



# Primary National Strategy

An evaluation of its impact in primary schools 2004/05

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**Better  
education  
and care**

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## Contents

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<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>2</b>
Key findings	2
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The impact of the Primary National Strategy in local authorities and schools</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The impact of the PNS on standards</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The impact of the PNS on teaching and learning</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching and learning across the whole curriculum</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The impact of the PNS on leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The impact of the PNS on inclusion</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Executive summary

The Primary National Strategy (PNS) was introduced in May 2003 with the publication of *Excellence and enjoyment, a primary strategy for schools* (DfES, 2003). This developed the government's vision for improving primary schools, emphasising the continuing importance of raising standards while making learning enjoyable. The goal is for every primary school to combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment of learning.

Following evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLNS), Ofsted was asked to evaluate the implementation of the PNS. This began in September 2004 with visits being made to local authorities and schools throughout the academic year. It covered the implementation of five key strands within the PNS: teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy; teaching and learning across the curriculum; transition from the Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1; leadership and management; and inclusion.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) conducted the survey across 47 local authorities, including meetings with primary strategy managers and visits to 220 primary schools. A large proportion of schools were involved in specific strategy programmes such as the Primary Leadership Programme (PLP) or the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). HMI also monitored the work of a small number of primary strategy consultant leaders. A further 50 schools were visited as part of the evaluation of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

The introduction of the PNS has been a positive development and has helped schools and local authorities to refocus on the key priorities of raising standards through improving teaching and learning and strengthening leadership and management.

Standards in the 2005 national tests for 11 year olds rose for the second year running. However, this overall rise masks a continuing concern over the fluctuating results in both English and mathematics in some schools, where standards rise one year but fall the next. There is still much to be done to improve standards in mathematics if the challenging targets set by the government for achievement in 2006 are to be met. Similarly, the performance of boys in writing remains a challenge in many schools. By the age of seven, a gap already exists between boys and girls in writing and this gap widens by the end of Key Stage 2. Most headteachers and subject leaders have concentrated on the raising standards agenda, which is at the heart of *Excellence and enjoyment*, but have been more cautious in promoting greater flexibility within the curriculum. There has been increased discussion in many schools on strengthening links between the teaching of literacy and mathematics with that of other subjects as a means of complementing the teaching of daily literacy and mathematics lessons. Some schools are considering integrating the teaching of English across subjects and looking at fresh ways to promote creativity and pupils' enjoyment of learning. However, relatively few schools

have made wholesale changes to the way in which the curriculum is structured and organised. Although the literacy hour and daily mathematics lessons remain in place, enhanced provision for English and mathematics through other subjects is often limited in scope.

Although most local authorities have responded well in aligning support for schools through the PNS, a few strategy managers still do not have sufficient influence within their local authority's management structure to provide the 'one-stop shop' coordination of support for school improvement. Consequently, local authority officers responsible for advising schools do not always give consistent advice on the most appropriate direction to take and schools are not always sufficiently aware of the range of support and guidance available to them. Strategy resources are not always used selectively to improve quality. For example, support for developing speaking, listening and learning has not yet led to effective whole school planning for speaking and listening, and some schools are still unaware of the availability of recently published strategy resources to promote teaching and learning. Although local authorities communicate the availability of strategy resources and guidance to schools, there is often too great a reliance upon schools themselves leading training, even where they lack the capacity to do so.

The leadership programmes promoted through the PNS have engaged schools and local authorities in working more closely together in developing the capacity of leadership and management to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards. Where schools are working within a tight structure, for example in the ISP, the drive for improvement is usually better focused with a sense of urgency in implementing improvements. However, more needs to be done to tackle long standing weaknesses in leadership and management in those few schools where underachievement goes unchecked, as fluctuating results year on year continue to hamper longer term progress in reaching the national targets set for the end of Key Stage 2. The setting of targets for raising attainment at the end of Year 6 in many schools too frequently provides an inaccurate projection of end of key stage results with more optimism than certainty that such targets will be met. Although implementation of the PLP has improved since its launch in 2003, the quality of primary strategy consultant leaders is still too variable with approximately one in five lacking the skills and knowledge to challenge schools.

Local authorities continue to be involved in setting targets to raise standards in schools. Better data tracking systems have improved their identification of underachievement. Most use this information well in their discussions with headteachers and in identifying schools for involvement in PNS leadership programmes. Schools' own use of assessment information, however, often lacks rigour. The causes of underachievement are often not identified and remedied early enough, with too great an emphasis given to boosting achievement in Years 5 and 6 at the expense of timely and effective intervention with younger

pupils. The three waves of PNS intervention to support low attaining pupils too frequently do not lead to sustained success.<sup>1</sup> Some programmes are used as a 'catch-all' with schools seldom aware of the broader range of interventions available to them, or which interventions are the most appropriate for specific groups of pupils.

The National Literacy and Numeracy frameworks are still used by teachers as their core support in planning for progression in both English and mathematics. Schools are anxious to maintain the improved standards they have seen since the introduction of the NLNS. Many do not wish to risk losing these gains through too great a change. Although the strategies have improved the teaching of English and mathematics, teaching in both subjects remains no better than satisfactory in one lesson in three. Although provision of additional guidance and better targeted support has improved the quality of teaching in some schools, it has yet to raise the overall frequency and consistency of teaching that is good or better in all schools. One significant improvement in teaching is teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT), a consequence of increased guidance and support provided through the PNS. However, despite support for teachers in developing assessment for learning, improvements are slow in coming and weaknesses remain.

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<sup>1</sup> The PNS promotes three stages of support for pupils with particular needs. Known as the 'three waves of intervention', they include adapting work within the classroom, small group support and individual programmes of work for those with the greatest need.

## Key findings

- ❑ The PNS has refocused and broadened approaches to securing improvement in many local authorities and schools.
- ❑ Most local authorities are providing good support for schools, particularly through specific PNS programmes such as the intensifying support programme. In most local authorities, the strategy is coordinated well by primary strategy managers.
- ❑ Standards in English and mathematics have risen in the national tests for 11 year olds for the second year running. However, the gap that exists in the attainment of boys and girls in writing remains. Almost a half of all boys are not reaching Level 4 in writing by the time they leave primary school.
- ❑ There has been limited improvement in standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in recent years. In some cases, schools give too great an emphasis to supporting teachers and pupils in Years 5 and 6 in improving outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 to the detriment of support for earlier identification and intervention.
- ❑ Building capacity in schools to sustain higher standards in national tests is a prime objective, but the problem of fluctuating test results from year to year in too many schools remains unresolved.
- ❑ The overall targets agreed between schools and their local authority for raising attainment at the end of Year 6 remain an inaccurate projection of actual end of key stage results, with still more optimism than certainty in many schools that the targets will be met.
- ❑ The impact of the PNS on teaching and learning is at least satisfactory in most schools. It has its greatest impact through specific programmes, such as the ISP, where support materials are used with greater consistency and all staff are involved. Although most schools are aware of PNS teaching and learning materials, too many have not yet used them effectively to review their practices.
- ❑ The use of assessment for learning is improving but overall it is still the least successful element of teaching. Where teachers are improving their assessment techniques, questioning is targeted effectively, pupils are encouraged to discuss and comment on their learning, and success criteria are used to help pupils evaluate learning outcomes.
- ❑ Many schools have used PNS training materials for developing speaking, listening and learning, but few have taken steps to incorporate the effective development of speaking and listening as part of a whole school approach.
- ❑ The PNS has raised the profile of ICT as an integral tool in supporting effective teaching and learning. Teachers are beginning to link the teaching of literacy with other subjects but very few are successfully planning for the development of mathematics across the curriculum.

- ❑ Pupils' achievement is seldom monitored effectively in subjects other than English and mathematics with many teachers lacking confidence in using the National Curriculum level descriptors to assess progress and to plan the next steps in learning.
- ❑ In almost all schools, leadership and management are satisfactory or better. In most cases, headteachers and subject leaders are committed to improving provision, raising standards and supporting the continuing professional development of staff. However, long standing weaknesses in a few persist, with underachievement not being tackled rigorously enough.
- ❑ Improvements are still required in schools' interrogation of data to identify which pupils are not making progress and to determine the actions needed to tackle weaknesses. Too frequently, schools focus their efforts on monitoring and supporting pupils in Years 5 and 6 and give too little attention to other year groups, particularly Years 3 and 4. They do not always use the information they have to identify and to intervene where pupils are underachieving over time.
- ❑ In one in three schools, action planning to support improvement still lacks sufficient rigour.
- ❑ Although school leaders have generally welcomed the PNS's emphasis on greater flexibility and freedom in the curriculum, in nearly all schools the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson remain intact. Where schools have begun to consider greater flexibility in the organisation and teaching of National Curriculum foundation subjects, this has been done with caution.
- ❑ The ISP has had a positive influence on improving the effectiveness of many underperforming schools.
- ❑ The ISP and PLP are improving subject leader effectiveness in those schools involved. The support from effective primary strategy consultant leaders and strategy consultants has helped to secure a number of improvements in schools. However, the overall success of the PLP is compromised by some schools' resistance to change and the inability of some consultant leaders to secure it.
- ❑ Inclusion is a key priority for most local authorities but, despite the focus given to it, the management of inclusion varies significantly across schools. Overall, schools do not yet manage the three waves of intervention well. Teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable of the range of interventions available to them and which would be the most appropriate for different groups of pupils. The impact of intervention programmes is too variable in overcoming underachievement or sustaining long term gains with those pupils most at risk of underachieving.
- ❑ Too many schools still lack the capacity and skills to evaluate the impact of their actions upon the improved achievement of individuals and groups of pupils.



## Recommendations

In order to build on the introduction of the PNS and to raise standards, those with **national responsibility** should:

- promote better understanding and use of the PNS's three waves of intervention in schools and local authorities, including the use of specific programmes to support low attaining pupils
- ensure that the primary leadership programme is implemented effectively and that consultant leaders are appropriately trained to challenge underperformance in schools
- provide greater guidance for schools and local authorities to ensure that improvement plans to raise standards and quality are sharply focused upon measurable outcomes for pupils, and are monitored and evaluated effectively
- provide more effective guidance for schools on implementing opportunities for speaking, listening and learning.

Those with responsibility at **local authority level** for implementation of the PNS, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, should:

- take greater responsibility for building leadership capacity in schools to ensure that the early signs of pupil underachievement are identified and rectified to avoid fluctuating results year on year
- improve schools' capacity to analyse assessments in order to implement effective curriculum targets and make better use of intervention
- ensure that schools are better informed on the range and effective implementation of the PNS's three waves of intervention
- support schools in networking effective practice in tackling the achievement of boys, particularly in writing, and in making best use of ICT to support teaching across the curriculum
- ensure that all consultant leaders have the skills and knowledge to challenge underperforming schools
- provide greater support for schools to ensure that school planning is better focused upon measurable outcomes that link directly to raised standards and improved quality in teaching.

To raise standards in English and mathematics and to improve the quality of teaching and learning, all **schools** should:

- improve the tracking of pupils' progress and make best use of available data to identify underachievement and take early and rigorous action
- take greater responsibility for tackling the issues that underpin fluctuating standards

- develop teachers' questioning techniques to support improved assessment for learning and ensure that the outcomes of assessment are used effectively to match work to the individual needs of pupils
- make effective use of the PNS's teaching and learning materials to improve the consistency of good teaching
- make better use of the three waves of intervention to improve the achievement of low attaining pupils.

## The impact of the Primary National Strategy in local authorities and schools

1. The PNS has been a positive development. It has helped schools and local authorities refocus upon the key priority of raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning and the leadership and management of schools. It has had a clear impact on local authorities through encouraging greater alignment of support for school improvement. Its impact in schools is satisfactory overall but good where schools have actively engaged with developments, particularly in relation to the leadership support programmes, development of ICT and effective use of resources and strategy support to improve teaching and learning.
2. Leadership and management of the PNS by strategy managers are satisfactory or better in almost all the local authorities visited. Where leadership and management are effective, it is usually due to the strategy manager having sufficient influence and authority to ensure that the work of consultants, link advisers and inspectors is coordinated effectively in a seamless approach to support school improvement. The majority of the local authorities have aligned their services well to ensure coordinated support for schools and coherent lines of communication. The most effective local authorities see the PNS as a high priority. Consequently, they have appointed strong and experienced strategy managers and reorganised their support services accordingly. These local authorities see the PNS as an important contributor to school improvement and have:
  - a strategic plan for implementation of the PNS which is integral to the Education Development Plan
  - a coordinated approach to improvement which aligns all local authority support services under the management of the strategy manager
  - a consistent and coherent approach to primary strategy consultants and link advisers and inspectors working together to secure improvement in schools
  - effective systems in place to identify and target underperformance
  - programmes of additional conferences and training events for all schools on key aspects of the PNS
  - convinced headteachers of the importance of using the PNS to raise standards.

These factors can be seen in the following example:

*The strategy manager coordinates the work of key personnel who lead and manage the various Strategy strands. Leadership is distributed well at local authority level with a Strategy steering group which meets regularly to manage all developments. The local authority has produced a Strategy prospectus outlining the approach taken to supporting the various Strategy strands and the form of support being offered to schools. A detailed action plan on implementing the PNS within the*

*authority includes targeted priorities for all PNS initiatives. Schools have received good guidance and support to enable them to develop their own response to the PNS.*

3. Some of the strategy managers, particularly those in small authorities, have other responsibilities. This affects their ability to manage the role of strategy manager as the 'one-stop shop' for school support. Occasionally, support services in local authorities are not aligned effectively and the strategic role of the primary strategy manager is compromised. In such circumstances, the coordination of school improvement services, special education, support for inclusion and information technology lacks cohesion and the strategy manager has limited influence in how support in these areas is coordinated.
4. Most local authorities are providing good support for schools, particularly support that links with the specific Strategy programmes such as the ISP.<sup>2</sup> However, even in the best managed local authorities, where the PNS is promoted positively by supporting school improvement, some schools do not always take advantage of the guidance and support on offer. Although all strategy managers understand the potential of the PNS to raise standards, not all programmes operating in local authorities were successful in helping to achieve this. Underperforming schools are not always challenged sufficiently with some local authorities having too little knowledge about the impact of the PNS on raising standards in individual schools. Few local authorities know enough about schools' use of the school development grant (SDG) and therefore are unable to evaluate whether funding to support improvement is managed effectively. Without this knowledge, local authorities are not able to determine whether funding is being focused upon the most appropriate actions that will have the greatest impact. A few schools are involved in too many initiatives and are supported by different consultants and local authority officers. Communication between the local authority personnel supporting different initiatives in the same schools is often too informal and support consequently lacks cohesion. Such schools are sometimes left confused with too many priorities and with contradictory advice. In such circumstances, this can deflect schools from the actions which are most appropriate for bringing about improvement.
5. Overall, the PNS has had a positive impact in most of the schools visited. The strongest impact has been through the ISP and the initiatives associated with developments in ICT. Local authority management of the PLP and the ISP is usually good but there is too little emphasis placed on monitoring and evaluating the work of consultants to ensure that all

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<sup>2</sup> The ISP is a programme of support designed to raise standards and quality in the most challenging of schools. It is directly targeted at local authorities where there are at least 15 schools, or more than 15% of schools, where less than 65% of pupils achieve Level 4 and above in English and mathematics in the end of Key Stage 2 tests.

schools are supported effectively. Consequently, although the majority of consultants are effective in their work with schools, where they do not deliver the quality of support required, the impact on school improvement is more limited. School leaders have generally welcomed the PNS and the greater emphasis on increased flexibility and freedom in the curriculum. This has led to some whole staff discussions on modifying the curriculum, to integrate the teaching of English across subjects and to look at fresh ways of introducing creativity and promoting enjoyment of learning. However, in most cases, schools are reluctant to make wholesale changes, especially where current practice is already seen to be supporting high achievement in English and mathematics.

## **The impact of the PNS on standards**

6. Although the NLNS remain the core guidance for teachers in planning for progression in both English and mathematics, the PNS has introduced additional features aimed at supporting schools to raise standards further. The introduction of leadership programmes which are targeted towards particular schools to build the capacity of leadership and to raise standards further has been a new development. The PNS has similarly introduced changes within local authorities to improve the alignment and coordination of local authority support for school improvement and to ensure that support for schools is more effectively targeted. Following a period of stability in standards at the end of Key Stage 2, the PNS has aimed to breathe new life into the drive to improve standards further.
7. Attainment in both English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, as measured by the National Curriculum test results in 2005, has risen for the second year running. Standards in English rose by 1% in 2005 with the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above rising to 79%. However, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 in English remains at 27%. There is an indication that the attainment gap between boys and girls in reading is beginning to narrow by the end of Key Stage 2: the performance of boys in the national reading tests for eleven year olds increased by 3% in 2005, with that of girls remaining the same as 2004. However, the significant gap that exists between boys and girls in writing has widened in 2005; although the performance of girls improved slightly with 72% gaining Level 4 or above in 2005, the performance of boys fell to 55%. Nearly a half of all boys do not reach the national expectations in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 and the situation does not appear to be improving. This is unacceptable and poses a significant challenge to local authorities and schools.
8. Standards in mathematics rose by 1% in the 2005 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above rose to 75%. However, the percentage gaining Level 5 remains the

same at 31%. There are still too many pupils leaving primary schools having attained below the expected level in mathematics.

9. Following the 2004 pilot reporting of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in a sample of local authorities, all schools have reported teacher assessments for the end of Year 2 in 2005. The proportion of pupils achieving the national expectation of Level 2 or above was 85% in reading, 82% in writing and 91% in mathematics. The proportion of girls reaching the national expectation in mathematics was 2% greater than that of boys. In English the difference is much wider: 8% in reading and 11% in writing, with 88% of girls reaching Level 2 or above compared to 77% of boys. This gap exists at the age of seven and is widening as boys mature.
10. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 2, as measured by the National Curriculum tests, have risen again in 2005, the rise has been greatest overall among the group of schools involved in the ISP. Although there have been variations between the performance of individual schools involved, the overall increase in both English and mathematics has been 1% above the national gain.
11. Local authorities are clear about their role in supporting and challenging schools to raise standards, but schools in some authorities serve communities that have deep-rooted social problems and these schools continue to be harder to shift. Building capacity in schools to sustain higher standards is a prime objective of the PNS, but the problem of fluctuating results from year to year remains unsolved. Short term interventions in targeted schools often prove successful in raising attainment in the short term, but building the capacity to sustain improvements and to raise standards further continues to prove difficult. As some schools improve their results, in others attainment levels fall or results in one subject improve while in another they go down. Some schools are too quick to excuse lower attainment by pointing to differences between cohorts of pupils and do not take sufficient responsibility or action to identify and tackle underachievement early enough to offset any specific year group issues.
12. The local authorities visited continue to be actively involved in target setting with schools. Some local authorities still set indicative school targets for the end of Key Stage 2 based on Key Stage 1 performance data. Target setting discussions between local authority link officers and headteachers continue in all local authorities. Improvements in attainment tracking systems have enabled local authorities to identify individual pupils and groups at risk of not achieving Level 4. Many of them use this data effectively to target their support towards schools which have high proportions of pupils who are underachieving. For example, following a thorough analysis of the achievement of boys in one local authority, a group of schools was identified where the differential between the

achievement of boys and girls in writing was particularly wide. The local authority initiated a writing project aimed at boys and provided targeted training to a group of teachers on strategies to engage boys in writing. The schools committed time and resources to tackling the weaknesses and progress was monitored by the local authority.

13. In contrast, both the quality and effectiveness of schools' tracking systems are too variable. In some local authorities, different tracking systems are used by schools, some of which overlap and duplicate information. Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT), an IT solution to support the tracking of pupil progress and identification of underachievement, is seldom promoted effectively by local authorities and there remains a lack of consensus between schools and their local authority over the most effective approach to using their tracking of data. This often leads to a lack of coherence between local authority and school-based systems and complicates the effective analysis of underachievement. Although local authorities are appropriately prioritising the need to raise standards and the tracking of pupil progress in English and mathematics, few are similarly prioritising the need to raise and monitor standards and achievement in other subjects across the primary curriculum as a whole. As a result, practice is too variable across schools with many not having a sufficiently clear view of standards being achieved in National Curriculum foundation subjects.
14. Aggregated school targets remain an inaccurate projection of final end of key stage results and there is still more optimism than certainty for gaining improvements in attainment at the end of Year 6. In spite of improvements in schools receiving support within PNS programmes, sustaining higher standards across the board in English and mathematics remains a challenge in all local authorities. In the last four years, results at Key Stage 1 have improved very little overall and too little attention is given to improving Year 2 results, especially at Level 2. In some cases, support for raising attainment is too heavily focused upon outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 to the detriment of support for earlier identification and intervention.
15. In the schools visited, most headteachers and subject leaders understand that raising standards in English and mathematics is a key target of the PNS and they are committed to achieving it. In particular, involvement in the PLP and the ISP often leads to a tightened focus on improving standards in English and mathematics. However, the response in a few schools has been belated, putting into practice strategies which good schools now take for granted. These include:
  - using Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) optional tests in all year groups through Key Stage 2
  - writing detailed action plans for specific improvements, for example raising attainment in writing
  - focusing more sharply on test analysis to inform curricular target setting and the layering of targets for improvement, as promoted in PNS training

- collecting, collating and analysing results for all year groups
  - targeting intervention programmes more effectively and measuring their impact
  - writing summary reports on achievement and points for action for each year group following thorough analysis of attainment and progress.
16. Although schools have greater access to assessment data, improvement is still required in the interrogation of assessment information available, and in identifying which pupils are not making progress and why. Schools focus too heavily on analysing Year 6 assessment information at the expense of that for other year groups, particularly Years 3 and 4. Consequently, they are not using the information they have to identify and to intervene where pupils are underachieving over a longer period of time. Important gaps in knowledge and understanding sometimes go unchecked for too long. In tracking the progress of individuals, significant differences in the attainment and progress of different groups, for example boys compared to girls, or boys in Key Stage 1 compared to boys in Key Stage 2, are also missed and not acted on. The quality of schools' action planning to secure improvement is variable. In the most effective schools, action plans are detailed and focused clearly on measurable increases in attainment. However, in nearly one in three schools visited, action planning is not sufficiently rigorous, with actions not being linked directly with measurable outcomes through which the action plan's success may be measured. Consequently, schools are unclear of the impact such actions have on improving attainment.

## **The impact of the PNS on teaching and learning**

17. The impact of the PNS on teaching and learning is at least satisfactory in most schools visited. It has the greatest impact in the schools that are engaged in specific programmes, such as the ISP, where the support materials underpinning the programme are used effectively to guide practice and all the staff are involved in learning together. Generally, there is a strong focus upon implementing improvement as part of a coherent whole school approach in those schools, with teachers and support staff having a common understanding of what needs to be done and the actions they need to implement in order to bring about improvement. The PNS has had less impact in a few schools, particularly where they have not taken advantage of PNS professional development materials, such as those for teaching and learning in the primary years or for improving speaking and listening and learning. Also, in some schools that have undertaken professional development, the core principles have not always been followed through or embedded into classroom practice. Consequently, in those schools, the impact of training has been limited in relation to longer term and sustained improvement on teaching or standards.



18. Support from strategy consultants, locally organised training and targeted involvement in programmes, for example the PLP, have all helped secure improvement in teaching, albeit to varying degrees. Some subject leaders in schools in the leadership programme are more secure in their knowledge of the quality of provision and can identify the aspects of teaching and learning they believe have improved. Local authority network meetings for subject leaders and carefully targeted training for particular groups of schools, such as introducing the PNS's *Speaking, listening and learning* materials, have also had an impact in raising teachers' awareness. There are, however, still some teachers who do not know what the PNS is, and some schools that are still unaware of the range of materials and resources that are available to them.
19. Most of the schools continue to prioritise improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has had some success but barriers to improvement remain. In one local authority, the NLNS are still not embedded well enough and teachers' knowledge of the frameworks is not strong, leading to continued weaknesses in the teaching of writing, particularly at Key Stage 1. In another local authority, conflicting advice provided by strategy consultants and school improvement advisers led to confusion in schools. Where the former emphasised a tightly structured approach based on the original guidance on using the National Literacy Strategy framework, the latter promoted greater flexibility along with greater emphasis on literacy teaching across subjects.
20. In many schools, the needs of low attaining pupils are not being identified early enough. Work provided in both literacy and in mathematics is not consistently meeting their needs or accelerating their progress sufficiently to enable them to close the gap with their peers. In some cases, despite good teaching, many pupils continue to find learning difficult. Their own poor language skills, along with limited support from parents and carers, contributes to the slow progress they are making.
21. Stronger elements in teaching and learning include:
  - a secure lesson structure with good classroom organisation and effective management of pupils
  - clear learning objectives with key vocabulary and key questions identified and planned
  - secure strategies for behaviour management and appropriate expectations that pupils will respect each other and cooperate
  - improving use of interactive whiteboards and PNS software to support explanations through modelling and demonstration
  - good support from teaching assistants, increasingly so during whole class teaching
  - effective use of practical resources to support pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and in the teaching of writing, to provide starting points and motivate pupils

- provision of informative feedback for pupils to help them improve their work
  - effective use of a plenary – a review of learning towards the end of the lesson – to involve pupils in discussion and in the assessment of learning outcomes.
22. Weaker elements of teaching and learning include:
- too great a focus on covering age-related objectives from the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy frameworks rather than securing and checking that learning is taking place for all pupils
  - too many objectives being introduced which are not subsequently followed up during the lesson to remind pupils of what they are learning and to assess what they need to do next
  - pupils are passive for too long in lessons, particularly in over-long whole class teaching sessions, resulting in them losing concentration
  - not enough attention being given to speaking and listening with too many closed questions from the teacher and too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning
  - insufficient challenge being provided through questioning and independent activities, particularly for higher attainers
  - failure to engage all pupils, but especially boys, in answering questions, particularly in English and in Key Stage 2
  - too little support and guidance provided for pupils' sentence-level work and independent writing
  - the frequent departure of low attaining pupils from the classroom to attend catch-up sessions which do not directly relate to the lesson they have started, leaving them confused and unable to contribute to the lesson when they return.
23. Although the use of assessment for learning is improving, it is still the least successful element of teaching. A majority of teachers are not yet adept enough at differentiating their questioning to match what they know about their pupils' prior attainment. Where schools have completed the *Assessment for learning* audit provided through the PNS, they usually have a clearer view of the detailed actions they need to implement to secure improved assessment. For those teachers who are improving their assessment techniques, questioning is better targeted, pupils are encouraged to discuss and comment on their learning, and relevant success criteria are identified to help pupils evaluate learning outcomes. The links between planning and assessment, however, are still too tenuous. Teachers' own assessments do not always lead to adjustments in their lesson planning. Consequently, when assessment raises gaps in knowledge and understanding, these are not always taken into account and work planned by the teacher continues to assume prior knowledge that pupils do not have.
24. In some local authorities, *Assessment for learning* materials have been disseminated through networks of schools but with too much responsibility

being left with schools to use and deliver the training materials to staff. Some schools do not have the level of expertise, understanding, or urgency in the use of this material. Consequently, the impact is limited with some requiring greater support and direction.

25. Where *Assessment for learning* is effective, teachers:
- make judicious use of summative testing to inform their grouping of pupils across subjects
  - highlight key objectives specifically for individuals and groups of pupils
  - identify suitable curricular targets which are shared with pupils and parents
  - analyse the reasons why some pupils do not achieve their targets and take appropriate action
  - include assessment during the early part of the lesson, take account of those pupils that may need more support and adjust the pace of teaching in response to the way pupils are learning
  - consider assessment strategies in their planning
  - ensure that assessment criteria are clear and that effective feedback is provided for pupils
  - make effective use of short reviews to summarise outcomes from initial tasks and to advise on next steps
  - demonstrate an effective balance between observing, intervening with additional support and scaffolding questions, from the literal to the more demanding, to meet the needs of all pupils
  - include questions which reveal how pupils learn as well as what they have learned
  - are creative in their use of assessment tools, for example using a digital camera to record and use evidence.
26. Where *Assessment for learning* is effective, pupils:
- are encouraged and involved in evaluating their own and others' work
  - have a clear understanding of what they are to achieve as a result of the lesson
  - know what their targets are and what they must practise in order to achieve them
  - understand and act on teachers' oral and written comments to improve their responses.
27. Systems for summative assessment are mostly secure with many schools analysing their performance in the end of key stage assessments and identifying what learning has taken place. However, in a few schools, improvement has only recently taken place with some belatedly introducing QCA testing in all year groups in Key Stage 2. The analysis of summative assessments, to identify weaknesses and inform curricular target setting, is improving and schools have begun to introduce layered

curricular targets, especially if they are involved in the PLP or ISP.<sup>3</sup> However, schools are more often focusing their efforts at Key Stage 2 and have yet to fully consider ways of using the Foundation Stage Profile data and assessment in Year 1 to track progress and to identify curriculum targets through Key Stage 1.

28. In those schools that monitor pupil progress effectively, computer software is used well to analyse underachievement and identify where individuals and groups of pupils are making inadequate progress. In the best examples, teachers write assessment reports for their classes and analyse pupil performance and progress, setting out clear points for improvement and actions they need to take. Whereas most schools are recording the progress made by pupils in English and mathematics, there is little evidence of schools monitoring progress systematically in the National Curriculum foundation subjects. Many teachers lack confidence and remain uneasy about using the National Curriculum levels in most foundation subjects and this affects their capacity to monitor progress. Where it exists, portfolio evidence is at an early stage of development.

## Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy

29. Although the vast majority of headteachers view the introduction of the PNS positively, the implementation of *Excellence and enjoyment* has had limited influence on the organisation and delivery of teaching and learning in English and mathematics. Most schools continue to use the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson for teaching English and mathematics. They are seen as central to attaining or maintaining high standards in both subjects.
30. The quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics continue to be good or better in nearly two thirds of all lessons observed. Although few lessons in English and mathematics are unsatisfactory, the quality of teaching in about a third of all the lessons remains only adequate. Where this is the case in English, there is sometimes too great an emphasis placed on coverage of objectives at the expense of securing learning. Differentiation is not always given sufficient attention in planning or few opportunities are taken to use assessment strategies to review learning at key points throughout the lesson. Sometimes, the pace of learning is too slow or there is an imbalance of time between teacher input and pupil activity. Adult questioning and explanation dominate in some lessons, leaving pupils with limited opportunities to develop dialogue and to express their ideas and responses to questions in any detail. In others, insufficient modelling is provided by teachers leading to pupils being

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<sup>3</sup> The setting of targets to raise standards based on the school's thorough analysis of assessment in all year groups. Targets are set for individual pupils and groups of pupils, with these contributing towards the targets set for raising attainment across the whole school.

unclear about their work or what is expected of them. Occasionally, support, including writing frameworks and worksheets, is either too complex for the least able, or inhibits the most able from expressing their ideas in full.

31. Similarly in mathematics, some adequate lessons are characterised by a slower pace in the mental and oral starter and main teaching activities, which are often too long and cause some pupils to lose interest. In others, objectives are not always clear or discussed fully so that pupils are left wondering where the lesson is heading. Occasionally, complicated expositions lead to misunderstandings for particular pupils and insufficient use is made of targeted or differentiated questions. Pupils do not always have opportunities to discuss how a solution may be reached and work is sometimes not matched to the needs of all pupils in the class. Assessment is often weaker, with some satisfactory lessons making limited use of the plenary to correct misconceptions, consolidate learning and extend pupils' thinking. Teaching that is only adequate in both English and mathematics often gives insufficient consideration to the needs of low and high attaining pupils, and this inhibits their progress and achievement.
32. Although the PNS maintains the focus on teaching of literacy and numeracy through use of the national frameworks and daily lessons in English and mathematics, it also encourages schools to give greater effort to linking the teaching of literacy and numeracy with other subjects. Where links have been developed, these are mainly in English and are often informal and lack a strategic approach in terms of delivery and progression. Even the best schools have difficulty in linking mathematics across the curriculum. Decisions on planning for cross curricular links are too often left to individual teachers. However, where links are made, these are often stronger between literacy and history, as illustrated in the example below:

*A meticulous mapping of literacy objectives against the foundation subjects ensures that pupils have the opportunity to consolidate their learning in relevant contexts in other subjects. For example, pupils' historical understanding develops through planned speaking and listening opportunities. They reinforce their knowledge in writing well-structured biographies, letters or instructions. Working in this way adds to pupils' enjoyment and relevance of both literacy and history.*

## **Teaching and learning across the whole curriculum**

33. Overall, in the schools and local authorities visited, the impact of the PNS on improving provision and achievement in National Curriculum foundation subjects is limited. Where improvement is evident, it is usually due to the influence of an effective subject leader rather than the influence of the PNS. On the part of the local authority, knowledge and identification of

good practice in foundation subjects varies and has implications for their ability to report on and share good practice with all schools. Local authorities remain sharply focused on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy and raising achievement in the foundation subjects is rarely a priority. There are exceptions, for example the quality of provision for music has been causally affected by the 'Wider opportunities' pilot programme, a government policy included within *Excellence and enjoyment* and promoted in the government's music manifesto. Similarly, the PE and school sport initiative has helped secure improvements in many primary schools.

34. Improving and sustaining the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics remain the key priorities for the vast majority of the schools. Where schools have recognised the potential of the PNS to promote and extend effective teaching and learning across the curriculum, teachers make good use of the information in *Excellence and enjoyment* and PNS training materials to generate discussion on how to extend good practice. The most successful schools have fully explored the meaning of 'creativity' and recognise creative development as integral to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Some have also identified the most effective learning styles of individual pupils and are beginning to consider personalised learning. In these schools, teachers encourage pupils to become independent learners and involve them in assessing their own progress.
35. The PNS has helped to raise the profile of ICT as a teaching tool. The proportion of lessons in which teachers and pupils use ICT has increased significantly. Teachers' use of ICT to challenge and engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning is improving. Many schools have installed interactive whiteboards and more teachers are using them effectively to teach new skills, to provide good models and to introduce a broader range of source material directly from the Internet. However, few have successfully linked the good use of interactive whiteboards for whole class teaching with effective follow through into pupils' own use of ICT to support independent work in lessons. Pupils' engagement with, and motivation for, learning is mostly good with teaching appealing to a wider range of learning styles where interactive whiteboards are used effectively. Teachers are starting to share interactive resources on school networks, both within and between schools, and local authorities are establishing central resource portals which are being used well by schools to support teaching.
36. Where ICT is used effectively, teachers:
  - have received good training, have good subject knowledge and are confident about how to use the technology
  - make effective use of the visual impact of the resource through a variety of presentational formats to display text, diagrams, and images, which are used interactively

- use the resources to demonstrate comparisons, for example between different bar and pie charts in mathematics
  - use the interactive whiteboard to provide models and demonstrations to secure new aspects of learning, for example problem solving or constructing text
  - switch easily between different pages and files to help pupils recall previous learning and to apply learning in one subject across other areas of the curriculum
  - use the interactive whiteboard in the plenary to display examples of pupils' work for assessment and discussion
  - use PNS interactive teaching programmes effectively
  - deploy teaching assistants with good ICT knowledge to support individuals and groups of pupils
  - make good use of ICT to amend planning electronically and to produce appropriately differentiated work and activities
  - have access to readily available technical support.
37. Where ICT is used effectively, pupils:
- show improved attitudes to learning through the interactive nature and visual appeal of computers and interactive whiteboards
  - are excited by the wider range of resources available to them
  - find the use of ICT a helpful way to share ideas and techniques
  - gain independence and confidence in their learning, for example pupils with special educational needs who have access to their own laptops
  - are motivated and consequently produce work with greater effort and often of superior quality.
38. Where improvement in the use of ICT has been most effective in schools and local authorities, there has been effective and coordinated leadership and management of the developments both at local authority and school level. The following example illustrates how this is achieved in one local authority.

*The PNS has had a positive impact on the development of ICT across the local authority. There is a clear and differentiated strategy for developing ICT in schools with an overall improvement plan of key priorities.*

*Training is organised for school leadership teams and matched to the levels of ICT capability. Subject leader meetings are organised to support school leadership and management and focus on developing schools' use of ICT across the curriculum. The local authority has a very good portal from which schools can access key resources. Networks of schools are included in an IWB expansion project and these work towards a national competency standard (NAACE mark). Schools receive good training and support from PNS consultants to improve their use of PNS software to support teaching and learning. The local authority has good and accurate records of the hardware availability in each of the primary schools and has a clear understanding of schools' capacity to develop ICT across the*

*curriculum. The local authority is extending its leading teacher team to include ten ICT mentors to support schools' leadership of ICT.*

39. Schools are making good progress in extending the use of ICT in and out of the classroom. The installation of interactive whiteboards has had a major impact on teachers' use of ICT to support teaching and learning. In those schools where some classrooms do not have access to interactive whiteboards, there are usually plans in place to purchase and install them. ICT is used more widely to support pupils' learning in English and mathematics but schools are beginning to think about extending this to other subjects. Overall, leadership and management of ICT in the schools are satisfactory and improving.
40. However, there is some variation in the quality of leadership and management, with a number of strengths and weaknesses identified in the schools visited. Stronger features include:
- auditing of provision against a common standard to gain accreditation, for example e-learning status, awarded in recognition of schools' success in using ICT to support learning
  - writing of clearly defined action plans for the development of ICT which include monitoring the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in English and mathematics
  - making good use of ICT for planning, and for both recording and collating assessment data
  - accessing of resources from the internet to support teaching
  - networking with clusters of schools to share in the dissemination of good practice and to provide more efficient use of training provided by strategy consultants
  - receiving good, targeted support and training from strategy consultants on how to make the best use of PNS software to support teaching and learning
  - increasing use of PNS software to support the teaching of English and mathematics.

Weaker features include:

- limited monitoring of teachers' use of ICT to judge whether it is enhancing teaching and learning and helping to raise standards
- ICT being used to record pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics but not in ICT itself
- limited training for teachers in how to make the best use of the resource
- limited use of interactive whiteboards by pupils, with teachers lacking an established routine of using the boards for group and independent work
- difficulties in finding appropriate resources to support learning
- not having exploited the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics, despite schools recognising the potential



- uncertainty as to the management of resources to develop teachers' and pupils' future use of ICT, for example whether room-based ICT suites or a mobile laptop suite provides the best solution.
41. The following example illustrates how one school is making effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

*The school has prioritised ICT to support teaching and learning. Interactive whiteboards are recognised as a key teaching tool to help engage and motivate pupils while appealing to a wider range of learning styles. Good support and training have been received from the local authority strategy consultant to help teachers use the boards more effectively and to become more familiar with PNS software. Teachers' own capability with the use of interactive whiteboards is improving. They use PNS software effectively, particularly to support the teaching of mathematics. In some cases, pupils are ahead of the teachers in remembering the correct procedures when the boards are being used. Laptops are used efficiently by teachers to plan, and resource their teaching. There are good plans in place to extend the use of ICT to learning in other subjects, for example history and geography. Training for teaching assistants is in progress and, when complete, should enable teachers to take full advantage of using the interactive whiteboards during group and independent work in lessons. The leadership team uses ICT effectively for collecting, recording and analysing attainment data.*

## **Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1**

42. Induction arrangements as pupils enter school are at least satisfactory in almost all schools visited, with good induction arrangements in two thirds. Schools' arrangements for induction are improving, with many schools increasingly involving parents and pre-school providers. Training has raised teachers' awareness of the importance of effective transition from Year R to Year 1 and this in turn has led to improvements in provision for Year 1 pupils in many schools. However, although schools understand the importance of transition and many recognise it as an area for development, it is rarely identified as a priority in school improvement plans. Provision for the transition of pupils with additional needs is usually effective with a greater focus being given to adapting the induction process to suit their individual requirements. Training and support provided by local authorities to help secure good practice in transition has resulted in an increased awareness of the need for greater liaison between Foundation Stage and Year 1 teachers. In some schools, this has led to increased confidence in the use of the Foundation Stage Profile along with changes to teaching in Year 1 to meet the learning needs of pupils.
43. In those schools that have been particularly successful in securing effective transition, sufficient time is made available for teachers to meet

together and discuss transition issues. Additional information sessions are provided to help parents understand the respective curriculum and teaching approaches used in each key stage and how the Foundation Stage Profile is used to record achievement at the end of the Reception year. In a few schools, baseline assessments are still administered to measure achievement at the start of the Reception year, with these being repeated as pupils leave the Foundation Stage. This is often due to teachers' lack of confidence in using the Foundation Stage Profile, but also because schools wish to continue assessment systems which have already been established and are used comfortably and confidently within the school. Most schools rightly concentrate on ensuring Foundation Stage pupils make good progress in acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills, but for some there is still a tendency to move children too early into the Key Stage 1 curriculum when they have made insufficient progress towards achieving the early learning goals.

44. The following examples demonstrate good practice in local authorities and schools which support effective transition:

*Induction: several opportunities are planned for pupils to visit their new classes at least a term prior to moving in order to develop their confidence in relating to their new teacher. Teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage follow pupils through into Year 1 and support them over an induction period in their new class. Information booklets are used effectively to explain transition to parents and how this affects their children. The transition arrangements for pupils with additional needs, including the gifted and talented and those with English as an additional language, are carefully managed with induction programmes planned to ensure that they settle quickly and that their specific needs are taken into account on transfer.*

*Teaching and learning: schools have specific policies for transition with a clear action plan to guide teaching and learning to secure continuity as pupils transfer from the Foundation Stage into Year 1. Teachers from both the Reception year and Year 1 plan together. This provides greater continuity with programmes and strategies that are matched both to pupils' needs and the learning of basic skills. The Foundation Stage Profile is integrated into whole-school assessment and attainment tracking systems, with information from the profile being used with targeted Year 1 pupils to continue work towards the early learning goals. Sufficient time is given for information to be communicated to receiving teachers on suggested next steps in learning. Facilities between Year R and Year 1 such as outdoor play areas and equipment are shared. Networks are used well in the local authority to support transition issues with knowledgeable subject leaders providing support on integrating the Foundation Stage curriculum into whole school planning.*

*Training: local authority training courses and local learning networks/cluster groups provide support for teachers in the Foundation Stage and Year 1. Local funding for transition projects is accessed to enable staff to meet and work together. Local authority funding is targeted towards the provision of Leading Foundation Stage practitioners to support transition. Whole school training on teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage provides teachers with a better understanding of the progress and continuity of provision into the Key Stage 1 curriculum.*

*Involving parents: Home visiting is used to improve links between home and school, with meetings being held for parents a few weeks after children enter a new class to discuss concerns and to plan the next steps for children. Workshops and meetings are provided for parents and carers to explain the curriculum and expectations of the Foundation Stage. Time is set aside to involve parents in contributing to the Foundation Stage Profile.*

## **The impact of the PNS on leadership and management**

45. In almost all schools visited, leadership and management are satisfactory or better. However, long-standing weaknesses in a few persist with underachievement not being tackled rigorously enough. In most cases, headteachers and subject leaders are committed to improving provision, raising standards and supporting the continuing professional development of staff. Leadership teams are usually knowledgeable about, and committed to, the PNS but some teachers are still unclear about the underpinning principles. Many schools have made only limited changes to the way in which they manage the curriculum since the publication of *Excellence and enjoyment*. In schools where management and leadership are most successful, leadership teams are prepared to challenge and modify current practice and take every opportunity to use the PNS to improve provision. Approximately one in three schools visited have not used the PNS teaching and learning materials to review practices and plan for improvements. Although there is a commitment to the principles embodied within *Excellence and enjoyment*, a few schools lack the practical knowledge of ways in which to implement change and bring about improvement in line with these principles. Consequently, such schools agree with the underlying messages but are hesitant in making changes.
46. Some headteachers see the PNS as a vindication of 'what we have always done' and have introduced few changes since it was launched. In contrast, schools with strong and confident leadership evaluate the potential of the PNS for securing school improvement and introduce appropriate changes to bring this about. An increasing number of schools are developing a broader range of curriculum initiatives, for example by teaching a foreign

language or reintroducing themed weeks and cross curricular projects. The majority of schools are aware of PNS teaching and learning materials, usually the unit on *Assessment for learning*, but few have looked in any depth at the full range. Although schools frequently cite ICT and *Assessment for learning* as the PNS strands having the greatest influence upon teaching, this was not always the case in the lessons observed. Although the use of ICT is increasingly effective, assessment is still the most common weakness in teaching. Many schools have undertaken training in *Speaking, listening and learning*, but few have taken steps to incorporate speaking and listening into a whole school approach.

47. In the most effective schools, strong leadership and management were characterised by:
- a clear commitment to raising or maintaining high standards in English and mathematics
  - delegation of leadership to include subject leaders for English and mathematics and to give them greater involvement in planning for, monitoring and evaluating improvements. In the best cases, subject leaders take a strategic overview and give good advice to headteachers and governors about improvement priorities
  - inclusion of PNS priorities in school improvement plans and subject action plans
  - improved monitoring from subject leaders, such as the scrutiny of planning, sampling pupils' work and some observation of teaching
  - a sharper focus on curricular target setting, including layered targets promoted by the PNS and which are based on the effective analysis of pupil performance
  - effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of 'catch-up' provision and of intervention strategies on raised achievement and pupils' progress
  - effective links made between the analysis of data and the management and provision of intervention and support
  - good support from strategy consultants to guide the work of subject leaders and to improve aspects of teaching and learning, for example in making better use of ICT and in developing teachers' questioning and pupils' speaking and listening
  - effective use of 'in-house' expertise of teachers to provide a clearer understanding of the strengths and aspects that require improvement.
48. Where leadership and management are least effective, there is often a lack of urgency among headteachers for securing improvements and for raising standards further. Subject leaders have insufficient influence on driving forward improvements, and initiatives are guided by weak action plans which do not have sufficiently robust success criteria through which to measure improvements.
49. Weaker features of leadership and management underpinning the least effective schools included:

- insufficient analysis of assessment information and too little knowledge of the weaknesses underpinning low standards, leading to a failure to identify and act on the root causes of underachievement
  - limited overview of the achievement and progress made by individuals over time, with some schools still not setting numerical targets for individual pupils and **all** year groups, or checking on pupils' progress from year to year to identify underachievement
  - insufficient attention given to early intervention, with too great a reliance on catch-up and booster support in the last two years of Key Stage 2
  - weak management of intervention programmes and insufficient knowledge and understanding of the three waves of intervention and support available
  - a lack of action upon outcomes from monitoring teaching and learning
  - insufficient links made in improvement planning to measurable outcomes for pupils, leading to plans which can be monitored but are difficult to evaluate in terms of quantifiable improvements
  - strategy support and materials, including leading teachers, not being used strategically enough to support teaching and learning
  - poor quality of self-evaluation, with too much assertion, too little evidence and judgements which are often overgenerous.
50. Schools involved and supported directly through one of the specific PNS leadership initiatives such as the PLP are more likely to have made changes to the curriculum and to teaching in response to the PNS. Support from effective primary strategy consultant leaders and PNS consultants has helped to secure a number of improvements in many of those schools involved. Involvement in the PLP or the ISP has led to leadership being distributed more widely among the leadership team with clear priorities for improvement and the best use being made of the skills of subject leaders for English and mathematics to raise the quality of teaching and ultimately the achievement of pupils. This is illustrated in the following examples:

*The mathematics subject leader is a recent appointment. She has been in the school one year and has been fully involved in the PLP. The fundamental change in her role since appointment is one of leadership replacing coordination. The school's commitment to improvement involves all staff and is articulated through a detailed action plan outlining the improvement priorities for the school. Raising standards in mathematics is a key priority and an action plan was defined following an audit of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. The plan includes detailed success criteria and quantitative targets for improvements in pupils' attainment.*

*The subject leader has introduced an improved format for planning, enabling teachers to make better use of unit plans as well as the school's own mathematics scheme. Weekly plans are now produced in a similar style and a greater emphasis is placed on including differentiated*

*activities for four groups (three groups plus SEN). Good guidance and support for this was received by the PNS consultant as part of the PLP. Springboard support programmes were introduced and teaching assistants were trained by the subject leader to support small groups. The subject leader's tracking of the Springboard programme indicates that most pupils have made sufficient progress and will not require intervention work in subsequent years. Additional tracking of targeted pupils using the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) has helped the subject leader identify weaknesses in pupils' mathematical understanding.*

*The programme for monitoring and evaluating mathematics is comprehensive and includes the analysis of test results to establish year group targets. Planning is scrutinised half termly and some work sampling is completed to match pupils' work with targets. Mathematics resources have been audited and new ones purchased to meet gaps in provision. The subject leader has used additional time funded through the programme to observe the teaching of mathematics in all classes with an emphasis on the quality of planning and the effectiveness of differentiation. A further round of observations is planned to focus particularly on the points for development identified in the autumn. A very good report was written and shared with staff which summarised the findings of the subject leader's monitoring and evaluation programme.*

51. Following the introduction of the PLP in 2003, the programme was expanded in 2004 to include a greater range of schools. Many were included for a second year in 2004/05 to strengthen existing leadership and management and improve capacity to raise standards in English and mathematics. Schools received additional training from the local authority and further support from a primary strategy consultant leader. Local authorities have generally improved their selection of schools for involvement in the programme and make better use of a range of data and performance indicators. The selection and training of consultant leaders has improved but approximately one in five consultant leaders are still not of the calibre required to challenge schools to secure improvements. The vast majority of headteachers value the support of consultant leaders and appreciate having another colleague 'from the chalk face' with whom they can talk and exchange ideas, but weaknesses in some schools are not challenged sufficiently by consultant leaders. Where included in the leadership team, English and mathematics subject leaders also value the professional development offered through the programme with schools benefiting from the improvement in their effectiveness.
52. The PLP's success in schools is directly related to the quality of its leadership and management within the local authority. The following example illustrates how good leadership provided by the strategy manager

led to the effective implementation and evaluation of the success of the leadership programme in one local authority.

*The leadership programme is managed successfully by the local authority and implemented with conviction. Two senior inspectors lead the programme and report regularly to the strategy manager. The selection of consultant leaders is thorough, and regular consultant leader team meetings are held to discuss progress in the schools they support. Schools are selected for involvement in the programme through the local authority's good systems for identifying schools causing concern and where underperformance is at its highest. All consultant leaders receive a detailed dossier on each school and they draw up an agreement to record targets for improvement with the school. The consultant leader focuses upon building capacity within the schools, particularly improving the leadership and management skills of subject leaders. The work of consultant leaders is monitored carefully through a scrutiny of their notes of school visits.*

*The impact of the leadership programme in the local authority's schools is good and all headteachers involved confirmed the authority's commitment to raising standards as a key priority within the programme. Headteachers valued the support they had received from consultant leaders. As part of the leadership programme, good support was received from strategy consultants for training and guidance on exercising more effective subject leadership. Schools were reluctant to commit themselves to confirming that the programme would raise standards, although results were expected to improve in all the schools. More challenging targets were set for Year 6 pupils in those schools involved in the programme than were set in most other schools. All schools improved their management of assessment data with some undertaking a more robust analysis of assessment and both identifying weaknesses and setting curricular targets for improvement.*

53. Many school leadership teams involved in the PLP are clearly profiting from the interaction with a consultant leader. Most recognise the benefits of collective leadership and better communication and teamwork following their involvement in the programme. However, not all recognise raising standards as an outcome of their involvement.
54. The management of the PLP varies considerably across local authorities and this does affect the overall success of the programme. Some authorities provide minimal information to consultant leaders on the schools they are supporting and very few follow up schools' use of the additional funding provided through the programme. A few schools involved in the programme are too slow to implement change and lack a sense of urgency. Leadership team training was the least useful aspect of the programme for many schools, often because it was seen to lack

differentiation, with headteachers considering it better suited to new headteachers or new teams.

55. Despite a greater focus upon the need to monitor achievement, the tracking of pupils' progress is still a weakness in one in three schools visited, with too little emphasis placed on monitoring the progress pupils make through the year and from year to year. Local authorities seldom monitor the quality and rigour of consultant leaders' work in schools through shadowing or observing them in action. Consequently, too great a reliance is placed on feedback provided by schools on the quality of the work and contribution of the consultant leader, rather than monitoring the quality and impact first hand. Links between the work of the consultant leaders and other school improvement personnel, such as the link adviser or inspector, are not always clearly defined and coordinated. This sometimes leads to missed opportunities for all officers and consultants to keep the school tightly focused upon a common agenda and to ensure that the pace of improvement is reinforced effectively. The following example shows how things can go wrong.

*In one local authority, weaknesses in the leadership and management of one sample school had been identified and inclusion in the Primary Leadership Programme was expected to support improvements. However, the programme was not implemented effectively or followed through with any rigour by the authority. Consequently weaknesses remained and the capacity to improve was not secured. Standards continued to slide and the school was included in the programme for a second time but with the support of a new consultant leader.*

56. The ISP has been expanded to involve over half of all local authorities nationally.<sup>4</sup> It has been effective overall in securing improvements in underperforming schools, but to varying degrees in the individual schools involved. The programme is targeted at schools with Key Stage 2 results that are consistently below national levels, and selection procedures for inclusion in the programme are robust. Almost all of the local authorities are implementing the programme effectively. Schools are positive about it and recognise its potential for raising standards. Involvement has led to improvements in teaching and learning with a clearer focus on teaching objectives and learning outcomes. Leadership and management have improved at all levels and especially among subject leaders in English and mathematics. The tracking of pupils' progress and target setting are generally secure and pupils' attitudes to learning are often improved, helped by their greater involvement in self-assessment and teachers' use of sharper marking strategies. Schools are usually supported well by ISP consultants, who provide good quality training and guidance. Consultants

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<sup>4</sup> The ISP was introduced as a pilot initiative in 2002–04 and rolled out as a national programme in 2004.



develop strong relationships and credibility with schools. Most have good professional knowledge and expertise and provide schools with good systems to help sustain improvements.

57. The following example illustrates how inclusion in the ISP had a beneficial impact in helping one new headteacher to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

*Before the programme began there was considerable disaffection among staff, a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, and a history of low standards. Coordinators did not take enough responsibility for the leadership of their subjects and the strategic development of the school lacked coherence. In a little over two terms, these issues have been tackled and good progress has been made on a number of fronts. There is now a strong sense of teamwork with staff working together very well to create an effective climate for learning. There is greater consistency in the culture and climate for learning in classes. Routines and expectations are common and all staff have a greater understanding of how learning develops. Staff share a common purpose and are eager to reflect on their practice and learn from each other; this has led to improved consistency in lesson planning and has raised the importance of assessment in the planning process.*

*All classes now have curricular targets clearly on display and staff are more aware of the impact of their teaching on the achievement of pupils. Assessments are accurate and teachers both share concerns and seek help if an individual or group of pupils does not make the expected progress. The programme consultant has helped staff understand the importance of assessment for learning and given advice on day-to-day assessment strategies. This has been particularly beneficial to the teachers who had previously taught unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers are now more confident in adapting their planning and responding creatively to questions and requests for clarification in lessons. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching in the school.*

58. There are some weaknesses however, particularly in the capacity of a few headteachers to lead and evaluate the programme successfully in their own schools. In such schools, staff are insufficiently involved in deciding the priorities for inclusion in the raising attainment plans, the quality of which varies considerably with some lacking precision in success criteria that links directly with outcomes for pupils. Monitoring and evaluation at school and local authority level are not always effective and the work of the consultants and school link inspectors are not always aligned.

## The impact of the PNS on inclusion

59. There remains some confusion among schools about the relationship between the PNS and the 'inclusion agenda' in improving standards for all pupils. It is uncommon to have direct reference in school improvement plans to raising the attainment of specific groups. Although some of the lowest attaining schools recognise standards to be too low, they lack a sense of urgency and determination in taking early and effective action. Many schools facing challenging circumstances are often involved in several PNS initiatives to support inclusion and raising achievement, for example involvement in the PLP or the Behaviour and Attendance Project. Some find it difficult to manage the different strands of the PNS within their school improvement plans and often see these as additions rather than central to their own strategic planning. Consequently, their efforts are spread too thinly across too many initiatives, impeding progress. Some of the schools facing the most challenging of circumstances too easily apportion blame for low achievement to external factors, including the pupils themselves, rather than considering weaknesses in their own teaching and support. Very few schools monitor and evaluate the impact of specific strategies designed to raise the achievement of particular groups of pupils. They are consequently unclear as to which strategies are having the most significant impact on pupils. Although there is increased recognition of the need for greater challenge for more able pupils in schools, provision is frequently limited to additional activities and discreet events rather than effective differentiation in lessons and appropriately challenging teaching.
60. Where schools have made changes to ensure that their practice is more inclusive, they have usually:
- considered a creative and cross-curricular approach to learning which includes all their pupils
  - used the PNS's *Speaking, listening and learning* materials to encourage all pupils to participate fully in lessons
  - adopted approaches which stimulate and engage pupils, for example talking with partners, collaborative group work and educational visits to stimulate first-hand learning experiences
  - increased the use of computers and interactive whiteboards as teaching resources to stimulate and motivate pupils
  - improved their data analysis and target setting for individual pupils, providing a sharper focus upon underachievement and better targeted support
  - used teaching assistants, learning mentors or bilingual support workers effectively to provide social, emotional and academic support to individuals and groups
  - increased the involvement of parents through a broad range of school activities and family learning programmes for literacy and numeracy.

61. Although inclusion is high on the agenda of most local authorities, the management of inclusion varies significantly across schools. Most authorities have developed robust pupil tracking systems and some provide training to improve schools' own management of inclusion. In spite of this, there are still groups of pupils who make insufficient progress. Most schools are aware of the PNS's literacy programmes forming the second wave of intervention and designed for small groups of pupils, for example Further Literacy Support (FLS) and Early Literacy Support (ELS). Some schools have received targeted support to successfully introduce Wave 3 literacy programmes for those pupils whose needs are greater. However, schools generally know too little about how to successfully manage the three waves of intervention. Some are unclear of the Wave 3 programmes available to them or are uncertain how to access those that are known.
62. HMI visited a small number of schools included in PNS pilot programmes to improve behaviour and attendance and to improve the teaching and learning of advanced bilingual learners. Although the local authorities' management of the pilots is satisfactory overall, it is occasionally unsatisfactory with weaknesses in both the training and support offered to schools. Where the programmes were implemented successfully, they helped schools to improve both the identification and support for pupils with additional needs and also to strengthen the management of inclusion. Where the programmes were effectively led in schools, the roles and responsibilities of those staff involved were clarified early and deployed strategically to support targeted pupils over a long period of time to improve their attainment. Teachers who are keen to broaden their repertoire of skills and strategies have welcomed the programmes' emphasis on improving the quality of mainstream teaching, with modelling of expert practice and whole school professional development. However, systems for monitoring and evaluating the success of the projects for improving behaviour, attendance and provision for advanced bilingual learners at both local authority and school level are seldom rigorous.
63. In schools where the management of inclusion is effective, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) generally have a better understanding of the three waves of support promoted by the PNS. Where inclusion is unsatisfactory, schools lack the knowledge and skill to identify and tackle underachievement. Although most schools implement some or all of the PNS literacy support programmes, few teach the Springboard intervention programmes in mathematics. The majority of schools do not use PNS intervention programmes selectively enough. Neither the specific needs of individual pupils, nor the appropriateness of intervention programmes in meeting these needs, are analysed sufficiently to ensure that support and intervention will have the greatest impact. Schools report mixed success with the intervention programmes. Interventions are more likely to be successful if they are taught effectively by well trained staff, are linked to the work provided for other pupils and

are used selectively. However, too many schools use intervention programmes as a catch-all for low attaining pupils whether or not the programmes themselves are meeting their needs.

64. Schools are understandably concerned about the organisation of withdrawal groups and the impact this has upon pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. A few schools do monitor the impact of intervention programmes on the progress made by those involved, but often lack the knowledge of why such programmes are or are not successful. Low attaining pupils frequently spend a significant proportion of their time with support staff. Where this is organised effectively with work that is well matched to their individual needs, pupils make good progress. However, this is not always the case and some support staff are given too much responsibility for adapting work and influencing the pace of learning. In such cases, there is sometimes too great an imbalance between consolidation and the introduction of new learning. It is rare for the impact of the additional support provided by teaching assistants to be systematically monitored. There remains too little feedback to teaching assistants to help them improve the quality and effectiveness of their work.
65. Where the management of inclusion is effective, this often includes:
- a thorough analysis of assessments and information on pupil progress to identify those who are underachieving
  - strong links between the work of the subject leaders and the SENCO/inclusion manager to ensure identified pupils receive appropriate support in English and mathematics
  - improved differentiation in teachers' planning to ensure pupils have appropriately matched learning tasks in lessons
  - harnessing good support from the local authority support services to help teachers improve their management of pupils' behaviour and the suitability of individual education plans (IEPs)
  - well managed intervention programmes, targeted appropriately and taught by well trained teachers or teaching assistants
  - good analysis of the impact of intervention programmes through thorough assessment of pupils' progress
  - matching targets in IEPs to curricular targets and learning objectives in lessons
  - good partnerships with parents to engage greater support for pupils with additional needs and for homework
  - good use of PNS teaching and learning materials to improve conditions for learning, to adapt teaching to appeal to a greater range of learning styles (such as using interactive whiteboards) and to involve pupils more in self assessment.
66. Where the management of inclusion is weak, this often includes:
- limited weak analysis of attainment and progress data resulting in groups of pupils not receiving the additional support they require

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- poor knowledge of the Wave 3 intervention programmes and how they can be used to support pupils with additional needs
  - implementation of programmes without the appropriate knowledge and then discarding them either because they do not show immediate impact or the school changes its priorities for the use of funding
  - insufficient analysis of the impact of intervention with little monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching
  - overinvestment in booster sessions at the end of Key Stage 2 at the expense of intervening earlier to helping pupils catch up in the preceding years
  - insufficient support in classrooms with pupils being provided with tasks that are too difficult to complete independently, or where adult support that is available guides pupils to the answers in order to keep the pace of the session but at the expense of securing learning
  - too great a reliance upon teacher differentiation in lessons in meeting the needs of pupils who have significant gaps in learning but who require more focused intervention
  - insufficient challenge provided for more able pupils.