufficient commitment to using the Strategy. Evaluation of the school's current provision and performance is absent or inadequate, and planning lacks focus and clarity. In these schools there is often less good practice on which to build and departments are unused to working collaboratively and to seeking a consistency of approach.

41. Most departments have completed an audit and action plans to implement the Strategy, in most cases helped by LEA consultants. It is less common for schools to review the initial audit, although they are aware of the need to evaluate the early stages of the Strategy and to refine their work accordingly. A factor in the success of planning and review is the provision of time for departments to meet and discuss the Strategy, including the key aspects of the Strategy's programme of training. In too many cases, time is very limited during the school's meeting schedule and the implementation is inhibited.
42. The most effective action plans are based on thorough analysis of patterns of performance, pupils' work, approaches to teaching and schemes of work. They respond specifically to areas of identified weakness and give priority to the impact on teaching and learning. Where planning is less effective, analysis and evaluation do not take sufficient account of pupils' performance and aspects for improvement are not identified. Often, this leads to revision of schemes of work and the adoption of teaching approaches which lack a clear focus on how pupils' attainment will be raised. Lack of clarity in planning contributes to inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
43. Planning is, overall, impressive in many schools. In most cases, schemes of work for Years 7 and 8 have been revised in order to incorporate objectives from the Strategy's Framework for English. Some schools have also revised Year 9 schemes of work. Schemes of work vary considerably; some contain little more than the teaching objectives from the Framework so that teachers are left to plan lessons individually. Others contain detailed lesson plans linked to the objectives, accompanied by recommended materials. In the best schools, there is clear leadership by key staff and shared planning, with a commitment to adopt common approaches.
44. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Strategy remain areas of concern. The absence of an effective assessment policy in some schools and weaknesses in marking limit the evaluation of the impact of the Strategy on pupils' attainment. Too often pupils are unaware of what they need to do to improve. Whilst analysis of assessment data is now more widely seen in schools, there is insufficient use of the data to identify and address particular areas of weakness in pupils' performance, both by departments and class teachers.

Teaching and learning

45. The quality of English teaching has been improved by the Strategy. It is good or very good in almost two thirds and satisfactory in a third of schools visited. Very few unsatisfactory lessons were seen. There is still considerable

inconsistency in some departments where exemplary practice informed by the Strategy co-exists with practice which is much less effective.

46. The implementation of the Strategy is most often seen in the adoption of the recommended structure for lessons. Teachers use learning objectives to inform planning, vary activities and approaches appropriately and match the pace of the work to the needs of the class. Revised schemes of work promote a broader and more balanced curriculum, although teachers often remain concerned about the extent to which they are able to include complete works of fiction or non-fiction within the programme.
47. Clear objectives, varied approaches, interactive teaching and a focus on how language works tend to motivate boys, as well as girls. In general, pupils respond well to group work, although many teachers have yet to realise the full potential of working with guided reading and writing groups, as recommended by the Strategy.
48. In the best lessons, learning objectives are explained to pupils and are used throughout to consolidate their progress; they are re-emphasised in the plenary session. Starter activities are sharply focused and relate to pupils' needs. Increasingly, the starter activity is linked to the main activity of the lesson, providing complementary skills or relevant knowledge. Teachers demonstrate effectively what they require pupils to do and use appropriate materials to help their reading, writing or oral work. In the best lessons, all pupils are encouraged to participate fully and thoughtfully in group work and whole-class discussions. Lessons pose a clear challenge and are conducted at an appropriate pace. Plenary sessions require pupils to show what they have learnt, to apply new skills, and to identify the next steps in their learning.
49. In less effective lessons, learning objectives are unclear or not shared with pupils and are usually no more than a list of tasks to be completed. The timing of activities is unsatisfactory, with starter activities allowed to drift and main activities encroaching on plenary sessions. Whole-class discussion often fails to engage the full range of pupils.
50. There were examples of the effective use of teaching assistants and English as an additional language (EAL) support in lessons, particularly to help individual pupils in the course of group activities. Support in EAL is most effective when it is based on good joint planning and teaching.

Assessment

51. Close and consistent attention to features of language use is evident in assessment policies and marking practice in only a minority of schools. There is a general lack of consistency in marking, which often fails to

identify repeated basic errors or which, having identified them, gives no advice on correction. This is related to the failure to establish literacy targets for pupils and the lack of communication about aspects of literacy that pupils need to practise and consolidate arising from their work on the literacy progress units.

Impact on attainment

52. The Strategy has had a gradually increasing impact on attainment in English in most schools. Improvement in pupils' attainment is evident in a number of respects. Standards in speaking and listening have improved where well-planned group work, including the use of guided reading and writing, is extended to whole-class discussion. Pupils demonstrate more effective skills of inference and interpretation in reading literary and non-literary texts. They have a better grasp of terminology to describe and analyse language. Many pupils now write more confidently in a wider range of genres, with greater awareness of audience and purpose. The Strategy is contributing to improvement in the accuracy of pupils' writing. This improvement is greatest among higher-attaining pupils and, in some schools, significant problems with the presentation, accuracy and detail of the writing of lower-attaining pupils remain and form a major barrier to achievement generally.
53. The Strategy is proving generally helpful to EAL learners. Pupils with EAL, especially those at the early stages of language learning, are helped to make good progress through regular reading activities that improve comprehension skills and increase knowledge and understanding of language. The Strategy also assists these pupils' understanding of grammar and key subject terms. Group work, including guided reading and writing, increases their confidence in speaking and consolidates their language skills. However, use of literacy progress units with EAL learners is not always effective, notably when they are not supported by materials that create a recognisable context for language development.

Intervention to help pupils catch up

54. Intervention to assist pupils to reach the expected standard in English by the end of Year 7 is largely based on the use of the literacy progress units. Around one in five schools is not using the units. Difficulties in timetabling, staffing and accommodation have caused some schools to discontinue their use. Schools' use of these units varies; most withdraw pupils from lessons once or twice per week, sometimes from English lessons and sometimes from other subjects. Difficulties often arise because the length of the literacy session does not match that of subject lessons and pupils consequently miss important parts of the subject lessons to which they return. Few schools now run catch-up sessions outside lesson time.

55. The teaching of the units is undertaken by a variety of staff, including English teachers, specialist teachers of SEN and teaching assistants. Teaching by all of these is good overall, uses well-established routines and has appropriate pace and challenge. Pupils respond enthusiastically and take pride in their achievement. A significant number of schools have trained teaching assistants to teach the units, or are in the process of doing so.
56. In the one in three schools where interventions to improve the performance of low-attaining pupils are organised effectively, there is good liaison between English teachers and staff who focus on SEN and EAL. These schools generally identify those pupils who need particular support at the earliest stage. In the two out of ten schools where intervention strategies are weak, communication is poor and provision for pupils lacks coherence.
57. Pupils make progress in sessions on the literacy progress units but this is not always communicated to, and built on by, class teachers of English and other subjects. There are few systems in place in other lessons to support the skills pupils learn in the units. Marking rarely shows constructive attention to the basic skills emphasised in the units.
58. Most schools are selecting pupils for intervention using the information available from primary schools and their own supplementary testing. In the best examples, pupils are identified to follow particular units according to their individual need. However, in many schools, pupils follow the whole literacy unit programme, whether they need it or not. In some schools, lower-attaining sets follow the units as a substantial part of their English curriculum in Year 7. In a small number of schools there are more pupils who qualify for intervention than the number of places available.
59. Most schools also run Year 9 booster classes, usually targeted at pupils aspiring to level 5, although some run classes for pupils working at a higher level. The recommended approaches and materials are well received and schools often amend them successfully for use with whole classes.
60. Summer schools are not common and those that are run are less exclusively literacy-based than was the case in earlier specially funded programmes. Many combine literacy and numeracy with activities based on building pupils' self-esteem and aiding their induction to secondary school. Their focus is more on increasing confidence and less on consolidating or improving attainment. The few schools which use summer schools do not track pupils' progress in literacy into Year 7 and consequently fail to build on their efforts.

Resources and staffing

61. The majority of English departments are staffed by suitably experienced and qualified teachers. However, in a significant minority, high teacher turnover, non-specialist teaching, long-term absence or the inability to recruit heads of department affect the implementation of the Strategy. These problems are often compounded by the pressure to allocate more experienced teachers to Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Increasingly, schools are unable to recruit suitably qualified specialist teachers of EAL.
62. The careful involvement of the librarian and the use of the library in the development of literacy have significant impact. Implementation of the Strategy is helped where there are well-qualified and enthusiastic library staff who have been involved in relevant training, planning and development. In the best practice, librarians are actively involved in the teaching of the literacy progress units and masterclasses. Good library accommodation, with adequate space for study by classes and individuals, sufficient and attractive book stock, and ready access to other sources of information, help pupils' skills of reading and information retrieval.
63. Lack of access to ICT for the purpose of developing literacy adversely affects the implementation of the Strategy in many schools. The use of ICT helps the drafting of writing and improving presentation, but such use is inconsistent, often because teachers are unable to secure sufficient access to computers. This means that departments are unable to include use of ICT in schemes of work with the confidence that all pupils will benefit.
64. In some classrooms, lack of space prevents teachers using group work. This is even more of a shortcoming in the teaching of drama when there is no access to specialist facilities.

Literacy across the curriculum

65. Progress has been made in developing literacy across the curriculum, but in some schools it remains slow and limited.
66. Development has been most effective where there is clear direction from senior staff and appropriate structures are in place to support the work of co-ordinators. As in previous years, this applies particularly where there is a group of representative staff from subject areas, including SEN, EAL and library specialists, with literacy as its focus. Good progress has been made and initial training has been followed up by consultants or with supplementary training programmes. Requirements on subject teachers to include aspects of literacy in schemes of work and in lesson plans are also helpful. A small number of schools have established weeks during which the whole school focuses on literacy skills.

67. Work on literacy across the curriculum has been less successfully developed where there is little emphasis given to it by senior staff in planning or training. Where co-ordinators have been appointed in these schools, they often lack time to work with other staff and suffer because there are no whole-school structures through which to take forward development. There are usually examples of effective practice by individual teachers and departments, but generally a lack of consistency of approach.
68. In almost all schools teachers are aware of the importance of promoting understanding and accuracy in the use of key subject terms. In many lessons, displays form part of the teacher's focus on learning objectives and link key words with subject knowledge and relevant work produced by pupils. A focus on the significance of individual words is commonly observed in lessons other than English. Teachers regularly offer models of language use to pupils and use varied forms of support, most commonly writing frames, to provide a structure on which pupils can build their work. This helps pupils in reading or discussion tasks and improves the quality of group work. However, such practice is not generally consistent across departments.
69. Work on literacy across the curriculum has been beneficial as a focus for action by teachers of EAL. The Strategy's emphasis on key words and the accurate use of language provides opportunities for them to contribute to planning and teaching. EAL learners have benefited from the increased rigour in lesson planning which gives greater attention to language structure.

Training for school staff

70. Training provided by consultants has been well received. Teachers feel that it was related to their needs and pitched at an appropriate level. Training was particularly effective where consultants followed up with specific activities in school or work with individual teachers. There is sometimes effective collaboration between English consultants and consultants in other strands on providing training and support for literacy across the curriculum, and this helps to achieve consistency of implementation.
71. The major factor which inhibits the impact of training in schools is the limited time available for teachers to pass on advice and materials to their colleagues. Some schools find it difficult to release teachers and the scheduled meetings do not provide enough time to ensure effective dissemination. In some schools this leads to an ad hoc approach to the selection of aspects of the Strategy to implement.

Support from LEA consultants

72. Almost all teachers receiving training and support from LEA consultants were positive about their value. They felt it was at an appropriate level and the materials were relevant and useful. Consultants were often especially effective where they assisted in the monitoring of action plans. The extent to which consultants taught demonstration lessons varied greatly, usually in relation to the time allocated to a particular school.
73. In general, consultants manage their time effectively, have clear objectives in their contact with schools, and provide valuable encouragement and focus for key staff. Consultants provide specific input to schools in accord with the needs identified in action plans. In the best examples, they are able to follow this up with training for individual teachers and departments and to model good teaching. Well-focused observation of teaching and support for newly qualified teachers and trainees assist in developing the impact of the Strategy on teaching. LEA consultants have given different levels of support to schools according to the criteria for intervention used by the Strategy. In some cases this has meant that higher-achieving schools have not had the stimulus and support they needed to begin to review their practice and to identify what in the Strategy is relevant for them.

Mathematics

Key findings

- The impact of the Strategy is good overall in over half the schools visited. Among the schools involved since the beginning of the pilot phase, most have improved their implementation of the Strategy considerably.
- The Strategy has led to improvements in the planning of teaching, with a greater focus on learning objectives, the structure of lessons and teachers' use of questioning. The use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics remains limited.
- In the national Key Stage 3 tests in 2003, there was a significant increase in the proportions of pupils gaining level 5 and level 6. In many of the schools visited, pupils are working more positively on mathematics. The Strategy is enhancing pupils' attainment, rather more so in the case of higher-attaining than lower-attaining pupils. Improvements in pupils' mental skills of calculation are being maintained, so that they are willing to tackle problems, even when unfamiliar ideas are introduced, and undertake difficult arithmetical sums mentally.
- Assessment systems are improving overall, but the use of formative assessment to adjust work in order to attend to pupils' errors and misconceptions remains underdeveloped.
- The organisation and teaching of catch-up programmes continue to be weak. Under half the pupils involved progress from level 3 to level 4 during Year 7.
- In most schools, development in the use of numeracy across the curriculum has been limited.
- The implementation of the Strategy continues to be hindered in some schools by problems of recruiting and retaining specialist teachers of mathematics. Among the schools visited, staffing was unsatisfactory in three schools in ten. Classes of lower-attaining pupils are more likely to be taught by non-specialist teachers than others.
- Opportunities for training, particularly those focusing directly on teaching and learning, have been valued by teachers. Consultants have worked closely with teachers on the planning and teaching of specific topics. Where schools have been able to make more time available for teachers to plan together, this has proved beneficial.

Points for action

- The planning and organisation of catch-up programmes for pupils working at level 3 on entry to the key stage need to be improved, and the use of the *Springboard* materials in schools needs to be subject to closer scrutiny.
- More needs to be done to develop teachers' confidence in using ICT in mathematics.
- Schools should evaluate the effectiveness of their use of transition units in aiding the continuity of work between Year 6 and 7.
- Further steps are needed to develop deeper understanding of mathematics among teachers of Key Stage 3 classes, particularly those who are not specialists.
- Work is needed to consolidate and extend early developments on numeracy across the curriculum.

Management

74. There is a high level of commitment by schools to the Strategy, which is continuing to have a positive impact on the planning and teaching of mathematics. This is reflected in the pilot schools visited, where the Strategy is bringing about a more energetic and systematic approach in Key Stage 3.
75. The Framework is seen as a key document for planning the curriculum. Training and the work of consultants have been valued. Expectations have been raised and there have been productive changes in teaching, such as using a three-part lesson based on learning objectives. The Strategy has often been combined with other initiatives to improve teaching and learning. The schools have successfully engaged most pupils, both boys and girls, in working more positively on mathematics, although they have been less successful in enabling pupils who are low attaining to make sufficient progress.
76. Effective leadership by senior managers and heads of department, combined with the quality of mathematics staffing, are keys to success in implementing the Strategy. Only a third of schools have strengths in all three areas. In one third of schools, there are important weaknesses in at least one of the areas.
77. Leadership of the Strategy by the senior management team is good or better in half the schools. Good leadership by senior managers is based on close familiarity with the Strategy and an ability to work effectively alongside heads of department in improving teaching, learning and attainment. It ensures that effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate practice and to promote and support training. Leadership in

implementing the Strategy by heads of department is good or better in one third of schools, but still unsatisfactory in a quarter of schools. In the best practice, heads of department preside over careful curriculum review, productive liaison with primary schools, effective training, efficient use of resources and, as a result, secure good progress towards targets.

Teaching and learning

78. The impact on teaching is good or better in four schools in ten, and unsatisfactory in just under one in five, similar to the proportions reported last year. Teaching is good or better in more than half the lessons. The quality of teaching and learning is better in Years 7 and 9 than in Year 8.
79. The influence of the Strategy on curriculum planning has been beneficial where departments have revised their existing schemes of work to take account of the Framework and make best use of the available resources. Their schemes helpfully incorporate guidance on enquiry-led teaching, the use of ICT, using and applying mathematics, and differentiation. The proportion of schools with unsatisfactory curriculum planning has fallen from last year.
80. Almost half the schools visited have adopted the sample medium-term plans issued by the Strategy too uncritically, without developing sufficient links to resources such as textbooks and computer software. This has caused difficulties. Sometimes the pace and change of topics are too fast for pupils to absorb ideas and some units are allocated insufficient time to cover the intended range of objectives. Less experienced and less confident teachers have struggled to find suitable materials to teach some units of work.
81. Teachers continue to use starter activities, which are sometimes well linked to the main activity. Their use has improved pupils' mental skills and recall of basic arithmetical facts. In the best practice, these activities are also used as a means of assessing pupils' understanding of specific mathematical concepts. In a third of schools, teaching of the use and application of mathematical ideas is evident. Interactive teaching and questioning techniques have improved. However, in some schools, pupils are over-dependent on teachers and there is insufficient emphasis on using independent, collaborative and oral work to encourage pupils to grapple with ideas. This restricts their skills in presenting extended pieces of work.
82. In the better practice, teachers use the recommended lesson structure in a flexible way, seeing it as a useful approach rather than a binding requirement. Class discussions and plenary sessions are included when they have a clear purpose, often in the middle of a lesson, and sufficient time is left for pupils to work individually and in groups.

83. Teachers are making more systematic efforts to include plenary sessions, but this remains an area for further development. In the best cases, teachers use a plenary at appropriate points during a series of lessons to review progress and check on pupils' understanding.
84. In unsatisfactory lessons, teachers use a three-part lesson structure without thinking through the purpose of its various parts; occasionally, this lack of planning leads to poor behaviour. Unsatisfactory lessons are characterised by insufficient opportunities for pupils to be involved actively and weaknesses in classroom management. Skills of independent working and use of language to develop ideas are not well promoted.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is generally better in higher-attaining classes, where it is good or better in two thirds of lessons. Very little unsatisfactory teaching or learning occurs in higher-attaining classes. For middle- and lower-attaining classes, teaching is good in fewer than half of lessons, and learning is good in only two lessons in five. In these groups, teaching is unsatisfactory in one in eight lessons. This is often because insufficient attention is paid to the learning needs of pupils, with lessons having too many objectives or being inappropriately paced. Lower-attaining groups are more likely to be taught by non-specialists.

Assessment

86. Where assessment is good, there are systems in place for regular monitoring of pupils' performance, with action taken to help them improve. Assessment systems are improving overall, with technology being increasingly used to enable more systematic recording of progress. The use of mini-whiteboards has helped to improve informal assessment. In some schools, specific curricular targets are routinely set for individual pupils, and these are motivating.
87. However, the use of formative assessment to adjust work according to pupils' errors and misconceptions remains relatively weak. Experienced teachers adapt lessons when the feedback indicates a problem, whilst non-specialists sometimes miss the signs that point to pupils being confused.
88. Some schools use Key Stage 3 tests for internal assessment. Sometimes the marks from a short test are used to derive finely graded levels, which is inappropriate. In the better practice, there is emphasis on developing and securing sound understanding by pupils of important concepts at each level and assessment is based on key objectives.

Impact on attainment

89. The impact on attainment is good or better in half the schools and unsatisfactory in a third. Pupils' understanding of mental methods and skills are being maintained. They are willing to tackle problems, even when unfamiliar ideas are introduced, and undertake difficult arithmetical sums mentally, using short-cuts or known facts. However, many pupils find aspects of written explanation and proof challenging.
90. In the national Key Stage 3 tests, 71% of pupils attained level 5 in 2003. This represents an increase of four percentage points on the previous year. The proportion of pupils gaining level 6 was 49%, an increase of four percentage points, significantly higher than the increase for English or science.
91. Evidence from the visits indicates that use of the Strategy is benefiting higher-attaining pupils more than lower-attaining pupils. The national progress tests in mathematics are now being used at the end of Year 7 in under a third of schools. Pass rates have improved but remain low, with high numbers of eligible pupils (up to a quarter) not taking the test. Analysis of Key Stage 3 test results shows that the progress made over the three years of the key stage by pupils starting Year 7 at level 3 is slow. It also shows that about one sixth of pupils achieving level 4 at Key Stage 2 make no or very limited progress over the key stage.
92. Teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 involves a judgement on pupils' levels in relation to each attainment target. In the few schools visited where the full range of information was available, pupils' attainment on the use and application of mathematical ideas was usually lower than for other attainment targets. Lower-attaining pupils also performed less well on number and algebra.

Transition from primary to secondary school

93. Progression from the primary to secondary phase is good or better in half the schools and unsatisfactory in one in six. Schools are increasingly using Key Stage 2 data for grouping pupils and more schools are using pupils' raw scores. In some schools, the data still arrive too late to be used.
94. Difficulties remain with the use of transition units, partly because there has been limited time for collaboration between primary and secondary schools. Where secondary schools have many feeder primary schools, it is difficult to ensure that all pupils complete the unit in the primary school.

Intervention to help pupils catch up

95. The planning and organisation of catch-up programmes are good in a quarter of schools but less than satisfactory in a quarter of schools. The teaching in these programmes is good or better in a quarter of schools and unsatisfactory or poor in a third.
96. The ideas in the catch-up materials provided for lessons have been found useful, but some lessons contain more material than can realistically be covered. A significant number of schools provide a differentiated scheme of work that aims to assess pupils' needs carefully and to improve their conceptual understanding. Some plans do not take enough account of the speed at which pupils assimilate ideas, so that the expected pace is often too fast. They do not sufficiently recognise that pupils who have achieved level 3 at Key Stage 2 often lack confidence and remain confused about aspects of lower-level material. For such pupils, the focus on harder topics and the pressure to achieve level 4 quickly can be unhelpful.
97. Systematic efforts are made in some schools to enable pupils who did not achieve level 4 at Key Stage 2 to consolidate important concepts at levels 3–5 in Years 7 and 8 and thus to help them achieve level 5 in Year 9, rather than level 4 by the end of Year 7. In the better approaches, pupils are taught by experienced and effective teachers, sometimes with extra revision lessons planned or help provided by mentors. This recognises that some pupils may make slow progress at first while misconceptions and gaps are addressed.
98. A minority of schools use the catch-up materials regularly, mainly as worksheets, and a few use the materials occasionally or are planning to use the intervention packs. Booster materials are used for revision in Year 9 and specific classes are run for Year 9 pupils in many schools. A few schools have decided to discontinue them partly because they believe they have limited value in laying secure foundations for pupils' future understanding.

Resources and staffing

99. The use of resources is good or better in four in ten schools, and unsatisfactory in a fifth. Accommodation for mathematics teaching is good or better in over a third of schools and unsatisfactory in a fifth.
100. The use of ICT in teaching mathematics remains limited, with problems of access in two fifths of schools. There are some examples of good use, including the use of interactive whiteboards, but the potential of such facilities to explore ideas has yet to be fully exploited.

101. Staffing is good or better in three schools in eight, and unsatisfactory in three schools in ten, reflecting an over-reliance on teachers without specialist background. In a few schools, there have been considerable turnover of staff and problems of recruitment and retention. In some cases these problems severely affect the quality of teaching. The high proportion of teachers without specialist background in mathematics poses a significant challenge in terms of training and other support in schools.

Numeracy across the curriculum

102. After the initial enthusiasm generated by training in numeracy across the curriculum, most schools have made limited progress. In two thirds of schools it has been insufficient to make any real difference to pupils' numeracy capability.
103. Some schools have developed a sensible policy, but few have taken the next step of ensuring that opportunities are highlighted in individual schemes of work and are part of a common approach. In a few schools there is greater co-ordination of the development of numeracy across the curriculum, with a focus on selected subject areas, including science or physical education, to develop useful common approaches.

Training for school staff

104. During the year, the Strategy has produced an extensive range of materials, including lesson plans. Teachers have found the ideas in the materials interesting and challenging.
105. The impact of training is good or better in four in ten schools, but unsatisfactory in a quarter. Schools welcome the increased flexibility they have had in selecting training appropriate to their needs. They particularly value the opportunities for discussing and sharing teaching approaches. Professional development has been most effective where teachers have been released to attend training, with time allocated for the department to discuss teaching approaches and revise schemes of work.
106. The training materials on data-handling have been well received and the extensive range of data made available on CD-ROM has been used in a quarter of schools. Other materials, such as those on geometry and multiplicative relationships, have yet to be incorporated into schemes of work, though some of the examples of visual imagery have featured in starter activities. The geometry unit has a strong focus on proof; most teachers need more time to study and absorb the ideas.

Support from LEA consultants

107. The work of consultants has focused on following national priorities and working with under-performing schools. This has caused some disquiet in a few higher-attaining schools because there has been no consultant able to provide guidance on aspects such as the use of ICT. There has been a high turnover of consultants, with some returning to a position in a school, occasionally at a senior level.
108. The impact of the consultants is good or better in four schools in ten of those visited. Almost all the consultants continue to provide at least satisfactory, and often good, support for selected schools. In one school where the work is highly rated, the consultant moved on, after lesson observation and review, to the joint planning and teaching of various topics with some of the weaker teachers in the department.

Science

Key findings

- The Strategy is having beneficial effects on curriculum planning and teaching in science and its emphasis on audit and action planning has led to a significant improvement in departments' evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses.
- The Strategy is contributing to a rise in standards through the improvements in planning and teaching it is bringing about. The proportion gaining level 5 in the national Key Stage 3 tests in 2003 increased slightly, but there was a much greater increase in the proportion reaching level 6.
- The Strategy has inspired the preparation of new, well-structured and effective schemes of work in most schools. Learning objectives are now shared more frequently with the pupils so that they have a clearer understanding of the purpose of the lesson.
- The use of Key Stage 2 data by secondary schools has improved. Key Stage 3 teachers have benefited from visits to partner primary schools, although curriculum planning is still not taking enough account of the different experiences pupils bring with them from their primary schools. There is limited use of specific intervention strategies in science to raise the attainment of pupils who join Year 7 below level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests.
- The use of assessment has improved, at both departmental and individual pupil level. The design of tests is better and the marking of them is more closely moderated to ensure consistency. Assessment is being increasingly used more successfully to guide pupils on how to improve their work, although more effective use of target-setting for individual pupils is needed.
- The range and quality of pupils' writing in science remain too limited.
- Pupils are still not making the progress they could in scientific enquiry. The investigation planning system provided by the Strategy is starting to be used by teachers in some schools to improve pupils' skills. There is only limited progress in planning for the development of key ideas of science and in most lessons there is still insufficient emphasis on contemporary science.
- There are continued problems in the release of staff to attend the training and in providing sufficient time for subsequent in-school dissemination. However, some departments have increased the frequency of their training meetings.

Points for action

- Progression in the development of skills in scientific enquiry needs to be improved. Schools need to take more account of the experience of investigative work pupils have had in their primary schools and introduce a broader range of investigative approaches through the key stage.
- Greater consideration of individual learning needs is required to ensure appropriate learning experiences for all pupils.
- More opportunities should be planned into lessons in order to improve the range and quality of pupils' writing in science.
- Improved use of ideas from contemporary science is needed to enhance the relevance of science to pupils.

Management

109. Successful implementation of the Strategy is heavily dependent on the quality of departmental management.
110. Science departments' use of the audit was highlighted as a weakness in last year's report. There has been good progress in this respect. In four out of five schools the head of department had ensured that the audit was completed effectively. The most successful practice ensured that individual audits were completed by all members of the team and these informed departmental audits. All schools with a complete audit had subsequently produced action plans. However, the quality of these varies. In three out of ten schools, where the process of identifying needs was very good, action plans identify appropriate priorities for the department and are linked to the overall school action plan. The plans provide a good platform for the further development. In a minority of schools, the process was enhanced by valuable supplementary evidence from analysis of assessment data and lesson observations.
111. In some schools, action planning is supplemented by 'contracts' agreed with LEA consultants. These are often very useful, incorporating outcomes of the audit and being specific about what actions are to be taken, when and by whom. Where action plans are well developed and embedded in the department's ongoing work, they are usually complemented by a programme of monitoring to ensure the consistency of teaching approaches.
112. In the few schools visited where departmental leadership is weak, the audit was poorly executed and the action plan was less effective. Some schools did not start the audit until well into the school year and so the implementation of the Strategy has been slow and inconsistent. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning and the

curriculum is fragmented as a result of a lack of clear direction. There is no consensus about what constitutes good teaching and individual lesson planning, particularly in the short term, is weak. Consistency in lesson quality is not monitored adequately in order to address this problem. In a very few instances, the progress made is limited by complacency among some members of the department, a problem compounded where departmental managers do not acknowledge that the quality of teaching needs to be improved.

Teaching and learning

- I 13. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in eight out of ten lessons and good or better in six out of ten lessons. It was unsatisfactory in one fifth of lessons observed.
- I 14. A significant improvement was seen in the overall planning of teaching through the development of schemes of work for Key Stage 3. Many schools are using or making reference to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) materials, either alongside or instead of their existing schemes of work.
- I 15. Individual lesson planning has improved in over half of the schools. The recommended three-part lesson structure is used in nearly all schools and pupils take part actively in all aspects of the lesson. Lessons start promptly with good use of starter activities and a brisk pace is maintained throughout. Clear learning objectives are spelled out and form the basis of learning and assessment. Teachers are doing more to build on pupils' prior experience, most often through questioning. Plenary sessions are used where appropriate.
- I 16. In lessons where the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory, learning objectives were either not shared with the pupils or did not in fact form the foundation for the lesson. In a few lessons, poor behaviour restricted the extent of learning for the majority of the pupils.
- I 17. While many schools are beginning to put into practice the methods promoted by the Strategy, in some cases the emphasis needs to shift from simply changing the way teachers manage lessons to directly improving pupils' learning. There is still scope in many schools for more active learning by all pupils. Associated with this is the need to focus on specific issues about learning in science, as opposed to features of learning generally.
- I 18. The quality of pupils' work is satisfactory or better in nearly eight out of ten lessons and good in a third of schools. It mostly shows appropriate progression in knowledge and concepts. A minority of schools are encouraging pupils to write at length and in their own words when they

are responding to questions or explaining observations or predictions and giving experimental accounts. However, in the fifth of schools where pupils' work is unsatisfactory, there is still too much use of copied notes and other approaches that give pupils little opportunity to write freely. In this respect the position has not improved significantly since last year's report.

119. In over half of the schools there is a good balance of theoretical and investigative work, although scientific enquiry is not being systematically developed.

Assessment

120. The use of Key Stage 2 data by secondary schools has improved. They are used to good effect in two thirds of the schools and satisfactorily in the rest. In many schools, Key Stage 2 data, often supported by other test data, are used to group pupils into ability sets and, sometimes, to aid the process of target-setting. However, the extent and quality of target-setting are still too variable, with too many schools not setting or regularly monitoring individual, class or year group targets. Some interesting examples of the developing use of self-assessment sheets for pupils were found in a few schools.
121. In nearly all schools, teachers are tackling common scientific misconceptions, usually through the process of marking work. Sometimes, where pupils have experienced problems with a particular concept, this is not addressed in subsequent lessons. Although there has been some progress made, the comparative lack of attention given to planning for the development of key ideas of science, scientific enquiry and the use of contemporary science continues to be an issue that needs action, as raised in last year's report.
122. The use of assessment at both departmental and individual pupil level has improved, although the quality of marking and feedback to pupils remains too variable in a significant minority of schools. Pupils are tested regularly and the results increasingly used diagnostically. The development of testing instruments is improving, with more schools designing and using their own tests. Where practice is good, there is close moderation of the outcomes across the department to ensure comparability of results.

Impact on attainment

123. Overall, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 3 has risen. Attainment in the national tests in 2003 has improved slightly, with 68% of pupils reaching level 5. There is a much greater improvement in the numbers of pupils reaching level 6, with an increase of seven percentage points. While these changes cannot be attributed wholly to the Strategy, it is contributing significantly to them through the improvements in curriculum planning and teaching it is sponsoring.

Transition from primary to secondary school

124. Contact with primary schools is satisfactory or better in three quarters of schools, and good in one school in four. Many science departments have key staff managing the transition arrangements and, as a result, they have greater awareness of the content of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. However, the schools are less knowledgeable about the teaching and learning styles used in primary schools or about pupils' previous experiences in scientific enquiry.
125. The majority of schools organise opportunities for pupils to experience secondary science through a range of activities. These arrangements are beginning to go beyond the traditional 'taster days' and there is much closer liaison between the primary and secondary teachers. In some schools there is also extra provision made for gifted and talented pupils from local primary schools to work on special projects using secondary school science facilities.

Intervention to help pupils catch up

126. There is limited use of specific intervention strategies in science to raise the attainment of pupils who join Year 7 without having achieved level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests. The best departments regularly provide revision classes and extra help for underachieving pupils. This usually has a positive effect on standards reached by the pupils in the Year 9 tests.
127. The science booster materials prepared by the Strategy were initially available to schools early in 2002, with a second set published later in that year. Some departments have made good use of them. In many cases it took a long time for departments to become aware of them and integrate them into their planning and revision programmes. Where schools are making use of the units, practice varies widely. In some schools the units are used in their entirety, as additional sessions with small groups of targeted pupils whose predicted attainment in the Year 9 tests is just below the expected standard. These sessions often take place outside normal school hours or in school holidays. In other schools, the material has been used as the basis for developing differentiated revision sessions that are used with all pupils as part of the normal programme of preparation for the tests.

Resources and staffing

128. Staffing problems continue to hinder the implementation of the Strategy. Where there are frequent changes of staff, continuity is hard to achieve and the implementation of the Strategy lacks consistency across the department. Changes in departmental leadership can take some time to

produce benefits. Inexperienced new teachers are, however, helped by the detailed and structured schemes of work now prepared by most departments.

Training for school staff

129. The quality of training and support was good or better in over three quarters of schools. There is often good involvement of both the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator and the senior management team in supporting departments and effective integration of whole-school strategies are effectively integrated into the work of the department. Dissemination of the ideas from the Strategy is part of the working life of the team and there is clear vision and direction. The science department also benefits from close working and support from colleagues in other strands. For example, literacy co-ordinators help the science department to recognise how it can contribute constructively and effectively to the development of the language skills of the pupils.
130. Three quarters of schools use the individual and departmental audits to identify and prioritise training opportunities. However, the majority of schools report problems with releasing staff to attend external training provided by the Strategy.
131. Last year's report highlighted the need for subject leaders to adopt a more systematic approach to dissemination, to ensure that successful approaches are incorporated into schemes of work. Good practice in this area continues to depend on appropriate allocation of time to ensure adequate dissemination of the training to all members of the department. Most science departments have satisfactory procedures for disseminating training, but some struggle to implement the Strategy effectively, particularly its more complex ideas, because they have limited time for meetings and support. In the schools – fewer than one in ten – where departmental leadership has made limited or no progress in implementing the Strategy, staff have little understanding of the potential of the training offered by the Strategy to develop their practice.
132. In the very few schools where the quality of support by the senior management is poor, this is impeding the progress departments make in introducing the Strategy. Teachers are unaware of good practice in the school and there is no culture of sharing experiences between teachers in different strands of the Strategy.

Support from LEA consultants

133. The support provided by LEA consultants is satisfactory or better in over three quarters of schools. They have been particularly effective in helping to develop action plans following an audit and in working with teachers to address some of the key issues arising out of the training. Relationships between consultants and schools are good and the consultants' support is valued by both departments and individual teachers. Consultants usually maintain regular contact with their allocated schools and their interventions are seen as giving useful support to departmental priorities. They are particularly effective when working alongside teachers in their classrooms, modelling good practice.
134. A very small number of LEAs have been slow to initiate an adequate development programme for the science strand of the Strategy and some are experiencing difficulties in recruiting consultants. Schools in these LEAs tend to be making limited progress in implementation of the Strategy.
135. Some schools are not aware of the procedures used by their LEAs to allocate support, and some are not clear how to make best use of their allocated consultant time and other resources.

Foundation subjects

Key findings

- Nearly three out of five schools have satisfactory or better arrangements for implementing the Strategy and are developing links with other initiatives for improvement, but a significant minority has yet to focus the use of the Strategy to raise standards.
- The quality of teaching seen in the schools visited was good or very good in nearly seven out of ten schools.
- In most schools there is little or no influence of the Strategy evident as yet on pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. In the classes seen in Year 7 and 8, the quality of pupils' work, particularly that of boys, is improving as pupils gain greater exposure to the Strategy. Their learning skills are developing, notably in oral work, research and collaborative working. This is leading to increased understanding and subject knowledge. Lack of adequate assessment systems means that many schools are not in a position to judge progress, and the contribution to it by the Strategy, for themselves.
- Overall, the quality of audits and action plans is unsatisfactory, although it improved somewhat over the year. Audits have been completed in only two thirds of schools and action plans have only been completed in about half the schools. Even in schools with reasonable systems of monitoring, little thought has been given to evaluating the impact of the Strategy.
- Schools do not make sufficient use of bridging units and other ways of linking with primary schools to ensure continuity of experience.
- In many schools, assessment in the foundation subjects is not well established and marking of written work does not do enough to promote improvement.
- LEA training programmes have been well received by two out of three schools. In a third of schools, the LEA consultants' subject expertise is insufficient or their deployment is not effective. It is often unclear why schools have been chosen for additional support and little thought has been given to what will happen when that support is withdrawn.

Points for action

- LEAs should ensure that training and the support provided by consultants are sufficient, consistent and based on a clear rationale. The rationale should take account of the particular needs of schools, with a focus on areas of underperformance.
- School managers should ensure that appropriate time and resources are available to complete and review audits and action plans so that they are

founded on an appropriate range of evidence and establish well-focused points for action.

- Schools should improve the rigour and thoroughness of their arrangements for assessing pupils' progress in the foundation subjects.
- Schools need to develop effective ways of disseminating training, spreading good practice and evaluating development work in order to extend and sustain improvements across the foundation subjects.

Introduction

- I36. The national implementation of the foundation subjects strand began in autumn 2002. Schools that did not receive the additional support are scheduled to receive it in subsequent years. From the outset all schools were entitled to receive further optional training from their LEAs. In the first year schools were expected to select two foundation subject departments to receive training and support from an LEA consultant. One of these was to be a strong department, chosen for its ability to spread good practice, and the other would be an under-performing department that would benefit from the Strategy's focus on improving standards of teaching and learning.

Management

- I37. The management of the Strategy is satisfactory in the majority of schools but unsatisfactory in two in five. These schools have generally not made the foundation subjects strand of the Strategy a priority. Insufficient time and resources have been set aside, links to school improvement planning are weak and arrangements for disseminating training are inadequate.
- I38. Leadership and support from senior managers and the enthusiasm and drive of heads of departments are crucial to the success of the Strategy in the way they signal the school's commitment and provide the necessary support, time and resources.
- I39. Most schools selected two foundation subjects on which to focus, in line with the guidance from the Strategy, although some relied upon heads of departments to volunteer. A significant minority of schools tried, with limited success, to introduce the Strategy across all the foundation subjects at once.
- I40. Almost all the schools have established a Key Stage 3 Strategy management group, which acts as a vital link between senior and middle management. Where this management group works actively to ensure a co-ordinated approach between the various strands of the Strategy, this can bring particular benefits to the foundation subjects strand.

141. The best management practice is found in schools where the senior staff understand the underlying principles of the Strategy, participate actively in meetings to promote it and, through well-defined line management, are available to give practical support. In these schools, implementation is identified within whole-school improvement planning and the annual review cycle. Careful consideration has been given to the choice of departments and to ensuring consistent development and the evaluation of progress. The schools have a definite approach to disseminating the training to those members of staff who have not attended the LEA programme.
142. While the quality of departmental audits still varies considerably, it improved over the year and, by the end of it, audits were satisfactorily completed in two thirds of schools. Where the audit is well done, assessment data are used to inform the process, all members of the department are involved, adequate time and resources are set aside, and good use is made of LEA consultants and senior staff in the school.
143. Overall, action plans are unsatisfactory. In more than half the schools, they have not been completed at all. A minority of plans are clearly based on the audit and set clear priorities for improvement, associated with measurable targets. However, the points for action often lack detail and rigour, bear little relation to the priorities identified in the audit and do not specify criteria for judging success.
144. The monitoring of the implementation of the strand is generally satisfactory. Nearly half the schools have incorporated this within their review cycle and heads of department monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, even in the schools with sound methods of monitoring, evaluation is not thorough or precise enough to enable the school to assess the impact of the Strategy on teaching and pupils' attainment.

Teaching and learning

145. The quality of teaching is good or very good in nearly seven out of ten lessons and is rarely unsatisfactory. Departments have begun to redraft their schemes of work to incorporate the Strategy's approaches and identifying opportunities for cross-curricular working, for example through the use of ICT to develop pupils' research skills. The best lesson plans show the benefit of this work. They are detailed, appropriately differentiated and draw upon a range of teaching approaches and resources.
146. In the majority of lessons, pupils are challenged suitably and teachers have high expectations made of them, with an explicit focus on raising attainment. At the start of the lesson, teachers provide pupils with a clear statement of lesson objectives and remind them about their targets for improvement. These lessons have a clear structure and progress at a pace

that is swift yet leaves sufficient time for reflection. Pupils' attention is caught by fast-paced and engaging starter activities; in the best lessons, these are linked to the main part of the lesson and referred to in the plenary. The main section includes a variety of activities, some individual and some collaborative.

147. Teachers are demonstrating a growing awareness of literacy across the curriculum, for example in their careful attention to keywords and to the use of extended writing, though this needs to be developed a good deal further.
148. Good teaching encourages pupils to develop their research skills, formulate a hypothesis and share their findings with one another before giving their feedback, either orally or in writing. Skilful questioning helps to develop higher-order thinking skills and encourages pupils to re-evaluate their interpretations and thereby become more confident in their judgements. Considerable emphasis is placed on the skills of listening to and learning from one other, and pupils are also encouraged to assess their own progress and to identify areas for improvement.
149. Pupils respond very well to these approaches. They enjoy the varied approaches used and the three-part lesson structure. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, like the structured lessons, the opportunities provided by starter activities, and the emphasis on collaborative working and oral feedback. The increased use of ICT and writing frames also help their learning.
150. In a small minority of lessons, the sequencing of activities is poor, differentiation and assessment are weak and the pace is inappropriate, with insufficient time left for the plenary. In these lessons, pupils' attitudes are often unsatisfactory. Pupils lose interest because teaching lacks variety and they have insufficient opportunities to interact. They then find concentration difficult and fail to follow instructions or to work collaboratively.

Assessment

151. In the majority of subject departments involved in the foundation subjects strand, the use of assessment for learning is not well established. The marking of written work is insufficiently focused to promote improvement.
152. Weaknesses in assessment in the foundation subjects contribute to the fact that only three in ten schools are able to call on objective evidence to measure pupils' progress in this strand. They also find it difficult to distinguish the impact of the Strategy from those initiatives to improve teaching and learning that predate it.

Impact on attainment

153. Most schools are focusing their work in the strand on Year 7, and expect that the effects of the Strategy will work through to Year 8 and 9 in due course.
154. HMI judged that one in three schools has yet to use the Strategy effectively as a means of raising standards.
155. In most schools there is little or no influence evident as yet on pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. However, in the classes seen in Year 7 and 8, the quality of pupils' work, particularly that of boys, is improving as pupils have greater exposure to the Strategy. Their learning skills are developing, notably in oral work, research and collaborative working. This is leading to increased understanding and subject knowledge. When soundly based, teacher assessments indicated that both boys and girls of all abilities are making progress in their skills and subject knowledge. Their teachers believe that they are more positive, better motivated, more reflective and self-evaluative than hitherto. Pupils agree that they have made substantial progress during Year 7, and know the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve.
156. Lower-attaining pupils are making good progress in schools where use is made of the complementary materials for pupils with SEN, and there is a well-developed approach to literacy, including effective teaching and integration of a catch-up programme. However, in many schools the link between what goes on in intervention programmes and in mainstream classes in foundation subjects is weak.

Transition from primary to secondary school

157. Departments do not make enough use of links with primary schools; including bridging units, to ensure curriculum continuity. This means that there is often an overlap between what pupils have studied in Year 6 and what they do in Year 7, which slows their progress.

Training for school staff

158. LEA training of key staff and the optional training based on the foundation subjects' folder have been well received by two thirds of schools and the distribution of the 'key messages' leaflets has helped dissemination. This central training is made available to schools at different times in the year; some schools did not start their training until spring 2003. Schools that received it early are in a better position to implement the strand and make progress than those that received their training later. One in five schools has failed to send the most appropriate staff on the training programme either because staffing difficulties impose limits on the time staff can spend

out of school or because senior management has only a vague grasp of the strand and what their involvement would entail.

159. After what was sometimes initial scepticism, the Strategy has generally been welcomed by foundation subject teachers. They regard it as addressing important issues in the classroom. In those schools – often those in which standards of work are lower than elsewhere – where staff are less committed to the Strategy, it has had little impact on pupils' attitudes and attainment.
160. Arrangements for disseminating the training to teachers within schools are unsatisfactory in half of schools. Where arrangements are sound, senior managers work with the staff development co-ordinator to incorporate the dissemination of the key messages within their professional development programme. These schools tend to be the ones with a long-term focus on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. They set aside appropriate time and resources and use staff training days and working parties to develop teaching or the curriculum. Some schools also produce their own internal bulletins to highlight key messages and spread good practice.
161. Some heads of departments find it difficult to adapt the generic skills training programme to their subject areas and to disseminate the training within the department, which can comprise large numbers of part-time staff or those with whole-school responsibilities. While the situation is improving, three in five schools expect this to be done in departmental meeting time which is insufficient for the task.

Support from LEA consultants

162. Overall, LEA consultants provide satisfactory or better support for schools. In general, their previous experience and their training in the Strategy equip them well for the role. They make good use of the additional training materials that are being developed. The consultant network meetings are a valuable means of disseminating good practice.
163. Some LEAs have delayed their launch of the strand and consultant support has not been made as intended, with some schools waiting for additional support to arrive before focusing on the Strategy. One in three LEAs has appointed one rather than two consultants.
164. Support for schools is satisfactory in two thirds of LEAs. Support is most effective where arrangements are formalised in a written agreement. Good support extends beyond training to helping with audits and action plans, observing and demonstrating lessons, and making links with other schools. Consultants can also play an important role in monitoring the Strategy in schools.

165. Weaknesses in LEA support arise from a number of factors, including: lack of clarity in the allocation of support to schools; failure to take account of the needs of individual schools; uneven attention to the departments involved within the school; and inadequate match of consultant expertise to subject needs. Attention given to audits and action plans has sometimes been superficial, whether because of the consultant's limited expertise in the subject field or because of insufficient time. Poor line management, including weak monitoring, in one in five LEAs has caused some consultants to move on, disrupting the service to schools.

Information and communication technology

Key findings

- The ICT strand of the Strategy has had a significant impact on school planning for the development of ICT and has helped an increasing number of ICT departments to complete an effective audit and action plan.
- The Strategy has encouraged more schools to allocate discrete curriculum time for ICT in Key Stage 3, although a few schools still do not allocate sufficient time to cover the Key Stage 3 programme of study. In particular, the coverage and assessment of modelling, data-handling and control are often limited.
- Teachers have benefited from good-quality training focused on improving pupils' ICT capability, although the dissemination of training to all staff, and particularly non-specialists, is often inefficient. The Strategy has encouraged more teachers to make lesson aims explicit and improve the pace of learning.
- The impact on pupils' attainment is difficult to gauge at this early stage. In the schools visited, pupils often produce good standards of work, showing skill in using presentational and word-processing software and using a variety of other applications. However, current standards of work can vary from good to unsatisfactory, even within the same school, and pupils' folders often show insufficient capability across the range of the programme of study.
- Pupils with SEN are generally not well supported. Adapting materials and devising other ways of supporting pupils with SEN remain significant challenges for teachers.
- The transfer of information from primary to secondary schools remains problematic. Formative assessment throughout the key stage is frequently cursory and inconsistent, and summative assessment at the end of Year 9 is often insecure.
- Liaison with other subject strands is embryonic in most schools.

Points for action

- Many schools need to plan more effectively to ensure that all staff are adequately prepared to implement the Strategy.
- Schools should allocate the recommended time across Key Stage 3 to ensure all pupils follow the programme of study and take advantage of Strategy materials.
- Support is needed from LEA consultants to encourage better transfer of information about pupils' experience of and capability in the use of ICT at Key Stage 2.

- Greater rigour is needed in the assessment of ICT.
- Teaching needs to cater better for the wide range of capability in ICT which pupils demonstrate.

Introduction

166. The ICT strand of the Strategy was launched nationally in September 2002. Training was provided, as was a new framework for teaching ICT capability. Most schools began using the new teaching material in January 2003. Most LEAs appointed ICT consultants who drew up priorities within their LEAs to support schools.

Management

167. The management of ICT is good in over a half of schools and at least satisfactory in five out of six.
168. Good management has involved: informed support and leadership from senior managers; positive and energetic promotion of the Strategy by the head of department; careful planning; linking the ICT action plan with the school development plan; thoughtful allocation of resources; and enabling the participation of key staff in Strategy training. Less well handled in most schools are: the systematic setting of targets; the dissemination of training to all staff; and liaison across the key stage between ICT and other subject strands.
169. Most schools have used the audit to highlight priorities for action. Over the year, an increasing proportion of schools completed the recommended audit satisfactorily or well, and developed appropriate action plans. The help of the consultants on the audit has been welcomed, even when this has identified weaknesses in the school process. The best schools appraise their own strengths and weaknesses honestly and have the confidence to involve all ICT staff in using the audit as a tool for development. However, mutual lesson observations are rarely used and this limits the understanding of current practice and what needs to be done to improve. Weaker audits go through the motions and tend to identify issues about the provision of ICT rather than highlight areas for improvement in its use.
170. One result of auditing is that more schools are now allocating discrete time across Key Stage 3 for teaching ICT. Almost all Year 7 pupils have a lesson of 60 minutes a week, though one in six have only 50 minutes. Increasingly, schools also allocate discrete time in Years 8 and 9. Schools that have been delivering ICT across the curriculum are moving to the allocation of discrete time.

171. Schools are benefiting from the Strategy's guidance on curriculum planning. They have been appreciative of the Strategy's sample teaching units and the associated resources. Teachers recognise that they offer more challenge to pupils and a better basis for assessment than before.
172. Schools' schemes of work are often based around the QCA units, supplemented by school-devised material. Often these schemes are imaginative and carefully planned and many have been subject to recent change as they have been expanded and amended to incorporate the guidance included in the Framework. A third of schools had previously emphasised the acquisition of technical competencies at the expense of developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Some weaker schemes of work helped pupils to acquire technical proficiency in using a single application and did not allow pupils sufficient autonomy to plan or make decisions. Now almost all departments are rewriting their schemes of work or including judicious additions and adaptations as suggested by the Strategy. All schools have begun, or are planning, to include the sample teaching units in Year 7. Slightly fewer have included them in Year 8, and only half have done so in Year 9.
173. Most schools' planning helpfully includes a policy on ICT across the curriculum and the Strategy aims to ensure that pupils are capable of using ICT to the benefit of their learning in other subjects. However, this has not been a major focus for the Strategy this year and few schools visited were pursuing action on it for themselves.

Teaching and learning

174. Teaching is satisfactory or better in most lessons and good in a half. Where specialist teachers used materials and guidance from the Strategy with skill and energy, this led to good and, on occasion, excellent teaching. Pupils of different abilities develop sophisticated skills quickly; they evaluate their work and receive good quality feedback from their teacher. This helps them improve and they respond well to the increased challenge.
175. Effective, experienced teachers believe that the Strategy guidance has helped develop their skills. Most teachers new to the subject are enthusiastic about the teaching units, guidance and training. Where teachers express doubts about the impact of the Strategy it is generally because either they are not comfortable in moving beyond a limited skills-based scheme of work, or they feel unsure about their pupils' ability to cope.
176. The Strategy guidance emphasises the need to structure lessons to help pupils understand and evaluate what they have learned. In the lessons clearly influenced by the Strategy, teachers followed detailed lesson plans

which include clear structure and timing. They share the aims of the lesson, have high expectations of pupils, make them aware of the criteria for success and how they might meet them, and encourage them to evaluate their work and that of others. Terminology is carefully explained and takes into account pupils' levels of capability. Lessons engage pupils' interest and careful questioning involves each pupil. Pupils' learning and understanding are checked in plenaries.

177. The Strategy expects schools in the long term to adapt rather than merely adopt the materials, and the more confident schools are doing this already. Good lessons have a clear initial exposition, an interesting and well-paced set of activities and a plenary, but they do not need to follow a rigid pattern. For example, in one very effective lesson there was a plenary session three quarters through the lesson where pupils, with guidance and clear criteria, commented on the designs of others. This was skilfully brought together by the teacher, before pupils then thoughtfully annotated their own work in a process of improvement.
178. In contrast, one lesson in seven is unsatisfactory. Here, teachers with little ICT knowledge use uninspiring and unchallenging activities and pupils learn little, filling their time with trivial, desultory tasks. Even where teachers had prepared well, they often did not follow plans through, for instance by abandoning the plenary session or neglecting to check pupils' understanding.
179. Some otherwise satisfactory lessons include weak elements. Lesson aims can be too generalised or limited. Teachers do not always manage time well, avoiding or rushing plenaries. Some lessons are not matched to pupils' abilities, leaving the more capable bored and others struggling with complex tasks.

Assessment

180. Assessment in ICT, both formative and summative, is a weakness. It is unsatisfactory in two thirds of the schools.
181. Assessment is often cursory. Teachers do not, in the main, have good systems for monitoring the progress of pupils or involving them, actively and positively, in developing their capability. The Strategy is beginning to have an impact, for example through the focus in training and sample teaching units on making learning objectives clear and communicating them to pupils.
182. There is almost no information in secondary schools about pupils' prior attainment in, and experience of, ICT, so teachers find it difficult to assess progress. Two thirds of schools use information on the core subjects to

set a tentative target level for ICT, sometimes supplemented by an initial test or task. There is some good work in devising records where pupils describe what they have experienced and learnt in primary school, and keep weekly work diaries where they record what is familiar and what has been newly achieved. Others look for an impression of pupils' capability to emerge over the year but this is rarely compared and moderated. Target-setting is weak in a third of the schools.

183. Summative assessment is often unreliable. There are frequently uncertainties about pupils' final attainment levels, as these have rarely been moderated. Teachers are not always accurate in assessing pupils' levels of attainment. Guidance from the Strategy is increasingly being incorporated into planning and most consultants are helping to initiate standardisation. Some schools expect a short-term dip in reported standards as assessment becomes more rigorous. Several schools and LEAs are using online portfolio systems to help store, transfer and assess pupils' work. Early signs are that these initiatives are very helpful in supporting Strategy guidance on assessment.

Impact on attainment

184. Since work on the strand started with training for teachers only in September 2002, the impact on attainment is difficult to gauge at this stage.
185. Pupils often produce good standards of work, showing skill in using presentational and word-processing software, and using a variety of applications. However, current standards of work can vary from good to unsatisfactory, even within the same school, and pupils' folders often show insufficient capability across the range of the programme of study. While most pupils are improving their ICT capability during the key stage, there remain general areas of weakness, particularly in modelling, data-handling and control. The control element of the National Curriculum programme of study was not offered in a third of schools.
186. Pupils with SEN are generally not well supported. They find the written materials difficult to follow and support staff are not always confident with the lesson's content. The Strategy guidance is helping a few schools to establish good practice through writing additional materials, using careful questioning and giving appropriate help in preparing staff more effectively. ICT consultants generally encourage special schools to become involved and are beginning to seek ways of offering practical support for pupils with SEN.
187. The continuity of work into Key Stage 4 was satisfactory or good in around half of the schools, but in the rest was limited or inappropriate,

in that not all pupils had access to an accredited qualification in ICT or to courses that cover the Key Stage 4 programme of study. A few schools are beginning GCSE or GNVQ work in Year 9, and occasionally in Year 8. The long-term effect of this on the breadth of experience of pupils who are not high attaining is unclear.

Training for school staff

188. Training events visited by HMI have, with a few exceptions, been very well managed and elicited a positive response from teachers. Consultants are well prepared and in the best practice develop teachers' skills and encourage them to extend their view of what their pupils can achieve.
189. The majority of schools have responded enthusiastically to the training. It has helped to bring changes in approaches to teaching and learning, given teachers the confidence to introduce new units, and enabled them to plan and assess better. However, a fifth of schools felt that training has yet to have impact. Some schools felt that certain training sessions lacked flexibility or were poorly organised. Some also expressed anxiety about the guidance in the materials on standards and assessment.
190. A half of schools are not managing to disseminate training efficiently to their teaching and support staff. Typically, schools have disseminated principles of pedagogy and made materials available. Half have made an adequate start in preparing staff to implement the Strategy advice. However, in disseminating detail of the sample teaching units, much reliance is placed on brief departmental meetings. Problems remain in giving non-specialists the expertise they need to develop pupils' learning effectively.

Resources and staffing

191. ICT departments have usually benefited from improved ICT resources; all schools visited had access to satisfactory or good hardware and software. Interactive whiteboards, data projectors and broadcast facilities are beginning to assist teachers in using materials to engage pupils' interest. LEA staff and ICT consultants frequently provide schools with appropriate equipment for implementing the Strategy, or with helpful advice about purchasing. This is particularly useful where schools do not have access to equipment to teach control technology.
192. Accommodation is generally adequate, but some schools encounter difficulties. Too few, or broken, machines and cramped working spaces can limit pupils' activities. Space to enable pupils to plan when not using computers remains a problem in many rooms. In some cases the noise of cooling fans means teachers can struggle to be heard by all.

193. In half the schools visited, the teaching of ICT was by a capable specialist team. However, half use a significant number of non-specialists and the provision of training for them remains problematic. In one school in six, staffing is unsatisfactory. In some, there are too many non-specialists to teach the Strategy effectively or there have been problems of recruitment and long-term absence. Most schools have not yet included support staff in training and departmental meetings, although this was done in a few schools.

Support from LEA consultants

194. Consultants' advice is generally judged by schools to be astute and helpful. Their credibility is enhanced when they work alongside teachers in the school and classroom. Their major impact has been in raising expectations and initiating a dialogue between teachers, focusing on improving teaching and pupils' attainment. Consultants have also been helpful in investigating and extending the use of local resources such as City Learning Centres and 'surgeries' provided by LEA staff. Having access to LEA resources allows many consultants to make materials, guidance and examples of pupils' work available to schools through LEA intranets and websites.
195. Important benefits were beginning to emerge where consultants for different subjects worked as a team in a school.
196. Consultants increasingly have access to useful information from the LEA about schools which they use to target their support. In two of the 26 LEAs visited there had been a change of consultant during the year, which caused some disruption to support. Schools sometimes report tensions in their relationships with LEAs associated with technical difficulties encountered during expansion of ICT facilities.

Modern foreign languages

Key findings

- The implementation of the MFL framework was good or better in half of the pilot schools visited, and satisfactory in the remainder.
- Teachers in pilot schools have responded well to the training and support provided by MFL consultants and are very positive about implementing the pilot. The quality of training and support for pilot schools was good or better in all LEAs visited and in almost half it was very good or excellent.
- The quality of initial subject audits and subsequent action planning was very variable and often unsatisfactory, despite support and guidance from consultants.
- The impact of training and using the framework objectives has been beneficial in all schools visited. Teachers have worked hard to incorporate framework objectives into their planning and teaching. In pilot schools, the quality of teaching is good or better in over two thirds of lessons, and rarely unsatisfactory. This has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes, and on those of boys in particular.
- Pupils have a better awareness of learning objectives, and are applying their increased knowledge of form and structure to write at greater length and with more spontaneity. However, departments have made slow progress in implementing the use of plenaries and assessment for learning. There is also unnecessary use of English by teachers, especially when sharing learning objectives on teaching grammar and in the plenaries.
- Pupils have insufficient access to authentic texts in the foreign language, and this limits the development of their cultural awareness.
- In some departments, the increased emphasis in the framework on teaching grammar has led to less attention to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are also important elements of the framework.
- Assessment for learning in MFL is not well established and remains a weak feature.

Points for action

- Those with responsibility at national level should:
 - provide further support for inexperienced associated trainers, especially in LEAs where there is no experienced MFL adviser to back them up
 - provide clear guidance on the use of the framework in special schools, and its links with Key Stage 2 developments in MFL
 - provide further guidance on sources of authentic texts in the foreign language, and how to use these to develop pupils' linguistic skills and their cultural knowledge and understanding.

- Those with responsibility at LEA and school level should:
 - improve the quality of the initial action planning to ensure that MFL departments focus sharply on priority areas for development
 - monitor the use of English in MFL lessons, and reduce the amount of unnecessary English when sharing learning objectives, teaching grammar and conducting plenaries
 - improve the use of assessment for learning, in particular to enable pupils to assess their own learning in a lesson and over time
 - ensure that, while fostering pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of grammar, the teaching of speaking and listening skills is not neglected
 - secure more use of authentic texts in the teaching of MFL.

Management

197. The visits were to schools involved in the piloting of the teaching framework and associated materials for MFL in 2002/03.
198. The implementation of the framework is good or better in half of the schools visited, and satisfactory in the remainder.
199. In the schools with good or better implementation, there is generally already a good infrastructure within the department, with effective leadership and a cohesive team. All teachers contribute to a thorough initial audit and subsequent action planning identifies clear priorities for action. This led in one school to useful targets for each year group which were monitored regularly by the head of department. The most effective departments have also found ways of involving all MFL teachers in discussing and reviewing the implementation of the framework, for example by having it as the main agenda item at departmental meetings. It is, however, unusual to see reviews of initial action plans.
200. Support provided by senior management teams for MFL pilot departments is at least satisfactory, and is good or better in over half of schools. In these schools, senior managers have a good understanding of their MFL departments and the needs of the pilot, and are very supportive. A significant feature which aids implementation is the provision of regular non-contact time for teachers to observe pilot lessons and discuss developments. In schools where progress is more limited, this is because of weaknesses in departmental leadership and management and, occasionally, because of insufficient support from senior management.

Teaching and learning

201. The quality of teaching is good or better in over two thirds of pilot lessons, and is rarely unsatisfactory. This is a higher proportion of good teaching than normally observed in Ofsted inspections.

202. There are, however, variations in some schools in the extent to which the framework has been used, for example between year groups and between different foreign languages. The impact of the pilot is most evident in the incorporation of framework objectives into planning and teaching. Objectives are shared in almost all lessons and starter activities are effective. Plenary sessions, however, are variable in quality, and fewer than half of schools employ them effectively.
203. The impact on pupils' attitudes and learning has been positive. Generally, pupils enjoy applying their knowledge of form and structure to be more creative and write at greater length and with more spontaneity. Some pupils are also writing with greater accuracy. In several schools the motivation of boys has been increased because they enjoy the clear structure to lessons, lively delivery and finding out how language works.
204. The development of cultural awareness is limited in a significant number of schools because pupils have insufficient access to authentic texts in the foreign language. However, there are good examples of the use of foreign language assistants to enhance pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding.
205. English is used unnecessarily and extensively in some lessons in the pilot schools, for example when sharing learning objectives, teaching grammar and conducting plenaries. This is often because teachers are less disciplined in their use of English than they would be in their use of the target language, and this can slow the pace, reducing opportunities for pupils to hear and speak the target language.
206. The increased emphasis in the framework on teaching grammar, while at the same time giving due attention to the development of pupils' listening and speaking skills, clearly creates pressure on the use of time. Some departments have reviewed the content of their lessons with a view to finding ways of saving time, for example by eschewing lengthy and ineffective listening comprehension exercises.
207. Assessment for learning is not well established and remains a weak feature.

Impact on attainment

208. The visits to pilot schools focused mainly on Year 7 lessons. It is therefore not possible to see any relationship with Key Stage 3 results. However, there are early signs that pupils' attainment in writing is improving in Year 7 because they have a better grasp of how language operates. It is too soon to say whether this is at the expense of their attainment in listening and speaking.

Training and support for school staff

209. The quality of the training and support provided by MFL consultants for teachers in pilot schools was good or better in all the LEAs visited. In almost half, it was very good or excellent. This reflected the high calibre of MFL consultants, many of whom are very experienced. It also reflected the very good quality national training which they themselves had received.
210. The quality of this training and support is the most significant factor contributing to the success of the departments in implementing the framework objectives. Significant features of support which aided successful implementation were visits to help plan lessons, observation of lessons and feedback, facilitating contacts with other schools and holding regular, twilight support sessions. The good external support was well matched to the individual department's needs.

Training for consultants

211. The quality of the national training for MFL consultants was very good. It enabled consultants to see how the MFL pilot fitted within the foundation subject strand, and increased their understanding of the MFL framework objectives.
212. The national dissemination training provided in summer 2003 for associated trainers was of an equally high standard. However, participants came from a wider mix of background and experience than the smaller group of pilot consultants. While some of these associated trainers responded very well to their training course, others were more uncertain, in particular those less experienced trainers with little specialist back-up.

The Strategy in special schools

Key findings

- The Strategy is having some impact in improving teaching and learning in two thirds of the schools visited. In these schools, the quality of teaching and learning is generally good, though the plenary sessions are too variable and some teaching does not include sufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own, and others', learning. In the remaining third of schools, the Strategy is having little impact.
- In three quarters of schools the leadership and management of the Strategy by headteachers and co-ordinators are at least satisfactory. In a similar proportion of schools the Strategy has led to a review of and improvement in curriculum policies and planning.
- Although half of schools are facing difficulties recruiting staff, many schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD) have subject specialists co-ordinating English, mathematics and science.
- In one third of schools a strong emphasis is being placed on the development of pupils' reading and spelling skills. In half of schools the teachers recognise the need to increase the emphasis on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In a similar proportion of schools pupils have too few opportunities to develop their independent writing skills.
- In three quarters of schools there are effective procedures to help pupils make a smooth transition from primary to secondary education. The information about pupils that schools receive from mainstream and special primary and secondary schools varies considerably. Links with other schools, both special and mainstream, are not well developed. In half of schools the Strategy has not helped to develop these links.
- Two thirds of schools have weaknesses in their current systems for assessing, recording and measuring pupils' progress. Targets set for individual pupils are often vague and progress towards them is difficult to measure.
- Over half of schools feel that the training they attended had been inappropriate to their needs. A quarter of schools have had little support from LEA consultants.

Points for action

- Schools need to improve their systems for assessing, recording and measuring pupils' progress.
- More opportunities are needed for pupils to reflect on and consolidate their learning experiences.

- Greater emphasis is needed on literacy, including independent writing, and numeracy in all subjects.
- Training for teachers and teaching assistants in special schools should be made more relevant to the circumstances in which they work. It should be made available to non-maintained as well as maintained special schools.
- Links between special and mainstream schools should be developed so that expertise can be shared.

Introduction

213. HMI visited 15 special schools. Three schools had taken part in the special school pilot phase, and twelve others were randomly selected. A wide range of special schools were visited; these included schools for pupils with EBD, MLD, severe learning difficulties (SLD), autistic spectrum disorders and complex and mixed needs schools. Some schools catered for a wide age range, others for secondary.
214. More secondary, rather than all-age schools are adopting the Strategy's principles, and schools for pupils with EBD and MLD are doing so more than those for pupils with SLD. This is partly because some all-age schools, in particular SLD schools, are following the framework of the primary strategies as they consider this to be more appropriate for their pupils' needs.

Management

215. In three quarters of schools the leadership and management of the Strategy by headteachers and co-ordinators are at least satisfactory. Although half of schools are facing difficulties recruiting staff, many MLD and EBD schools have subject specialists co-ordinating English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, in almost all schools the management of the Strategy by senior staff at whole-school level is better than that by subject co-ordinators at individual subject level.

Teaching and learning

216. The quality of teaching and learning seen was generally good, and in about two thirds of schools there have been improvements as a result of the Strategy.
217. Planning for most lessons includes clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils at the start. Lessons are well structured and in over half there are lively starter activities which immediately focus pupils' attention. Teachers have high expectations and a good pace is maintained. A variety of activities involving individual, paired and group work are included, and interesting resources are used in over half of lessons. These encourage

active participation by pupils. In two thirds of schools, teaching assistants work effectively with teachers in supporting pupils in their learning and in reinforcing expectations of behaviour. In about a third of schools the differentiation of activities and resources is good; this is most commonly true in schools catering for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, in some EBD and MLD schools teachers rely too much on worksheets and, as a result, pupils have too few opportunities to develop their independent writing skills, particularly in science lessons.

218. There are some aspects which generally require further development. Lesson objectives are not clear enough in about a third of lessons; consequently, pupils do not know what they are expected to learn and teachers find assessment of their learning difficult. Pupils are not fully aware of their individual targets and there are few opportunities for them to be involved in self-assessment. In a small proportion of schools, in particular EBD schools, marking is ineffective and does not help pupils to improve.
219. The most common weakness is in the quality of plenary sessions. Too often, insufficient time is given to pupils to reflect on their learning. Plenary sessions are often focused on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and effort rather than on their own and others' learning.

Impact on attainment

220. It is difficult to see the effect of the introduction of the Strategy on pupils' overall progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum levels and 'P scales' have improved but in two thirds of schools there are weaknesses in their current systems for assessing, recording and measuring progress. Most are in the process of adopting new systems. Accurate information about pupils' progress over time is limited. Target-setting is used in the majority of schools but the quality of pupils' individual targets varies. Some are very explicit, but others are vague, making progress towards them difficult to measure.
221. In about a third of schools a strong emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' reading skills, and pupils are often withdrawn for individual or small group support. This is having a positive effect on raising standards. A small number of EBD schools are using the literacy progress units and *Springboard* materials for mathematics. These have helped to raise standards in reading and spelling in particular. In about half of schools there is a focus on key words and spelling, but opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, for example in science, are missed. At least half of schools recognise that further development is needed in promoting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

222. In three quarters of schools the Strategy has led to review of and improvement in curriculum policies and planning. A more co-ordinated approach to planning is being adopted; there is more focus on planning for individuals and, in a few schools, 'P scales' criteria are being fully incorporated into termly plans.

Transition

223. In three quarters of schools there are effective procedures to help pupils make a smooth transition from primary to secondary education. Comprehensive induction programmes help pupils adapt to the rules and routines of their new schools, provide staff with opportunities to make detailed observations of pupils at school, and often at home, and allow tutors and class teachers to establish relationships with pupils before the start of Year 7. Some schools, in particular EBD schools, assign an older 'buddy' to each new pupil to help them to settle in. In about a third of schools the pupils in Year 7 are taught by one teacher for all or most of the week. This occurs in SLD, MLD and occasionally in EBD schools. Teachers feel that this arrangement enables pupils to settle in quickly and develop positive attitudes.
224. The information schools receive from others varies considerably, whether pupils enter at the start of Year 7 or at other times during the key stage. Inadequate transfer of information is most common for pupils with EBD or autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. Schools for pupils with EBD often find it difficult to identify gaps in pupils' learning. At least a quarter of schools identify the inconsistency of teacher assessment against lower levels of the National Curriculum and 'P scales' as a difficulty. Schools find that levels assigned at times overestimate pupils' achievement. Only one quarter of secondary special schools consider that they receive enough academic, social and behavioural information about pupils.

Training for school staff

225. Over half of schools feel that the training they have attended has been inappropriate as it has not taken account of the nature of special schools or the needs of their pupils. A third of schools find that the training and support in science has been better than that for English and mathematics. In a small number of schools there has been training for teaching assistants in the use of catch-up materials.
226. Training for staff led by school Key Stage 3 co-ordinators or subject co-ordinators has been of more relevance and has led to successful developments, for example in improving literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, and in focusing on different learning styles. However, at least a third of schools recognise that they still require additional training in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Support from LEA consultants

227. A quarter of schools have benefited from good support from LEA consultants, but a similar proportion has had very little support. No support has been offered to non-maintained special schools, although they benefited from support in implementing the literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools. There is concern among about a third of schools that some LEA consultants lack the necessary knowledge and experience of working with pupils with special educational needs.
228. In about half of LEAs, Strategy consultants have established working groups made up of staff from similar special schools. These have provided staff with good opportunities to share ideas, work on curriculum planning, and discuss appropriate resources. However, links with other schools, both special and mainstream, are not well developed and the Strategy has not helped to improve them.

LEA support

Key findings

- Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory or better in seven in ten LEAs inspected in 2002/03 and good in almost a quarter.
- Despite some recruitment difficulties, most LEAs have a full complement of Key Stage 3 consultants and some have funded the appointment of additional personnel. Schools hold consultants in high regard and value the support and training they provide.
- LEA support has led to more primary and secondary teachers working well together to ensure continuity between key stages, through visits to each other's classrooms and collaboration on bridging projects and summer schools.
- Other than in relation to numeracy and literacy, LEA support for cross-curricular work is less well developed, but LEAs are beginning to address this through the increasing focus on teaching and learning in foundation subjects.
- LEAs have effective strategies for disseminating good practice. They are increasingly making good use of data to target support and evaluate its impact.

Management and staffing

229. In most LEAs, the Strategy is being well managed by senior officers. Through their education development plans, LEAs are linking the Strategy closely to the literacy and numeracy strategies at Key Stage 2 and other initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones. In some LEAs, Key Stage 3 teams are working closely with the ethnic minority achievement and education welfare services to give additional support to pupils in danger of underachieving.
230. Most LEAs have succeeded in recruiting a full complement of consultants and some have used their own resources to fund additional posts in order to address specific local priorities. However, several authorities have experienced difficulties in recruiting or retaining consultants and this has slowed down implementation. These difficulties are more evident in southern authorities but are not exclusive to them. The consultants are, in general, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and highly motivated and schools have a high regard for them. In the few cases where consultants' work has not been of sufficiently high quality, the problem has usually been handled effectively.

Training

231. Training has generally been well received by schools. In some cases, the timing of sessions and problems of finding sufficient cover have made it difficult for schools to release staff for training or to observe practice in other schools. Some small or selective schools have also found the nationally produced materials less well suited to their needs; they have usually appreciated support from LEAs in adapting them.

Other development work

232. With the support of consultants, more primary and secondary teachers have worked well together to ensure good continuity between Key Stage 2 and 3. They have visited each other's classrooms, shared training events, have been involved in a range of bridging projects and collaborated in running summer schools. Evaluations by LEAs show that summer schools have been generally well received but have not always been targeted sufficiently on pupils most in need of support.

233. Other than in literacy and numeracy, cross-curricular work is at present underdeveloped. However, LEAs are beginning to address this through the foundation subjects strand.

Evaluation and dissemination

234. There are increasing instances of examples of effective use of data to evaluate the impact of the Strategy and to target support, for example in having quality data to show the progress of pupils from Key Stage 2 to 3. In the case of some LEAs, however, there is insufficient central analysis of overall trends and patterns or of strengths and weaknesses across the curriculum.

235. LEAs are using a variety of ways of disseminating good practice, including networks for heads of department, meetings of schools within an Education Action Zone, cross-phase meetings, demonstrations by leading teachers and advanced skills teachers and publications on LEA websites.

236. The pattern of improvement in the key stage test results varies considerably across the LEAs inspected. There is some evidence of a significant improvement in low-attaining LEAs and schools. There is more evidence of the positive impact of the Strategy on teachers' attitudes, styles of working and understanding of issues of curricular continuity and coherence.

Annex: performance data

Key Stage 3 national test results 2001 to 2003

Table I shows the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or higher (5+) and level 6 or higher (6+) in the core subjects.

Table I

	2001	2002	2003	Improvement 2002–3
English level 5+	65	67	69	+2
English level 6+	32	33	35	+2
Maths level 5+	66	67	71	+4
Maths level 6+	43	45	49	+4
Science level 5+	66	67	68	+1
Science level 6+	34	33	40	+7

Good progress has been made in mathematics at both levels 5 and 6. Progress in science is modest at level 5 but very good at level 6. Results in English have shown improvement at both levels. There is no significant difference between the rates of improvement in the results of the pilot and other schools.

The government's targets for 2004 for pupils attaining level 5 or higher are 75% in English and mathematics, and 70% for science. The targets for mathematics and science are within reach, but the English target is challenging, given the present rate of progress.

Progress towards the school floor targets in 2002/03

'Floor targets' are minimum targets set for schools by the DfES. In relation to these:

- 867 schools (28%) failed to reach the floor target in English in 2002/03, an improvement from 2001/02, when the comparable figure was 33%
- 730 schools (23%) failed to reach the floor target in mathematics in 2002/03, an improvement from 2001/02, when the comparable figure was 31%
- 891 schools (29%) failed to reach the floor target in science in 2002/03, an improvement from 2001/02, when the comparable figure was 33%.

