



Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

Secondary
National Strategy
for school improvement

National Low-Attainers Pilot
– report on the first year

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**Pilot and associate
schools, local
authorities, DfES
and Primary and
Secondary National
Strategies**

Status: Recommended

Date of issue: 10-2005

Ref: 1836-2005DCL-EN

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National Low-Attainers Pilot – report on the first year

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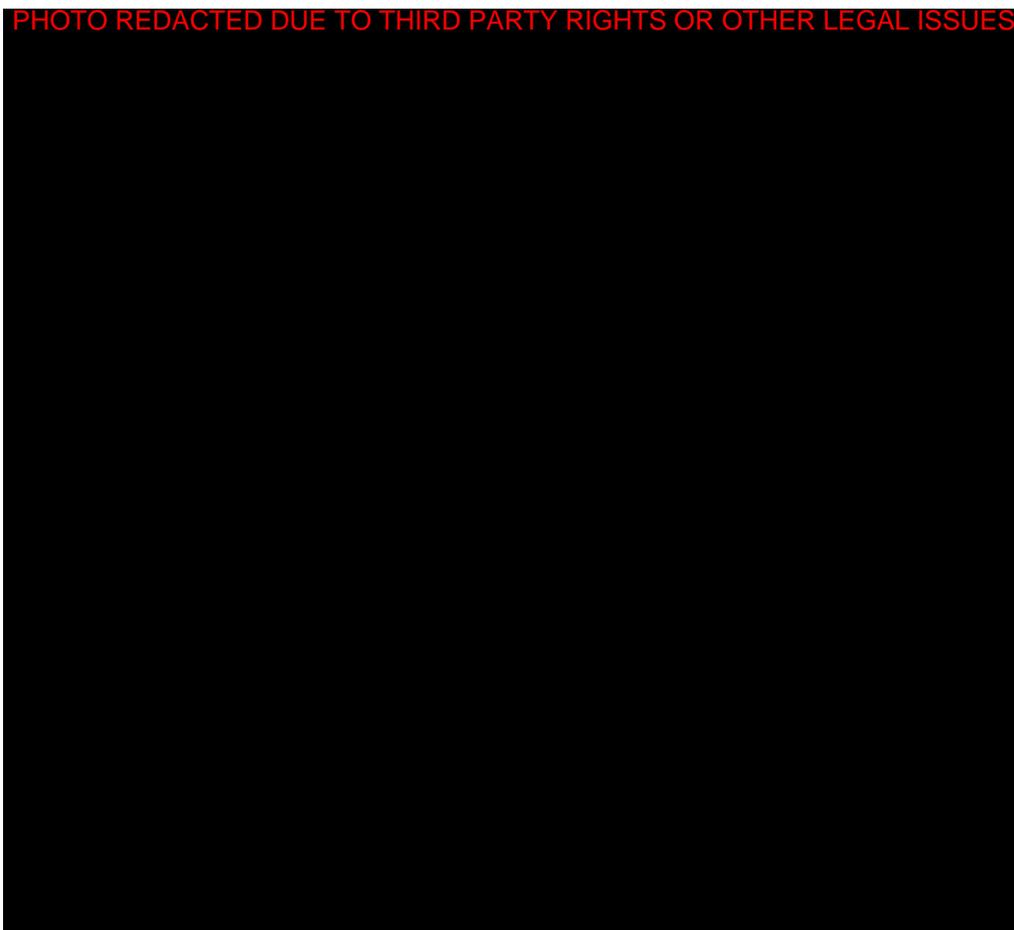
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About this report

The National Low-Attainers Pilot is a four-year initiative, with the first year giving schools time to prepare their curriculum changes for the level 3 entrants. This report on that first year is therefore not an account of the results of Key Stage 3 curriculum innovation, but a description, largely by the schools themselves, of their planning year. Their collective experience raises a large number of issues which will be of use to school leaders who are planning similar initiatives, and the local authorities (LAs) who could be supporting and advising them.

Among the topics there is discussion of the leadership and management of change, the logistics of timetabling, the problems of recruitment and retention, the value of properly focused networking and the use of new technologies to enliven teaching and learning. Although this was a planning year, several schools started to put new or enhanced strategies in place. Examples of this are more effective procedures for tracking pupils' progress, better involvement of parents and carers, and some particularly innovative examples of productive links with partnership primary schools.

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National Low-Attainers Pilot – report on the first year

Overview

Twenty schools, two from each of ten LAs, are taking part in the National Low-Attainers Pilot, which began in April 2004 and will run for four years. The schools in Bristol, Doncaster, Essex, Greenwich, Liverpool, Manchester, Sandwell and Nottingham are funded by the DfES, while the schools in Lewisham and Newham are funded by London Challenge. The LAs are paired for networking purposes. All the schools have at least 25% of their current intake entering at level 3, and more than 50 such pupils in the current Year 7 year group. The pilot is exploring ways of maximising the progress of level 3 pupils by enabling the schools to consider radical changes in their Key Stage 3 curriculum, in terms of both structure and content. In recognition of the fact that schools cannot suddenly change the structure of their curriculum, the first year has been for preparation of the new models, which will have particular regard to:

- progression in literacy, numeracy and learning skills;
- innovative organisation and timetabling of the Key Stage 3 curriculum so that the needs of pupils who enter secondary school working at level 3 are better met;
- more flexible and innovative curriculum and teaching styles to secure the progress of the target group of pupils;
- the use of interactive whiteboard technology to enhance teaching and learning strategies.

The schools will develop models that are the most appropriate for their profile of achievement and local context, but it is expected that all will offer 5 hours each of English and mathematics support for the target cohort.

As well as the 20 substantive pilot schools, there are also 17 associate schools and three associate LAs, who attend network meetings and take part in inter-school visiting.

Main findings

Progress

- Schools are showing a greater awareness of the characteristics and needs of level 3 learners, and are starting to actively seek innovative strategies for supporting them.
- Schools have been prompted to look at their practice in crucial areas of the use of data for tracking progress and pupil grouping.
- There is an increasing level of commitment from the schools, and particularly from senior managers.
- The pilot is giving a direction for a route some schools had wanted to take, but were not sure how to proceed on.
- There has been much benefit from the opportunities to share practice at network meetings and during school visits.

- Many of the schools have made creative and effective use of the funding.
- The pilot is providing new professional development opportunities for staff.
- In some schools the pilot is helping with recruitment and retention difficulties.
- There has been valuable support from the LA Strategy managers.
- Schools have begun to use Strategy materials more coherently to support low-attaining pupils.
- The pilot is promoting more effective Key Stage 2–3 transfer practice.
- Staff are excited about the possibilities presented by the interactive whiteboards.

Constraints

- There are leadership capacity issues in a few of the schools.
- Some of the schools have recruitment and retention problems which affect plans for the provision of 5 hours of English and mathematics.
- In some schools there is insufficient integration of pilot action plans into the whole-school improvement plan.
- Some schools initially lacked the confidence to innovate – and the confidence to make mistakes.
- The use of data to track and promote pupils’ progress is in need of development in some of the schools.
- After some years of the National Curriculum schools have lost the experience of creative curriculum planning, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Curriculum

The initial brief for this pilot referred to ‘radical’ innovation, and some schools have clearly achieved this. Some of the other schools may not appear to be radical in their approach, or even particularly innovative. However, the 20 schools had very different starting points, and for many the changes which have been planned are very innovative when compared to their previous practice. In different ways the curriculum thinking of all the schools has been strongly influenced by the pilot as a result of the reflection that it has prompted. One school, for example, has abandoned streaming which had been in place for several years, as it realised that the system created a false differentiation. Other schools have looked in more detail not just at the particular needs of their level 3 pupils, but have also differentiated those needs by grouping pupils at level 3a with those at level 4c, and then providing a different curriculum for the level 3b and 3c learners. Insights such as these represent significant progress in their practice. It is clearly useful in a pilot to have a range of curriculum structures, ranging from the more conventional to the positively radical.

All schools have been encouraged to move beyond conventional curriculum thinking, with the proviso that any innovative building should sit on a secure foundation. Some of the schools were in a position to make the leap; others needed to take shorter steps. An issue in most schools was the lost practice of creative thinking about the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum have been in place long enough that few staff have had recent experience of structuring an 11–14 curriculum to meet the specific needs of the school and its learners. Consequently

many of the first attempts to produce innovative changes tended to consist of simply changing the position of the furniture, rather than seeing if some of the walls needed removing, or even stepping outside the house to consider more radical rebuilding.

An important strategy which is common to many of the plans, and is also a feature of the existing practice of many of the associate schools, is the reduction of the number of teachers for pupils in Year 7. While many pupils manage, or even thrive on, the jump after a gap of six weeks from one teacher to ten or more, it may be the case that schools have overestimated the ability of all pupils to handle this change. Those who have already reduced the number of teachers have found that attendance and levels of behaviour improve as a result. Across the pilot schools there are a variety of plans to use fewer teachers, including having form tutors teach 50% of the timetable, having mathematics and science taught by the form tutor with the rest of the curriculum taught by three teachers, and in several schools the provision of combined humanities.

The only curriculum stipulation for the pilot schools was that they should provide 5 hours each of English and mathematics. Most of the schools have instituted this for the first year, although some have experienced difficulties arising from staffing constraints. Currently the schools fall into three groups: those providing 5 hours for each subject; those providing the equivalent by the provision of cross-curricular literacy and numeracy, or the use of withdrawal groups; and a minority which are not yet able to provide the required amount. There is still work to be done in this area, particularly to ensure that the extra time provided is not simply more of the same.

The two curriculum models which have had the most influence on the schools have been the RSA Opening Minds (a competency-based scheme that has a successful, if relatively short, track record in a number of schools) and the curriculum at one of the associate schools, Bishop's Park in Essex, which is itself influenced by the RSA scheme. The headteacher of Bishop's Park has usefully challenged the thinking of the schools, by asking such questions as where is the research which proves that 'drip feeding' each subject each week is the best way of promoting learning. One of the pilot schools has responded by planning an expressive arts carousel with the subjects taught sequentially in blocks during the year. Two of the schools are adopting Opening Minds, one for 50% of the week and the other for 80%. There will be particular issues of assessment for schools adopting this scheme.

The planned curricula contain a variety of pupil groupings. Two schools have decided to apply the new curriculum to the whole of Year 7, since their emerging plans seemed to offer a better learning path for all pupils. Other schools are treating the pilot cohort as a discrete group, with their own accommodation and teachers. As mentioned above, other schools have decided to challenge those at level 3a by teaching them with level 4c pupils, and teaching the rest of the level 3s separately. As with the overall structures, the variety of pupil groupings is valuable for a pilot.

Predictably, not all schools have made the same progress with their curriculum models, although the overall picture is encouraging. An interesting aspect of feedback from schools has been the frequent observation by the pilot coordinators that the opportunity to plan a new and innovative curriculum had energised staff, and created a sense of excitement about curricular and teaching and learning possibilities which had not previously existed.

Teaching and learning

It has always been intended that developments in teaching and learning should proceed alongside the planning for curriculum change. This has largely been the case, although capacity issues have sometimes meant that the curriculum preparations have taken precedence. However, developments in teaching and learning are inherent in many of the planned changes. This is certainly the case in the Opening Minds schools, and equally those where teachers are teaching outside their subject disciplines. Providing the latter situation is properly supported by peer INSET, there can be positive gains from the probable greater concentration on process rather than content.

Some common themes emerge in the schools' plans. One is the enhanced role planned for teaching assistants. In some cases they will be used to support literacy and numeracy, in others they will have a role in assisting with the tracking of pupils' progress and the monitoring of curricular targets. A frequent pattern is the use of dedicated teaching assistants for the pilot cohort. One school is recruiting teaching assistants with primary experience to assist with the level 3 pupils. Another theme is the use of the Secondary National Strategy's whole-school initiatives, particularly Leading in learning and Assessment for learning, to support the pilot.

The issue of the tracking of pupils' progress has been a feature of both network meetings and school visits during the year. At the beginning of the pilot this issue was in need of development in many of the schools, and existing systems were not sufficiently effective to support the needs of the pupils. There has been significant improvement generally, with some further work to be done. Positive gains have been the greater understanding and planned use of curricular targets, and more effective collection, and most importantly use, of data. The session on the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) at the February network residential was particularly influential in encouraging schools to look at the package again, and plan for its use.

A few of the schools have made links with Creative Partnerships, an Arts Council-funded scheme which enables schools to work with a range of organisations and individual artists. This initiative is intended to support literacy skills, raise the confidence and self-esteem of pupils, and widen strategies for teaching and learning. The use of drama techniques has also proved effective in promoting more engaging and interactive teaching.

Interactive whiteboards

At the beginning of the pilot, ICTIS provided the funding for five interactive whiteboards, projectors and laptops for each pilot school. (This did not include the London Challenge schools, but through separate funding they are fairly well provided with interactive whiteboards.) A number of companies tendered for the contract and Promethean was successful. The company has proved to be an excellent partner in this initiative, with a genuine interest in the pedagogy of interactive whiteboards. The schools have been provided with free training and software, and each was given a class Activote set. Few of the pilot schools had much previous experience in this area, and hardly any of the teachers who will be teaching the pilot cohort had ever used interactive whiteboards. The Promethean trainers have been very well received, with excellent evaluations. They have also provided the Strategy team with feedback on the training from their perspective in order that the regional directors know the situation in each school.

A particularly imaginative exercise in one pilot school was a Promethean training session for a small group of Year 7 pupils, so they can help their teachers in the use of the boards.

Feedback from the most recent network meetings showed the success of this initiative in the majority of schools. Many of the schools have been so impressed with the potential of this technology that they have invested in a large number of extra boards. In our visits we have seen some of the teachers using the boards, and have noted the very positive effect on the interactive nature of their lessons. Teachers have become excited about their possibilities, and there is a gathering momentum in this area. There is now a need for a sharing of experiences, and continuing development of the use of the boards so that they become an effective part of the teaching repertoire in all the schools.

Key Stage 2–3 transfer

There has been considerable progress in this area. Some schools already had some effective practice, but this was not the case in the majority of schools. Following productive sessions at the network meetings, useful developments have taken place. These include much more cross-phase visiting, team teaching with primary colleagues, twilight sessions for core subject and primary staff, Low-Attainers Pilot briefings for primary headteachers and the use of network learning communities. Some of the pilot schools have funded the analysis of the Key Stage 2 test papers this year, and in addition to using the information internally have used the results for a dialogue with the primary schools.

The main issue still causing concern to the schools is the transfer of data. Despite the possibilities created by the planned use of ICT to make the results more easily available, their late acquisition remains a source of frustration for the pilot schools. We have asked the Strategy managers from the pilot LAs to put pressure on their relevant colleagues to ensure that the results, including the raw scores, are available to the schools as soon as possible. Last year one school almost managed a full set by sending a teaching assistant to all the partnership primary schools in a taxi to collect data.

Network meetings

In the feedback from schools at the recent network meetings there was a clear majority view that the most valuable experience of the preparation year has been the network opportunities. These meetings are for pilot and associate schools, and are held each half-term on a regional basis, with the exception of the first half of the spring term, when a national network residential takes place. At this latter meeting, which was held in February, there were nearly 70 delegates, and the programme was a mixture of workshops, presentations and network opportunities. Evaluations were excellent, with many schools stating that it was the most useful INSET they had attended for a long time. There are largely common agendas for all the meetings, but as the pilot progresses there are increasingly regional variations. The LA Strategy managers attend the meetings, and have been effective in working with the schools in the planning sessions.

An interesting development has been the number of network visits initiated by the schools and LAs themselves. These opportunities have ranged in scale from two pilot coordinators in nearby schools meeting, to inter-LA visits by Strategy managers and teachers. Informal feedback from many of the schools indicates that their challenged situations have previously resulted in limited opportunities to look at practice in other schools. There is a need in the coming year to promote greater involvement in network visits by the associate schools.

Strategy organisation

The pilot is coordinated by a team of four regional directors led by a senior regional director and line managed by a senior director. Each director has particular responsibility for two paired LAs and their schools, and any associate schools which fall into the geographical area. In its first year the pilot was supported by a project group representing other Strategy strands, and including the strand directors for English and mathematics. A regional director for each of English and mathematics strands provided direct input into some of the documentation and the national network meeting.

School organisation

Each pilot school receives a yearly Standards Fund allocation which is intended to pay for a coordinator, with the balance for supply cover and development costs. There are examples of very effective use of this money, particularly where it has funded imaginative staff development. In practice the schools have taken interestingly different approaches to the coordinator post. With the exception of one school, all have given the role to an existing senior manager, which has released funding to support the pilot in other ways. Many schools have used this extra money to fund responsibility posts for issues such as literacy support, thinking skills and the development of teaching and learning. The role of the coordinator has been most effective in schools where the headteacher has given the pilot a high profile, and the pilot has been a significant factor in the school's development. Where this did not happen there was a danger that the pilot would remain at the periphery of the schools' overall priorities. As the year has progressed this has been an improving factor, and as the prospect of the first pilot cohort approaches there has been clearly more of an incentive for the pilot to have a higher profile.

At one school the attached regional director has encouraged the headteacher to establish a School Improvement Group (SIG), along the lines of those developed in IQEA and the Octet project. This group has had a successful start, and is providing a robust management structure to support the development of the pilot in the school.

LA organisation

The Strategy managers of each LA receive the equivalent of 15 days' funding to support the pilot. Six of these days are used for attendance at the network meetings, leaving them the equivalent of three days a term. The Strategy managers have become an increasingly important part of the pilot. In the best examples of practice they have briefed their LA colleagues, focused the work of the consultants in the pilot schools, kept the momentum going through their school visits and in some cases visited each other's LAs. There is now much more consistency in the participation of Strategy

managers in the pilot. There was a significant shift in this involvement following an overnight conference in October 2004, which was successful in its aim of developing the partnership with them.

School visits

All pilot schools are visited twice a term. There are some common elements to the programme, with others relating to issues in the individual schools. The programme includes meetings with the headteacher and coordinator, relevant staff and pupils, and observation of Year 7 lessons. In the autumn term there were meetings in all the schools with the heads of department or postholders in the English and mathematics departments to discuss their existing practice for supporting low-attaining pupils, and their knowledge and use of Strategy resources. Currently we are tracking Year 7 pupils for a day in each of the schools during the visit.

The visits are recorded on a form, and by agreement this is copied to the schools, the Strategy manager and the regional director team. Action points from each visit are sent to the school, and these form part of the agenda for the following visit. These have proved a useful way of working in partnership with the schools.

Lessons from the first year

- Schools are appreciating and exploiting the networking opportunities provided by the pilot.
- It is clear that teachers do believe that the level 3 learners can succeed, despite the odds.
- Generally low-attaining schools are less likely to make good use of Strategy materials, partly because their challenges can prevent attendance at courses and internal dissemination.
- Strategy resources are most successful when mediated by a whole-school improvement group.
- The pilot has encouraged many of the Key Stage 3 Strategy managers to move from a coordination to a management and leadership role.
- Initially for some of the pilot schools innovation meant doing the basic things well.
- Many low-attaining schools struggle to make effective use of the wide range of initiatives and interventions they are subject to.
- Many schools lack curriculum development expertise.
- There is still a need for more support and training for schools in the use of data to track and improve pupils.

The second year

The first pilot cohort arrived in the schools in September 2005, and the previous summer term provided opportunities for much more information about the level 3 Year 6 children to be gathered than may have been the case in previous years. The final touches will need to be made to the curriculum plans and new schemes of work in the 2005 autumn term. The network meetings will address the issue of communication with parents and carers, and their involvement in the pilot. They have a valuable support

role, and experience suggests that parents and carers are more than willing to carry out this role, providing the schools can remove the barrier which many parents and carers feel exists between them and secondary schools.

In order to assist schools to find ways of providing 5 hours of English and mathematics teaching, there has been an inevitable concentration on these subjects, and little focus on science. However, science provides particular challenges for low-attaining pupils, particularly in its literacy and numeracy demands and the volume of content, and this issue will be addressed at network meetings.

The third major issue for the second year is the evaluation of progress with the pilot. This will happen at various levels. The team of regional directors, the LA Strategy managers and the schools themselves all have evaluation roles, and these will need to be carefully defined. This is a pilot – many of the schools have moved into new and unfamiliar territory, and effective evaluation will enable them to build on what is successful, but revise what is not working.

There is a range of other tasks for the second year, as follows.

- The use of interactive whiteboards needs to be developed into new areas.
- The use of data and the tracking of pupils' progress requires further support and development.
- As the year progresses schools will have to consider what provision will need to be made for the pilot cohort in the following year.
- Schools will use the pilot evaluations to implement changes for the new cohort to arrive next year.
- Schools need to ensure that the curriculum changes are accompanied by effective teaching for the level 3 learners.
- The role of the associate schools must be supported so that they do not feel detached from the main pilot.
- All those involved in the pilot partnership will need to contribute to documentation in order to disseminate the lessons of the pilot.
- Parents and carers need to have an increasing partnership role in the pilot.
- Literacy and numeracy skills must be applied and consolidated in other key subject areas.

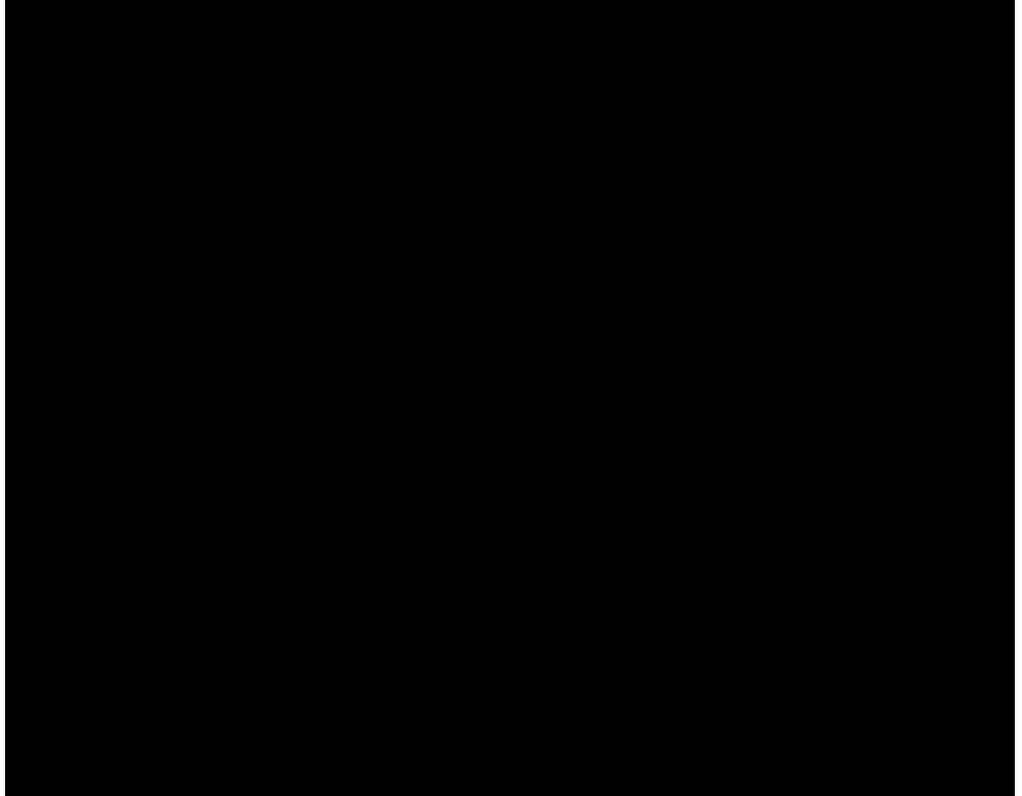
Reports from the schools

The following reports on the preparation year have been written by the coordinators in each of the pilot schools. They were written in the second half of the 2005 summer term, when the schools were in the final stages of planning.

An interesting feature of many of the reports is how far-reaching have been the changes in many of the schools. At first sight the pilot seemed to be on a fairly small scale. Initially the schools addressed the effectiveness of their current curriculum for level 3 learners, and began to investigate changes. However, the reports show that as schools began to examine provision for low-attaining pupils they realised the need to consider a wide range of issues. These include teaching and learning strategies, pupil grouping, Key Stage 2–3 transition and relations with primary partners, tracking pupils' progress,

deployment of staff, continuing professional development (CPD) and the advantage of networking. This latter issue is a feature of all reports, and one of the obvious successes of the first year. The schools have found that where networking is linked to a shared initiative, rather than a vague notion that schools should cooperate, there are powerful possibilities.

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School 1

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Six periods per week for both English and mathematics
- Strong literacy support in science and humanities lessons
- Modern foreign languages (MFL) not offered to the pilot cohort
- Analysis of Key Stage 2 test scripts using PAT
- Summer school for basic skills catch-up

The school is an oversubscribed 11–19 comprehensive with 1400 pupils, including 165 in the sixth form. The majority of pupils come from highly socially disadvantaged areas in the locality. Each year group has 16–20% pupils from ethnic backgrounds, mainly Asian.

Attainment of pupils on entry is well below the age-related expectations of pupils at age 11. We have 35 statemented pupils and 20% of all pupils are identified as having special educational needs, arising mainly from learning difficulties. We are the LA's first full-service extended school.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot, renamed the Flying Start project, is led by the deputy headteacher for inclusion/strategy. A project coordinator, assisted by the deputy SENCO, manages the implementation of the project across the school. A learning support assistant has been appointed to support pilot groups. Funding has provided an additional interactive whiteboard, salary enhancement for the project coordinator and deputy SENCO and 0.5 learning support assistant time.

At LA level, the senior Strategy adviser has taken the lead role with the mathematics and English consultants, working closely with both schools.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The Year 7 pilot timetable will move from four periods to six periods per week for mathematics. All Year 7 pupils will maintain six periods per week of English/literacy. A core of three English and three mathematics teachers will deliver the Flying Start programme. Literacy will have a high profile in humanities and science lessons. To allow increased mathematics time, MFL will be removed from the curriculum for the lowest four sets in Year 7.

CPD will be required for some staff to assist them in using the interactive whiteboard effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Further training will also be needed in ongoing short-, medium- and long-term planning of course content and the interpretation of PAT data to inform planning and delivery.

Drivers and blocks

We had an effective action plan in place from the outset. Project provision of interactive whiteboards and Promethean support to enhance classroom delivery has increased staff confidence and enthusiasm. The pilot has full backing from the senior leadership team, and we have received LA adviser and consultant support throughout. Networking at local and national level, including exchange visits with another pilot LA, has provided an excellent forum for sharing good practice, joint planning and exchanging resources, including schemes of work.

In a dry run for the coming year, mock Year 7 progress tests were held and the scripts analysed using PAT. This subsequently identified specific curriculum target areas and formed the content for a booster programme. The involvement of Teacher of the Future in Key Stage 2–3 transition work has been very valuable, particularly in the use of interactive whiteboards and working with pupils on the presentation of project work, as well as contributing to writing schemes of work for mathematics and English. Relationships with our primary feeders has improved, particularly in terms of their willingness to engage with and assist in the project and in the provision of data. Our mathematics department has liaised with our partner LA school to jointly plan and prepare lesson materials and the two English departments are planning to share resources. Sixth form volunteers are to be trained by the LA consultant as reading mentors. A reading programme has been planned and resourced to start in the autumn term.

There were some difficulties. Recruitment of a project coordinator proved difficult despite national adverts. Internal restructuring fortunately facilitated a quality internal candidate. Some departments have only lately recognised that the pilot is the responsibility of all, not just the English and mathematics departments, and this is a key message to be driven home from the outset next term.

Assessment

Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test scores will provide our first baseline, in addition to teacher assessments. Key Stage 2 scripts will be analysed and fed into PAT. The findings will be fed back to primary feeders and used to inform Key Stage 3 target teaching. The Star Reading Test, spelling test and cognitive abilities tests will be carried out during the first half-term of Year 7, and the reading tests will be repeated termly.

Pupils will be given a planned Success Maker programme (literacy and numeracy) which provides ongoing assessment to inform progress and a diagnostic element to assist in future planning. Mini National Curriculum tests will be administered termly in mathematics, and the pilot cohort will take mock and actual progress tests in English and mathematics. There will be fortnightly quiz questions set for pupils in the pilot. This will be a rewards-led programme to encourage the use of their resources which include English, mathematics and science dictionaries and the videos or readers which form part of the reading scheme.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Our enhanced transition programme has included the Teacher of the Future and the project coordinator visiting feeders to meet staff, gather data, work with pupils and observe lessons. A transition project was led by our history advanced skills teacher. There has been an increased number of primary visits for taster days this term including Year 5 and Year 6 groups.

Information gathering, transfer and induction has been enhanced by the presence of transition learning mentors in six of our main feeders. These have delivered an effective transition module to all pupils and have set up a Year 6 pen pals network between the six schools.

Early identification of pupils for the pilot through our academic, social and attendance-gathering process is already in place. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test scores and scripts have been promised prior to the end of the summer term. Identified pupils and their parents and carers will be seen at induction sessions this term and invited to attend summer school (for basic skills catch-up) and other extended school activities. The parents and carers of pupils involved in the pilot will be shown how they can support their child's learning and take part in adult learning themselves, and there will be a special meeting for them in September.

A bid from Neighbourhood Regeneration Funding is going forward to support the development of a DVD exemplifying the ways in which parents and carers can support their children. The parents, carers and children involved will be from the locality, which will heighten the impact. We plan to use the Strategy DVDs featuring James Nesbitt to encourage parents and carers of the pilot cohort to support their children's learning.

Interactive whiteboards

The use of interactive whiteboards has had a positive impact across the age and ability range, with some staff now highly skilled in their use. All key staff delivering the pilot have boards and use them in a variety of ways including through the Activote system and future use of Activslates. Development is ongoing in terms of producing and using software resources and in best practice in use of the boards in classrooms.

Networking at local and national level, including exchange visits with another pilot LA, has provided an excellent forum for sharing good practice.

There will be fortnightly quiz questions set for pupils involved in the pilot.

School 2

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Starting the pilot with Year 8 pupils
- Literacy support through history
- Thinking skills being taught in geography, religious studies and PSHE
- Extra teacher in mathematics will deliver material from the *Mathematics Challenge* (DfES 0200/2003)
- Parents and carers will be trained to deliver material from the *Reading Challenge* (DfES 0293/2003)

The school is a mixed 11–19 comprehensive with 1200 pupils, and is a designated sports college. It is oversubscribed and has a truly comprehensive intake from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, with 10% minority ethnic representation. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average, with a significant number of pupils having behavioural difficulties. Approximately 25% of pupils enter on level 3 in mathematics and English.

Coordination of the pilot

The assistant headteacher with responsibility for achievement at Key Stage 3 is coordinating the pilot. Liaison with primary schools is also one of her responsibilities and this has proved useful with some of the work that has been initiated through the pilot. Her involvement provides a direct link with the senior leadership team and ensures that the pilot dovetails with the Key Stage 3 Strategy, school improvement plan and other initiatives.

Coordinators for English, mathematics and thinking skills will oversee the day-to-day planning and implementation of the strands, and will also be responsible for teaching within the pilot. Two of the three coordinators are subject leaders.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

The pilot group will be in Year 8, with a cohort of 25 pupils identified from progress tests, teacher assessment and reading tests. Greater awareness and training of key staff and the second year of the interventions have resulted in increasing numbers of pupils moving from level 3 to level 4 in Year 7. We want to build on this and target those pupils who have still made little progress. The Year 8 group will have an extra teacher once a week who will assist in identifying specific weaknesses and work with small groups or individuals.

A review of the progress of pupils in English over the last five years has shown that more impact has been made by increasing the number of teaching groups, including a small SEN group, than by giving extra time to English. There has been a steady improvement

in our results and we are therefore providing extra literacy input by linking English with history and ensuring that for the pilot group literacy is taught explicitly through history for at least one of their lessons, using Key Stage 3 materials where appropriate.

In geography, religious studies and PSHE staff will be teaching thinking and learning skills explicitly to the pilot group through their subjects using the *Leading in Learning* model and materials (DfES 0035-2005, DfES 0036-2005). We would hope that in Year 3 of the pilot we can extend this model into lessons in science, DT and one of the arts.

In mathematics we have also decided to give more flexibility in how the pilot group is taught. In Years 7 and 8 we already employ an extra teacher who delivers the Mathematics Challenge material (*Mathematics Challenge*, DfES 0200/2003) to level 3 pupils throughout the year. The pupils are taken out of other subjects giving them extra mathematics time, which has had very successful results.

Drivers and blocks

Factors that helped in the development of the National Low-Attainers Pilot

- Initial training that identified the problem and raised consciousness further.
- A more focused use of data, particularly Year 7–9 conversion rates.
- Giving key staff the time to look at and try strategies that might work better with level 3 pupils.
- Networking with other schools – this has had a positive effect not only with the pilot but also with developing ideas that may impact on learning generally.
- Working with the Strategy consultants in a very focused way.
- The pilot is another strand of what is already part of the school improvement plan. It fits perfectly with what we are trying to achieve and therefore does not feel like ‘another initiative’.

Factors that have hindered the development of the pilot

- CPD, although necessary, has taken staff out of the classroom.
- Staffing – a key ingredient to success, but problematic when staff decide to move on.
- Insufficient time for project team meetings.
- Philosophical arguments about identifying a group of pupils, including issues of movement in and out of the group, gender balance and possible behaviour problems. There is to be another group that will be in common with humanities and are just above the pilot group so there can be movement between groups if necessary.

Assessment of pupils' progress

As well as analysing Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, we carry out a test paper analysis over the summer holidays to give an individual pupil baseline. Teacher assessment is collected twice a year throughout the key stage, and all pupils complete the progress test in Year 7, the optional test in Year 8, and regular reading tests in English.

The thinking skills coordinator will also be conducting a regular review with the pupils so they can set their own learning targets. All pupils involved in the pilot will complete an attitudinal survey at the beginning of Year 8 which they will repeat at the end of Year 8 and again in Year 9.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Teacher assessment levels and specific pupil information are collected informally on school visits. All pupils arrive with transition books for mathematics and English and the transition units are delivered at both ends. At the induction evening parents and carers are encouraged to help their children with their reading over the summer holidays. Reading journals are distributed and we give prizes in September for their completion.

As a result of the pilot we conducted a Key Stage 2 test paper analysis, which provided excellent information for us and for the primary schools. The same exercise is being completed this year using PAT and it is being done during the summer holidays so the information is available earlier. As we are starting the project with Year 8 we know the pupils very well and therefore identification has been easier. However, we still highlight the level 3 children in Year 6 in preparation for the support work that continues in Year 7.

A launch evening with parents and carers will take place in October. This is intended to be not simply an information evening but also an opportunity to give parents and carers practical advice on how they can help their children. We have already held two evenings with parents and carers in which Reading Challenge training (*Reading Challenge*, DfES 0293/2003) was delivered in a condensed form.

Interactive whiteboards

The installation of interactive whiteboards has had an energising effect on the teachers, and staff are building up a portfolio of resources for sharing. Next year the current staff using the boards will receive more training, particularly in how they can be used actively with pupils in the classroom. Training will concentrate on interactive whiteboard pedagogy rather than technical aspects. We have used eCredits to buy software to give more variety and flexibility in their use. We are also going to invite other staff to undertake training with a view to expanding the use of the boards across the school.

As a result of the pilot we conducted a Key Stage 2 test paper analysis, which provided excellent information for us and for the primary schools.

The installation of interactive whiteboards has had an energising effect on the teachers, and staff are building up a portfolio of resources for sharing.

School 3

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Two bands offering different curricula, with more English and mathematics for the pilot cohort
- Few teachers for the pilot cohort, achieved by carousels in DT and expressive arts
- Literacy coordinator will plan termly literacy focus for the cohort
- Half-termly homework packs
- Strategy Learning Challenge material to be taught through the PSHE curriculum

The school is an 11–19 comprehensive with 750 pupils. It serves two council estates and has a small number of pupils from private housing. The area has suffered from much higher than average unemployment and other forms of socio-economic disadvantage. The attainment of most pupils when they enter the school in Year 7 is low compared with the levels expected nationally. The school is part of a LIG collaborative with seven other schools and has a Leading Edge Partnership with one of the seven.

Coordination of the pilot

The coordination has been shared between the two deputy headteachers, one having responsibility for curriculum and assessment and the other for primary liaison and transition. The overall coordination of activity is through a steering group chaired by one of the deputy headteachers. The membership of this group consists of cross-curricular coordinators for literacy, ICT and thinking skills as well as representatives from each of the faculties. Coordination within the English faculty is through the head of English and in the mathematics faculty through a project coordinator for the pilot cohort.

The funding for coordination has been used for the appointment of a mathematics teacher at 4 management points to lead initiatives in the mathematics area, an increase in remuneration and time for the head of English and time for the deputy headteacher in the preparation year. Preparation for 2005–06 has seen the appointment of a learning support assistant, who will be funded from the pilot with additional monies from the school budget, and dedicated to the pilot cohort.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

There will be two bands offering different curricula. One band will have pupils that were National Curriculum level 4 and above (X) and the other band will have pupils that were National Curriculum level 3 and below (Y). The table below shows the different allocations in the two-week timetable.

Band X		Band Y	
English	6	English	9
mathematics	6	mathematics	9
science	6	science	6
DT	4	DT	4
MFL	4	MFL	0
geography	3	geography	3
history	3	history	3
RE	3	RE	3
art	2	art	2
drama	2	drama	2
music	3	music	3
PE	4	PE	4
PS	2	PS	2
IT	2	IT	cross-curricular

The Year 7 cohort will have fewer teachers through ensuring that no split classes are timetabled, and through DT and expressive arts experimenting with teaching one group for all the blocks' scheduled lessons for half a term. The teachers would then rotate to teach the other groups. The humanities department will teach a common core topic to all the pupils for the first half-term.

We have also identified the need to ensure that key concepts in ICT, literacy and thinking skills are transferred across the curriculum so they become embedded. ICT will be taught through other subjects for the pilot cohort and an ICT specialist will be timetabled for some mathematics, English and humanities lessons. Our literacy coordinator will develop the introduction of a termly literacy focus for learning objectives and assessment with the pilot cohort. Thinking skills is our Strategy focus and English, humanities, science and mathematics Year 7 subject teachers will be responsible for delivery. A learning support assistant has been appointed for the project and she will be key in ensuring that the chosen skill is high profile in all lessons.

We are to trial a half-termly homework pack for our Year 7 pupils. The work to be completed should dovetail with the literacy, ICT and thinking skills focus and include a variety of tasks including investigations, not just completing work. This will particularly benefit boys' achievement. The Learning Challenge Strategy material is being introduced into the Year 7 PSHE curriculum. Gender-paired seating is also being introduced.

Drivers and blocks

The newly appointed mathematics National Low-Attainers Pilot coordinator has planned changes in teaching with more innovation, interaction, whole-class and group work and modelling by the teacher. He has developed expertise in using interactive whiteboards, including the use of Activote, and has disseminated his skills to other staff. In English there has been a developing awareness of the Strategy materials, new schemes of work and gradual familiarisation with the whiteboards.

Lists of relevant Strategy resources for all subjects have been issued and the *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools* (DfES 0423-2004 G) booklets have been used widely. Currently faculties have chosen to study areas specific to their own needs and give feedback at curriculum meetings. CPD has been focused upon teaching and learning, with invaluable support from the Strategy team and a growing awareness of the need to network.

The setting up of a steering group has provided a coherence to the development of the initiatives. The Leadership Edge Partnership has enabled thinking skills to be developed with staff from another school. Different staff have attended the network meetings; this has been useful as a means to raise the profile of the project and to broaden involvement and share good practice. However, the recruitment of staff has been an issue as the aim was to have all English and mathematics teaching delivered by specialist teachers.

Assessment of pupils' progress

START will be developed as a means to track and analyse pupils' progress. Information will be collected half-terminly using the START system and the deputy headteacher will analyse data and report findings. The system will also give an opportunity to monitor other factors such as attendance, homework, contribution in a lesson, and behaviour. Information from START will also enable heads of department to track progress. Data will also be used to generate progress reports and will be available for discussion with parents and carers at academic review day. Optional and progress tests will continue to be used. Assessment for learning will play a key part in providing our Year 7 cohort with the steps needed to progress.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Initial meetings with the main partnership schools took place in April where it was agreed to have earlier transfer of teacher assessments. We hope to have half-terminly meetings with the main partnership schools to discuss a transition project for the 2006 intake. Funding secured for a summer school at West Bromwich Albion will focus on pupils from partnership primary schools. Key members of staff have been into primary schools, and a meeting with parents and carers will take place this term.

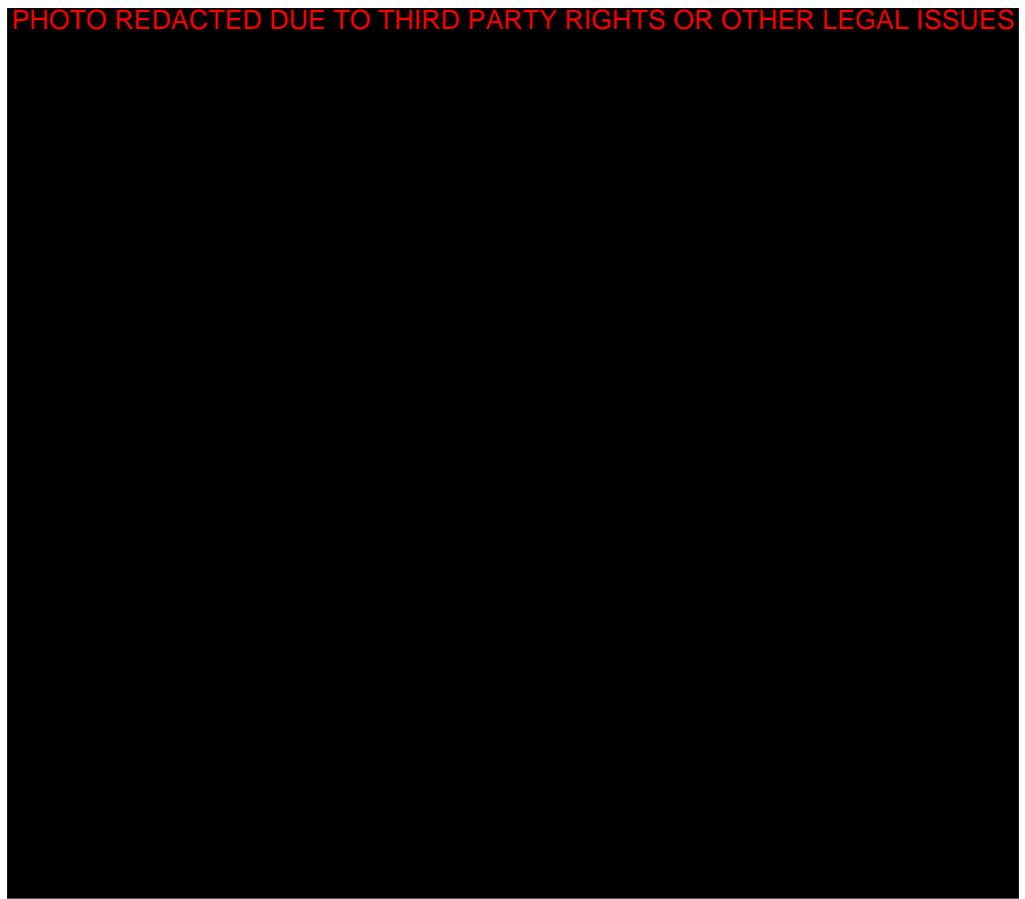
Interactive whiteboards

A year ago the school had two interactive whiteboards which no one could use. Now they are in almost every classroom. The pilot acted as a springboard and we have bought additional boards from the pilot supplier. The support and training has been very good with additional support from the LA. Staff have found the boards invaluable and are quickly making progress.

The Leadership Edge Partnership has enabled thinking skills to be developed with staff from another school.

A year ago the school had two interactive whiteboards which no one could use. Now they are in almost every classroom.

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School 4

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- A competence-based curriculum with cross-curricular modules
- The curriculum devised by a cross-curricular group of staff
- A strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy
- Some staff will teach outside their subject specialism
- Discrete teaching of the competence curriculum in the morning, and lessons with the rest of Year 7 in the afternoon

The school is an 11–19 comprehensive with 1 100 pupils. It has been a designated technology college since 1998 and now is nearing the end of the third phase of its technology college funding. Its pupils have low levels of prior attainment with over 30% being on level 3 or below on entry into Year 7. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot has been led by the assistant headteacher who is director of teaching and learning. The project group planning the curriculum changes includes the literacy coordinator, and staff from the English, mathematics, science, PE, DT and ICT departments.

The funding has been used to release time for the pilot coordinator, fund the setting up and running of a Year 7 Learning to Learn course in 2004–05, provide staff development in teaching and learning, facilitate visits to other schools, create capacity for colleagues to write modules, and provide extra interactive whiteboards and training in their use.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The pilot cohort will consist of pupils on level 3 or insecure level 4 in English and mathematics, and this will total about 60 pupils. They will be divided into three groups, one with an emphasis on numeracy, one literacy and one literacy and numeracy. This cohort will follow a transitional curriculum devised by the school. This is a competence-based curriculum based on the RSA's Opening Minds, and lessons will be delivered through six modules, with one being covered each term. (The LA has a six-term year.) The modules are: Being Proud; Our Backyard; Out of the World; Earth, Air, Fire and Water; Fit for Life; Making the News.

Each fortnight pupils will receive the following subject allocation:

- 30 3 60-minute modules, consisting of 15 English/humanities, 6 mathematics, 6 science and 3 DT/ICT;

- 8 3 30 minutes of French, 6 3 30 minutes of numeracy and 6 3 30 minutes of literacy;
- 10 3 60 minutes of art, music and PE.

The daily structure for the competence curriculum will be:

- Lesson 1: 2 3 30-minute sessions of literacy, numeracy or French;
- Lessons 2, 3 and 4: modular lessons which will incorporate English, humanities, PHSE, citizenship, mathematics, science, DT and ICT;
- Lesson 5: art, music, PE with rest of the cohort.

A great deal of literacy will be incorporated into the English/humanities part of the modules. This competence-based curriculum fits into our current timetable model; the only slight difference is in the 30-minute slots in lesson 1. There are, however, rooming implications in that, in seeking to replicate good primary practice, we will provide pupils with their own base in which most of their lessons will take place. All the rooms will be equipped with interactive whiteboards. It was hoped that the pilot cohort would be in discrete tutor groups, which would facilitate the delivery of aspects of the curriculum. This has not proved possible this year, but the situation will be monitored with the possibility of change for next year's cohort.

Staff involved have needed CPD to teach outside their curriculum area and to develop their teaching repertoire in order to teach pupils explicit learning skills. As we roll out the new competence-based curriculum, and so involve more colleagues, we shall deliver in-house training on these aspects of pedagogy. It is envisaged that this cadre group will lead this development.

Drivers and blocks

This pilot involves a diverse group of mostly younger teachers on the staff. All are working in unfamiliar territory, and are having to think outside their subject training and previous practice. A real bonus of the pilot has been the enthusiasm which the project has generated among this group, and the realisation that this sort of collaboration can widen horizons in an exciting way. Devising a new course is both alarming and stimulating, and is also hard work. Although the whole course is planned in outline, only the first two modules were completed by September 2005. The completion of the course will need to take place throughout the year, and while this will be time-consuming, it does have the advantage of being able to draw on the experience of teaching the completed modules.

The networking opportunities made available by the pilot have been invaluable. A great deal has been learned from the half-termly network meetings, the pilot network residential and visits to other schools and LAs. The pilot has also promoted increased cross-phase dialogue and, above all, a real focus on teaching and learning. This has been particularly the case when devising a competence-based rather than strictly subject-based curriculum; there is less emphasis on the weight of subject content, and more on ways of enabling pupils to acquire necessary skills and competences.

There has been invaluable support from the Secondary National Strategy team, and from the LA team, from both the Strategy manager and the consultants. The funding for the pilot has enabled the setting up of an active steering group, as well as network opportunities and school visits.

The blocks to the development of the pilot curriculum have been the pressure of time in developing this fundamentally different curriculum, and the need to convince key colleagues in the school who could feel threatened by the changes.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Pupils' progress will be assessed against competences, against subject objectives, with National Curriculum levels and through mathematics and English progress tests. Progress will be tracked through the college's system using Assessment Manager.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

We identified the pilot cohort in consultation with Year 6 teachers and through Key Stage 2 teacher assessment data. Transfer has been supported through transition projects and a welcome booklet and teaching sessions aimed at the pilot cohort. This year has seen improved transition practice, in that we have met partner primary headteachers and Year 6 teachers to explain our new curriculum and to seek their advice in selecting pupils for whom it is appropriate. We aim to develop and expand this collaboration next year through further transition projects and cross-phase collaboration.

Interactive whiteboards

The development of practice in this area has been a very exciting part of the preparation year. There were some pockets of expertise before the pilot, but the excellent training from the interactive whiteboard suppliers has enabled a wider range of teachers to understand how to exploit the potential of this technology. A separate project by the interactive whiteboard trainer to enable a small group of low-attaining pupils to gain skills in the use of the boards has also been very successful, and has shown us another interesting way forward.

What has gone really well has been the opportunity to pull together a diverse group of enthusiastic teachers and discover how fruitful collaboration can be.

Main gains made this year have been from networking, collaboration, increased cross-phase dialogue and, above all, a real focus on teaching and learning.

School 5

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- School day altered significantly
- English and mathematics every day for all pupils in Years 7 and 8
- Professional development time built into the timetable
- New management structure builds capacity and ensures greater accountability
- Junior science week introduced

The school is an 11–16 comprehensive with 940 pupils. An above average proportion of pupils (27.7%) have special educational needs and a high proportion have free school meals (30%). The school's catchment area has a very high youth crime rate, poor quality housing, low standards of youth and adult health, high teenage pregnancy and termination rate and it scores very highly in measures of childhood poverty.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot is being led by an assistant headteacher who is also the director of science. He also temporarily line manages the mathematics department until the newly appointed director of mathematics arrives for the autumn term. He leads a pilot steering group that includes the directors of English and (from September 2005) mathematics, the school Strategy manager, the Year 7 pastoral manager and the staff teaching the targeted pupils.

In the first year most of the pilot grant was used to help fund the post and work of the pilot coordinator, with the remaining monies allocated to administrative support for the pilot.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

For a number of reasons, including the pilot, we have altered significantly the shape of the school day. As a result, the new school year will be very different from previously. The timetable has been restructured, increasing the number of taught lessons by three periods a week to 28 lessons. However, all staff work a 30-period week, within which there is dedicated time for whole-staff CPD and planning. Accordingly, our new timetable has only four periods on a Monday as pupils do not start lessons until period 3, at 10:50 am. Arrangements are in place to use the time protected on Monday mornings for the pilot team to meet for planning and to continue using the National Strategy materials such as the units from *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools* (DfES 0423-2004 G) as part of our CPD.

English and mathematics will be taught every day. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 will get five 55-minute lessons per week. For the first time English will set pupils, an arrangement mathematics has used for some time. The sets will be based on Key Stage 2 test results and teacher assessments. We have appointed a data manager who is

responsible for managing data and producing the reports that are used to ensure that the pupils are in the appropriate sets and that teachers have up-to-date information on the pupils they teach. The data is easily accessed by teachers, who all have laptops.

Classes will be organised into twin populations both containing the full ability spread. Each population will have three groups. One of these will be the target group for the pilot as it consists mainly of level 3 learners. The English classes will be taught by the head of English and the head of Year 7. The mathematics classes will be taught by two experienced Key Stage 3 teachers. A teaching assistant has been appointed to work with the level 3 English and mathematics classes and the pupils will also be using a commercially designed software program for basic literacy skills.

Assessment of pupils' progress

To ensure that we monitor progress effectively in order to inform planning, we will be assessing pupils every six weeks. Progress tests will also be undertaken to help measure achievement.

Drivers and blocks

Since its introduction, the project has had the support of the senior leadership team and steps have been taken to ensure that the pilot is in concert with the other National Strategy programmes. The LA has also been closely involved. To help the school move forward rapidly, the attached school improvement adviser and the consultants for English, mathematics, science, and behaviour and attendance have worked with us regularly. A joint training day with another pilot school was organised and led by the LA for all teachers involved in the pilot. This involved training on different teaching and learning strategies and on developing and refining schemes of work. Further joint meetings are planned for the future.

The preparation year has been extremely useful in providing time to do a number of things. We have been able to amend schemes of work to include the National Strategy intervention materials. For example, in mathematics the *Medium-term plan: Year 7 intervention materials* (DfES 0504/2001) have been incorporated. Training has taken place on the use of interactive whiteboards. The departments of English, mathematics, modern languages and humanities have been re-roomed to group these curriculum areas to enable closer collaboration between colleagues. As would be expected, this has caused some difficulties, with a few staff not wanting to move for a variety of reasons.

To implement the required changes in the curriculum, and in the way in which we process and handle data, we have restructured the management of the school. This new structure creates capacity while at the same time ensuring greater accountability. We have set as the focus raising standards by the tracking, monitoring and target setting of individual pupils and identifying groups with specific needs, for instance the pilot target groups. The new arrangement allows for the early identification of underachievers and the immediate application of a range of coordinated interventions.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

The pastoral manager for Year 7, who will also teach English to one of the target groups, has visited all our feeder primary schools to talk to the Year 6 teachers and collect specific information about the pilot cohort. These pupils have also benefited from other transfer activities. A range of teachers have visited primary schools to help deliver lessons in all subjects and the science staff have taught over 50 Year 6 children as part of their junior science week. The transfer day in June enabled all the future Year 7 pupils to attend the school for a day, meet their pastoral manager and form tutor and attend taster lessons in a range of subjects.

To keep all key stakeholders informed, the pilot coordinator made a presentation to the governors' Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee and will be repeating it to a meeting of the full governing body in the near future. Parents and carers will be informed about the opportunities offered by the pilot at an evening in September.

Interactive whiteboards

Interactive whiteboards have been installed in the English and mathematics rooms and are being used increasingly by the teachers who will be taking the target groups in September. Interactive whiteboards are also installed in the modern languages rooms, in four out of seven science laboratories and in other rooms across other subject areas. The plan is to allow the target groups to have access to these resources with a view to enriching the teaching and learning to accelerate the progress of these pupils.

The new arrangement allows for the early identification of underachievers and the immediate application of a range of coordinated interventions.

All staff work a 30-period week within which there is dedicated time for whole-staff CPD and planning.

School 6

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Pupils have same teacher for eight periods of the week
- The pilot complements the school's focus on teaching and learning
- Underperformance is swiftly identified
- Planning is informed by pupil level data
- Transfer arrangements have been amended

The school opened in 1998, following the amalgamation of two local schools. Almost all of the 771 pupils on roll are of white British heritage. A third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and 27% have special educational needs; this figure includes 3.9% who have a statement of special educational needs. On entry to the school, the pupils' standards of attainment are below average and a high proportion of pupils arrive at the school with problems owing to difficult circumstances at home.

In a relatively short period of time the school has moved from the Ofsted category of special measures to being judged by Ofsted as being one of the 100 most improved schools in the country. This is because we have sustained continuous improvement in teaching, learning and behaviour for learning. We have worked hard to ensure that policies and procedures are embedded into practice and our systems for early identification of special educational needs and intervention have become increasingly effective.

Coordination of the pilot

As one of the assistant headteachers already fulfilled a number of related roles, she was given responsibility for leading the alternative Year 7 curriculum and was timetabled to teach one of the two cohort groups (details are given below). An advantage of having the work coordinated by a senior leadership team member is that she liaises regularly with the headteacher and her senior colleagues through their meetings. While some of the funding was used to cover costs arising from attendance at network meetings, the majority of the money was used to fund another teacher so that pupils could benefit from smaller classes in all subject areas.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

Since September 2004, the Year 7 timetable has been organised so that pupils identified as not achieving level 4 at Key Stage 2 in English have the same teacher and teaching assistant for 11 1-hour periods out of 25 per week to cover English and humanities with a particular focus on literacy. We felt that continuity with one person, teaching in the same room, with less movement around the school, would lead to better progress, behaviour and attendance. This has proved to be the case. Two groups were set up, one consisting mainly of level 3 learners, the other containing pupils transferring with level 2 or below. The decision to innovate during what was

considered to be the planning year for the pilot enabled us to use certain intervention materials and strategies immediately rather than waiting for September 2005. However, because the focus was literacy, the mathematics element remained discrete.

For September 2005, the pupils involved in the pilot will remain with one teacher for eight periods a week because two of the original 11 periods have gone to mathematics, increasing its allocation to five, and one period has been allocated to citizenship as it is being introduced as a discrete subject. We will continue to have two groups. One will have strong level 3 and weak level 4 pupils and the other will consist of pupils at weak level 3 and below. The coordinator will not be taking one of the groups but the other teacher involved this school year will be. She is working with the new teacher on the material that was trialled in 2004–05, while the two mathematics teachers have participated in training provided by the LA consultant.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Data on pupils' prior and predicted attainment is used for planning purposes and learning objectives are related to level or grade. Class and individual targets are set, based on the differential between the end of Key Stage 2 actual levels and target minimum levels for Key Stage 3. Our marking relates specifically to learning objectives and highlights the next learning steps for each pupil. The Key Stage 2 points score is used to predict attainment at Key Stage 3 using the DfES Autumn Package. On entry to Year 7 pupils undertake a range of screening tests. The data are used to centrally set target minimum levels at the end of Key Stage 3 for all pupils in all subjects, with the expectation of a minimum of one and a half levels' progress across the key stage. Interim reports also show end-of-Year 7 and Year 8 targets which will need to be achieved if pupils are to be on track to reach or exceed the end-of-Key Stage 3 targets. Interim reports are issued every half-term. Administrative staff identify unsatisfactory progress and pupils are interviewed or mentored by staff of varying seniority depending on the nature and severity of the difficulty.

Drivers and blocks

The pilot has slotted into the existing ethos and strategies of the school without upheaval. We have a strong emphasis on improving teaching and learning and this thread is central to every initiative we are involved in. As a result of our alternative curriculum there have been improvements in behaviour and attendance in comparison with similar groups in previous years and we expect that the same will be true next school year. One of the reasons is that we have been able to identify early and address quickly difficulties that could have become major barriers. Having the same staff teaching the pilot cohort for a significant proportion of each day enables us not only to become quickly aware of issues, but also to find a swift solution.

The pilot is led by someone who is also the SENCO and this brings the particular benefit of established links with outside agencies. This has proved useful to support quickly some pupils whose progress has been hindered by problems beyond the academic. We have welcomed the opportunity to network regularly with other schools as it is always helpful to talk to other people and share ideas.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Information is received from the primary schools from May onwards. A senior member of staff and a teaching assistant visit the schools to gather information from June. The teaching assistant has adapted the information gathering sheet to include reasons why a pupil has not achieved level 4. For the past two years the pupil referral unit has identified Year 6 children who may have difficulties settling in to Year 7 owing to behaviour or attendance. As many of these children will be part of our pilot cohort, this year we have arranged for the pilot teachers to visit the primary schools to work with the pupils identified by the unit to help the transfer process. We hope that if children already know the teachers they will feel more secure, and they will have the opportunity to get to know the school and its systems before starting in September.

Parents and carers will be informed initially by letter and then invited to a meeting in July to explain how they can work with the school to help their child.

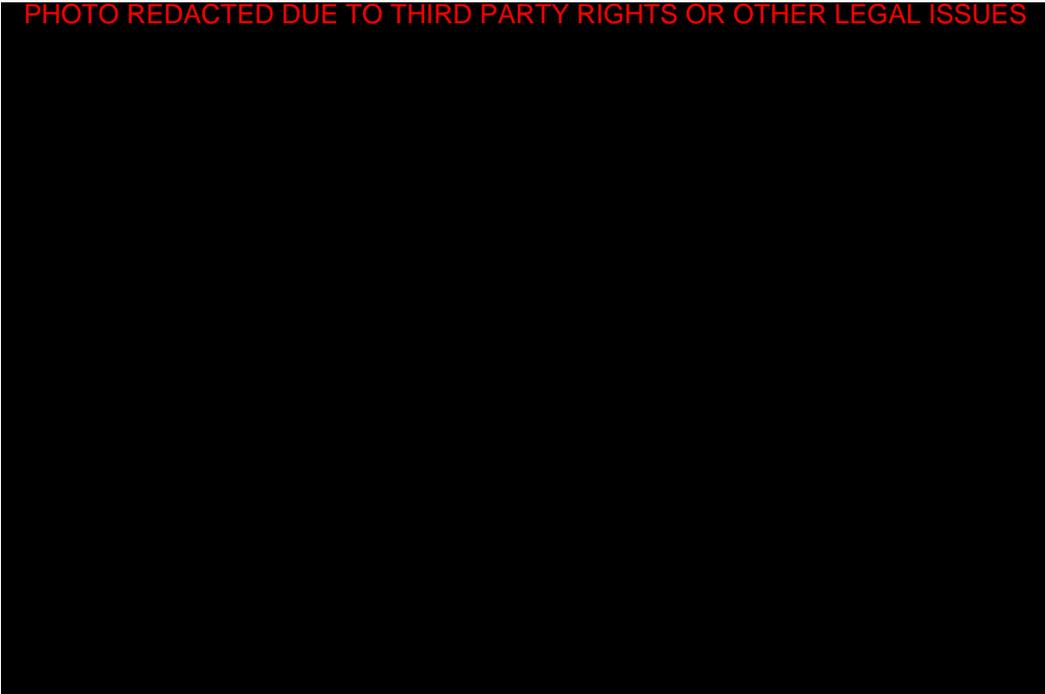
Interactive whiteboards

Some progress has been made on the use of the interactive whiteboards. Work schemes are being amended to ensure that this resource is exploited. Now that we know exactly which staff will be teaching the pilot cohort, further training will be provided.

Administrative staff identify unsatisfactory progress and pupils are interviewed or mentored by staff of varying seniority depending on the nature and severity of the difficulty.

We felt that continuity with one person, teaching in the same room, with less movement around the school, would lead to better progress, behaviour and attendance. This has proved to be the case.

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School 7

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Assistant heads of core departments key to pilot
- Staff better understand the needs of level 3 learners
- 5 hours each of English and mathematics
- Science staff working in partner primaries
- Peer and self-assessment to play an important role

The school, an old educational foundation dating back to the 17th century, is now a co-educational 11–18 comprehensive occupying two sites. There are 1150 pupils on the roll with considerably more boys than girls. Although the school is surrounded by very affluent housing, the pupils come from some very deprived areas. Consequently, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. About 40% of the total roll is from an ethnic minority background and some 29 languages are spoken at the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is roughly that found nationally but the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is almost twice the national average. The school has Beacon status and is involved in a number of initiatives such as Excellence in Cities. We won a Schools Achievement Award in 2002 and we are submitting a bid for science specialist status in October 2005.

Coordination of the pilot

Initially the pilot was led by an assistant headteacher but at Easter 2005 the pilot was passed to a deputy headteacher. At subject level the preparatory work in English and mathematics has been coordinated by the second in departments as part of their Key Stage 3 responsibilities. It was decided that the term ‘Low-Attainers Pilot’ was not appropriate so the target pupils are known as the ‘Hi Fives’. The pilot grant has been used to fund additional responsibility points for the assistant headteacher, some of the salaries of a new data coordinator and a teaching assistant, and training for staff and related supply costs.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

When our Year 7 pupils join us they will be set for English and mathematics, based on the end-of-Key Stage 2 test results. The Hi Five pupils will have two additional English and mathematics lessons, giving them 5 hours per core subject per week instead of the typical 3 hours. In order to do this, pupils will be disapplied from modern languages and will be taught a reduced history and geography curriculum. We hope to develop an integrated humanities curriculum for 2006–07.

Because we are a split-site school and have Year 7 pupils on both campuses, we need to have in total four Hi Five groups. Each group will have approximately 20 pupils with identified teaching assistant support enabling better use of appropriate pedagogy and methodology for this level of learner. Our intention is that all staff will be able to trial and then transfer these strategies into their general teaching toolkit.

The groups will be taught by two English and two mathematics teachers per site with the support of one teaching assistant or a special educational needs teacher per group. This will allow for team teaching and appropriate resources to be developed that can be rolled out across the departments. It will also allow for the production of materials for the interactive whiteboards that can be put on the central system for use by other staff.

Drivers and blocks

During the planning year we have been involved in a number of CPD activities to help us prepare for the first Hi Five cohort. These activities included:

- work with the whole staff on developing a greater understanding of the nature and needs of level 3 learners;
- a consideration of the implications for the school on the use of transfer units;
- collaboration between English and mathematics staff and Key Stage 3 consultants on the production of schemes of work and resources;
- interactive whiteboard training for English and mathematics staff;
- training for teaching assistants;
- a joint training session with another pilot school led by the LA on the use of PAT.

Our involvement in the pilot has offered the assistant heads of English and mathematics an opportunity to lead a major whole-school project. It is an advantage that our second in mathematics has had substantial primary teaching experience from being a deputy headteacher for a number of years in one of our main feeder schools. The various networking opportunities have been useful. It has enabled consultants to work alongside our staff to develop their skills and they have helped us to embed key aspects of the National Strategy. The work with our partner pilot schools has led to collaborative planning where we all learn together and from each other. We have been able to make use of the planning year to explore exactly how we want to implement the pilot, trial some materials, evaluate their impact and amend as necessary.

Although finance has been available during the planning year to release staff for planning and training, this has not always been feasible because of staff absence in the two key departments. At times we have also found it difficult to maintain commitment and give attention to something long term, as staff members get caught up in more immediate issues. We have found generating whole-school involvement difficult because the programme is not yet in place for staff to see and the effects of the pilot will not be felt for at least another year.

Accommodation is a significant issue for the school generally. We have two buildings but one is small and cramped and the other outdated and austere. Although we have taken steps to improve the situation, neither building lends itself to the creation of a

stimulating and engaging climate for learning. Timetabling a split-site school is always problematical and seeking to accommodate the needs of the pilot has exacerbated this.

Assessment of pupils' progress

When our Year 7 pupils join us in September, their reading and spelling ages are tested and these data are distributed to staff, together with the end-of-Key Stage 2 test results. There is a well-established school assessment system in place and pupils are set assessment tasks half-termly. One outcome of these tasks is that the pupils are given a National Curriculum level or GCSE grading. Parents and carers are informed termly about pupils' attainment levels or GCSE grading. Currently, we are reviewing our assessment policy to ensure that it meets the needs of the pilot. Two aspects we know we want to strengthen are peer- and self-assessment. To help us the assistant heads of the English and mathematics departments are due to visit a local school that is known to make good use of these approaches.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

We had hoped to identify our potential pilot cohort much earlier than in previous years by circulating disks to the primaries to capture relevant information and data but this was unsuccessful. We need to know why this was. Members of the science department have been working with Year 6 children in our main feeder primary schools since January 2005 and this practice may be adopted in future by English and mathematics staff to allow early identification of Hi Five pupils, an alternative approach to the distribution of a disk.

Interactive whiteboards

After some initial difficulties, with the help of consultants we have been looking at various software packages and trialling certain teaching strategies that we hope to embed into our schemes of work. All of these activities have helped us to build staff capacity so we are better placed to deliver the pilot effectively.

It is an advantage that our second in mathematics has had substantial primary teaching experience.

Our involvement in the pilot has offered the assistant heads of English and mathematics an opportunity to lead a major whole-school project.

School 8

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Key Stage 2 teacher coordinating pilot
- Primary ‘one teacher one class’ model adopted
- Strategy’s intervention materials built into work schemes
- PAT central to assessment
- LA heavily involved in preparation

We are an expanding inner city boys’ technology specialist comprehensive school with 1200 on roll. English is the first language of less than 35% of the pupils and over 50 languages are spoken in the school. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is above the national average, at 34%. Approximately one third of our pupils are on the Code of Practice with 8% of the pupils having a statement of special educational needs.

Given the socio-economic profile and learning needs of many of the pupils the learning support department is the largest department in the school with a staff of approximately 30 full- and part-time members that include teachers, learning support assistants, counsellors and mentors. The department has a very successful record of putting in place various initiatives designed to raise levels of achievement. From the beginning we saw the National Low-Attainers Pilot as another way of ensuring that pupils make the progress that we expect.

Coordination of the pilot

We decided to adapt the ‘one teacher one class’ approach that is common practice in many Key Stage 2 classrooms. An experienced primary school teacher was appointed as a middle leader to coordinate the initiative. She has been supported by the assistant headteacher responsible for inclusion and the deputy headteacher who oversees the curriculum. The LA link inspector and National Strategy consultants have also worked closely with the coordinator on planning, curriculum content, assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

A steering group has been established, led by the assistant headteacher responsible for inclusion, which includes: the pilot coordinator, the Key Stage 3 manager, the SENCO; representatives of English, mathematics and humanities departments and the Year 7 pastoral team; and a learning support assistant with primary school experience.

The first year grant contributed to the coordinator’s salary and paid for supply costs for training and network meetings, activities with local primary schools, and other miscellaneous costs.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

Twenty-eight boys have been identified to participate in the pilot and will be taught as a discrete group for 50% of their timetable. English and mathematics will be allocated four lessons each, geography and history will have two lessons each and single lessons will be given over to drama, personal and citizenship education and religious education. For the other 15 periods the pilot cohort will be integrated with other pupils in the year.

The schemes of work for English and mathematics have been rewritten to better meet the needs of level 3 learners, with the National Strategy intervention materials now integral. To reinforce the basic skills, the history scheme has been adapted to strengthen English and the geography scheme to strengthen mathematics. Opportunities to teach and reinforce literacy and study skills have been highlighted in personal and citizenship education and religious education.

Drivers and blocks

From the outset the pilot has been embraced by the school's headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. The early appointment of the coordinator has been very advantageous, and because she will be teaching the group for 15 periods of the week she has been well placed to consider both the theoretical and practical issues of what is being proposed. When visiting primary schools her background has allowed her to team teach rather than just observe. Her work with the pupils has helped identify which boys are eligible for the first pilot cohort.

As our overall approach had been established early in the planning year, the regional network meetings were not as useful for us as for other schools that had yet to determine how they were going to meet the demands of the pilot. However, the regular visits from the regional director have ensured a constant review, focus and team approach from the senior leadership team down, which has proved extremely beneficial to our planning.

The liaison with representatives of the LA has been extremely effective as it has ensured that the programme has not been developed in isolation. This communication has allowed the sharing of different expertise to pull together a programme that is innovative and different from the normal Year 7 curriculum.

The hope is that, having had to produce a more finely differentiated scheme of work, staff will find that the content and approach cascade into the English and mathematics departments to the benefit of pupils and staff alike. As a result of the pilot, links with the English department have been strengthened, leading to much greater sharing of resources, audits and good practice. Strong links have also been forged with staff from humanities and this has been instrumental in ensuring successful planning designed to prevent humanities subjects being marginalised.

Initially, progress was hindered because of the reluctance of some teachers. The support of key senior staff proved vital in overcoming this barrier. As the pilot's profile has been raised, the interest and support of colleagues have increased.

Assessment of pupils' progress

The school has well-established systems to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress. Further specific means of assessing progress of the pilot cohort have been written into the schemes of work. During each half-term a number of formal assessment activities will be set to assess progress in mathematics, while progress in English will be based on the assessment of a distinct project produced at the end of each unit of work every half-term. We hope also to make use of PAT, which will be used as an ongoing form of assessment throughout the pilot.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Because of the pilot, our school's transfer arrangements have been refined and a number of new activities introduced. The project was launched with primary heads in January 2005 when they were invited to a briefing. The attendance of our headteacher and other senior members of staff endorsed the importance of the pilot. It was evident early on that the primary headteachers wanted to participate; they pledged their support and agreed to the coordinator visiting their schools to undertake some team teaching. This has allowed the coordinator to work with prospective Year 7 pupils in their Year 6 environments and begin to establish with individual pupils relationships that will be further developed throughout the summer term.

We expect that, as a school, we will be better placed than before to support the pupils' transfer both academically and socially. Ultimately, lessons learned from the initiative will inform a fundamental review of our school's primary–secondary transfer arrangements.

From the beginning we recognised the importance of parents' and carers' support to the success of the pilot. We had planned to conduct individual parental or carer interviews from May, the start of the transfer period, but we reviewed this decision in the light of discussions and have decided to wait until September. This will allow us to explain fully the differentiated approach with all the appropriate resources to hand and, of course, by then the pupils will have started with us.

Interactive whiteboards

Teachers in our school frequently use interactive whiteboards and we intend this to be the case in the lessons provided for the pilot cohort. Use of the boards has been written into the schemes of work as the representative of the interactive whiteboard provider has developed flipcharts to accompany sections of the English scheme.

It was evident early on that the primary headteachers wanted to participate; they pledged their support and agreed to the coordinator visiting their schools to undertake some team teaching.

To reinforce basic skills, the history scheme has been adapted to strengthen English and the geography scheme to strengthen mathematics.

School 9

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Increased time for English and mathematics taken from MFL
- Extended time for literacy (particular focus on emotional literacy)
- Introduction of half-termly monitoring of pupils' progress and attitudes
- Extensive focus on 'mind-friendly' learning in all core subjects
- Teachers have worked with primary colleagues to deliver the Key Stage 2 curriculum

The school is a large boys' 11–16 comprehensive with a diverse multicultural intake. Over 50% of the pupils come from families where English is not the first language and almost a quarter of the school's population require EMAS support. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

Coordination of the pilot

An assistant headteacher is coordinating the pilot in school. Most members of the senior leadership team have been involved in attending meetings, working on new curriculum plans and working towards a refined transition programme for the new Year 7 intake. £20,000 has been offset against the staff salary costs. All of the core faculties have staff members specifically allocated to the overview of Key Stage 3 and each of these, along with a staff member specifically allocated to oversee the work of Year 7, will have a role in the target setting and monitoring of the level 3 learners. There are at least five subject leaders who will be teaching our target group of pupils.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The school has reviewed the teaching time for the level 3 learners. The target pupils will have 10 lessons of mathematics and English per two-week cycle, which is an increase of three (with the time having been taken from MFL in Year 7). Teaching time for science and for subjects outside the core curriculum remain the same.

A two-day training programme (in July 2005) for all of the teachers of the pilot cohort will cover issues relating to emotional literacy, which will provide staff with the opportunity to explore their own emotional literacy through a series of interactive exercises. Through developing emotional literacy, we hope to improve day-to-day communication between ourselves and our pupils which in turn can contribute to promoting a more positive outlook, a greater sense of the value and importance of each other and most importantly develop an environment in which it is acceptable to experiment in order to succeed.

The second day of the training will concentrate on 'mind-friendly' learning: improving motivation, creativity in learning and achieving. This will provide staff with the opportunity to identify and experience practical strategies that promote and encourage positive learning behaviour.

Drivers and blocks

Excellent consultancy support and the opportunity to network with other schools participating in the pilot have driven the pilot this far. The enthusiasm and commitment among staff at all levels to share ideas and concerns has also helped with the development of the pilot.

The freedom to innovate and take opportunities to experiment and explore is still constrained by budget and staffing issues. However, a meaningful dialogue has begun on new ways to help pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language and has also led to an enhanced transition where we hope to build on existing relationships between parents and carers and the school.

This year has seen a team of teachers working with their primary school colleagues to deliver the curriculum at Key Stage 2. We have already held a parents' and carers' morning and used the DfES materials including videos 'Getting Involved' and 'I can explain' to involve parents and carers in their child's education.

For the first time we have held a day for the Year 5 children to experience life at secondary school. This was followed by two days in the school for Year 6 children (an increase from our usual allocation). The first day gave the pupils an opportunity to follow a normal school day on a timetable. The second day gave staff the opportunity to meet parents and carers in a small-group setting with their son and their son's form tutor and then in a formal presentation where the theme was partnership between parents and carers, pupils and the school. This proved to be very successful and will be something we continue to develop throughout the year.

A letter has been sent to the parents and carers of the level 3 learners informing them of our commitment to support their children in attaining level 5 by the end of the key stage.

Assessment of pupils' progress

The project has shaped our current practice on the tracking of pupils and our systems for assessment and monitoring. The potential of each Year 7 pupil to improve his attainment will be identified using a variety of data: Key Stage 2, FFT, MidYis, RA and PASS. We are also considering using PAT for the analysis of the English Key Stage 2 marks. We plan to use a half-termly monitoring regime with our level 3 learners and we are currently organising training for staff to develop their awareness of how data should be used to track pupils' progress. Our transition coordinator will oversee the assessment of all the Year 7 pupils.

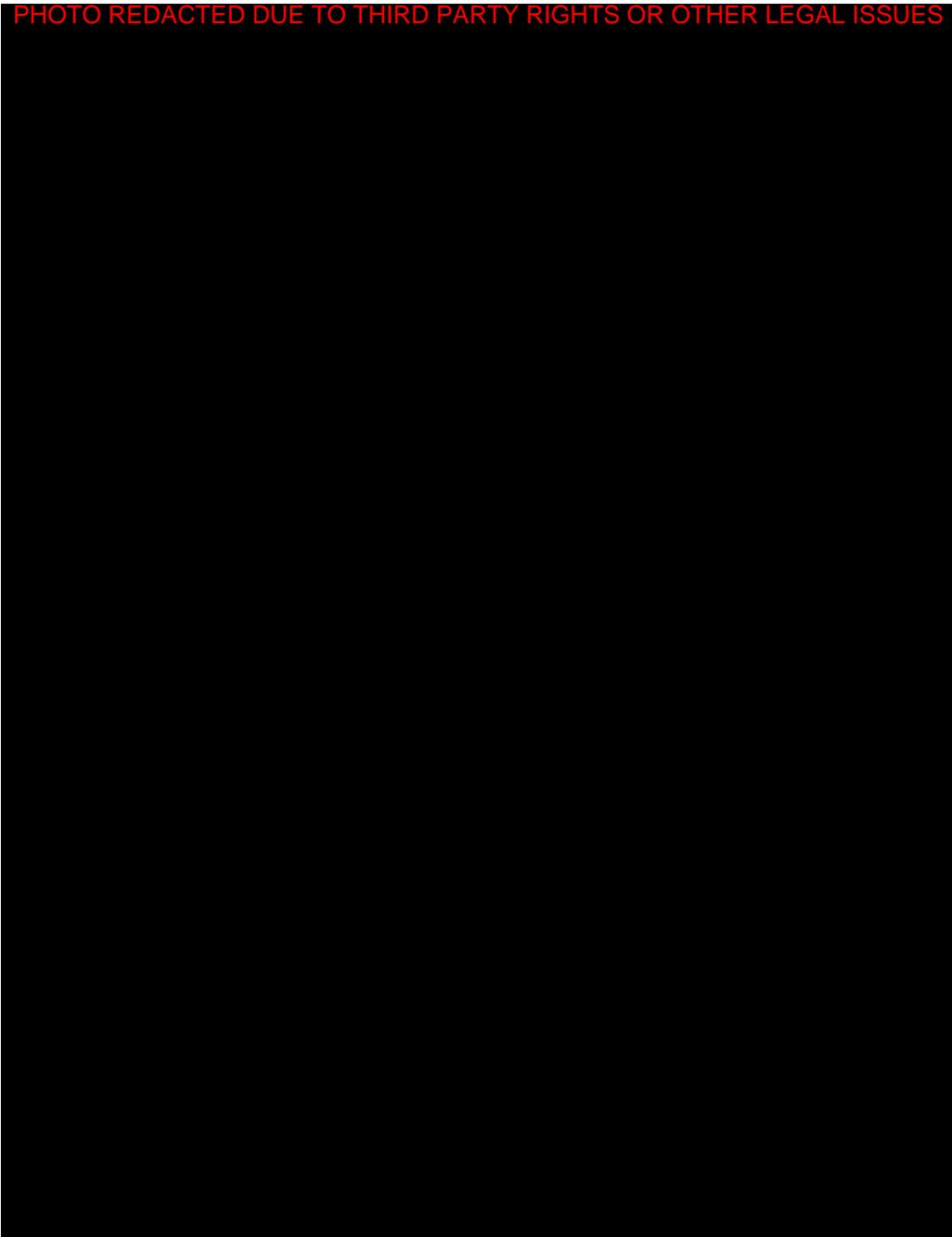
Interactive whiteboards

The interactive whiteboards have all been installed in the classrooms where the pilot cohort will be taught. Three of the boards are currently being used effectively in English and science. Twelve members of staff have been trained in their use, and plans are in place to provide further training that focuses on the pedagogical benefits of interactive whiteboard technology.

The project has shaped our current practice on the tracking of pupils and our systems for assessment and monitoring.

Excellent consultancy support and the opportunity to network with other schools participating in the pilot have driven the project this far.

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School 10

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Integrated curriculum (50% of timetable) for the whole Year 7 cohort
- Competence-based curriculum delivered in masterclass style to 100+ pupils in the main school hall
- External businesses involved to give the modules a real-life focus
- Team teaching for significant chunks of the curriculum
- Two-week induction of pupils into the new curriculum

The school is an 11–16 boys' comprehensive school of over 1000 pupils in an intensely urban environment. The environment is one of significant social disadvantage and all the local wards that form the catchment area are within the top 5% of the most deprived LA wards in England and Wales. The school has recently been designated as specialist visual arts and media college and is part of the first phase Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme with a new building scheduled for 2007.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot is led by an assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher. Both have an overarching responsibility for curriculum development and were writers of the specialist college bid. In addition, the pilot is supported on a voluntary basis by 28 teaching staff as well as the LA in the form of consultants and attached adviser time.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The aim for 2005 is to create an integrated curriculum for the whole year group rather than just targeting level 3 learners. This will be delivered to the two banded halves of the year group (called the X band and the Y band) and will take up 50% of their curriculum time: 15 of 30 lessons. The curriculum is divided into six modules that will be delivered for 5 lessons per week – three modules to one half of the year group and three to the other – and these modules will then rotate after one and a half terms. The new curriculum is competence and skills based rather than content driven and will be delivered in a masterclass style to banded half-year groups of 100+ pupils in the hall. The other 15 lessons will include: mathematics, literature, MFL, PE, one science lesson for practicals, DT and either geography or history on a half-year rotation.

This delivery style will be unique and will move both staff and pupils beyond traditional subject areas. It provides an excellent opportunity for staff development through team writing, teaching and coaching. The hall fixtures and fittings are ordered to enable training and use of equipment in the latter half of the summer term. Lunch will be served in the hall for Year 7: this will be an extremely positive change to aid transition to high school.

Staff will deliver in teaching teams of four, focusing on productive talk, collaboration, media literacy and assessment for learning. It is intended that the pupil acquisition of competences and skills through this integrated approach will raise standards and attainment by enabling pupils to transfer generic skills and competences across subjects and access a curriculum that was formerly inaccessible. The school has planned a two-week induction that will prepare the pupils in terms of ethos and expectations of the competence curriculum (CC).

The timetable is complete and the school has managed to incorporate all but two modules as two double sessions and a single. Mathematics will be delivered in three discrete lessons outside the CC and delivered and tracked as numeracy through the CC modules to give 5 hours' teaching per week. English is delivered and tracked through the modules as well as two discrete lessons of literature in both bands. In addition, the Y band will receive three lessons of literacy progress units (LPUs) in place of MFL. Progress will be measured in these groups using the LPU flow charts and the progress and optional tests twice yearly. The decision as to when to resume learning a foreign language will be made using this progress as the key indicator.

Drivers and blocks

The school staff have been the main driver of the curriculum and have demonstrated their flexible approach to change. Module writing teams meet regularly, including on three weekend writing residencies. This has been further supported by involving external businesses to give the modules a real-life focus. Local employers and companies have been very keen to support a competence-driven curriculum, as they see it as preparing employees for the 21st century.

Support has been extensive, including from the DfES, LA, Creative Partnerships, local businesses, partner schools, regional networks and associate schools. We have also undertaken our own research, culminating in the involvement with the Royal Society of Arts, and their Opening Minds project. LA consultants have undertaken the task of tracking literacy, numeracy and ICT across all modules to ensure consistency. Additionally, they are providing targeted expert assistance to staff working outside their subject expertise.

The staff are enjoying producing a process-driven curriculum that will support and develop our pupils and cannot wait for it to begin as a contrast to the daily challenge of delivering a content-driven, overloaded Key Stage 3 curriculum that does not meet the majority of our pupils' needs.

Assessment of pupils' progress

We will use Assessment in Action to track pupils' use of competences and skills through group work, presentation and peer and self-evaluation. This is being led by the head of expressive arts. A form has been devised to record evidence for each individual competence. In addition the generic thinking skills will also be assessed in this way. Progress in English and mathematics will be measured beyond the CC by the relevant departments and standardised. Halfway through the year both bands will undertake last year's optional and progress tests in mathematics and English to measure progress followed in May by all pupils taking optional tests in the X band and live progress tests in

the Y band. Cognitive ability tests will be taken during the induction week as three sessions per half-year group, rather than as a whole day of tests. The pupils will each have an A3 learning log in which to record, save and evaluate their CC experience. We have even ordered trays to keep the learning logs safe!

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Primary heads have attended a CC presentation. This follows on from transition support from our LA link adviser acting as our CC ambassador when visiting our feeder primary schools. We have 36 partner primaries, and have produced a leaflet for the end of the two-week induction period for pupils to take home to parents and carers. We are using the DfES 'Getting Involved' material as the template, supported by individual copies of the 'Getting Involved' DVD for all parents and carers.

At the end of the autumn term parents, carers and Year 6 teachers will be invited to an open day that extends into an evening exhibition of work. Due to limited space that prevents us having a parent and carer drop-in centre, on that day we will set up a café-style space at the back of the hall to help parents and carers feel more relaxed in the school setting.

Interactive whiteboards

The interactive whiteboards are all installed in CC staff classrooms and supplement all the interactive whiteboards we have in school. These rooms are timetabled against the CC hall delivery so that small-group work using the boards can take place. We have three mobile boards which will be used in the hall, alongside the large screen as appropriate. The large screen in the hall has Activote software installed and we have purchased another copy.

Local employers and companies have been very keen to support a competence-driven curriculum, as they see it as preparing employees for the 21st century.

The staff are enjoying producing a process-driven curriculum ... a contrast to the daily challenge of delivering a content-driven, overloaded Key Stage 3 curriculum that does not meet the majority of our pupils' needs.

School 11

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Thematic curriculum for all Year 7 pupils (50% of timetable)
- Learning tutors to teach all of the new thematic, project-based curriculum
- Coordinated intervention programme for level 3 learners built into new curriculum
- Project linked to major new building programme in the local area

The school is a mixed 11–18 comprehensive with a population of 800 (including 437 pupils on the special educational needs register) with 54% of the school qualifying for free school meals. Pupils' attainment and attendance are below the national average.

Coordination of the pilot

In July 2004, the literacy coordinator took on the role of the pilot coordinator, and so leads the project. However, the pilot coordinator is in close partnership with the headteacher, who attends all regional network and key school meetings. The strong support of the headteacher has given the pilot a high status from the start.

More than half of the staff have regularly attended discussion meetings. Information on the pilot's development is relayed to staff via staff meetings, daily briefings and from meetings of heads of departments and our leadership group. Over half the staff have been involved in writing the new curriculum. The LA has been very supportive and their consultants have been on hand to advise on planning, and to analyse data and work samples.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The consensus from the initial whole-school meeting in July 2004 was that we wanted pupils to become 'happier, more autonomous learners'. We felt that pupils' motivational levels had fallen, that there was a repetition of content across subjects and that pupils were insufficiently challenged. The pilot was seen as an opportunity to try something different. We felt that all pupils would benefit from a curriculum that looked at needs and skills as opposed to content: a curriculum that would prepare them for their future. Since a majority of our Year 7 pupils work at level 3 and below, staff decided that the pilot should be broader than the level 3 cohort.

All Year 7 pupils will, from September 2005, be taught for 12 of their 25 hours per week as part of the pilot. The 12 hours of the pilot will be thematic time, with pupils working in more inclusive, mixed-ability groups than at other times. Thematic time takes the form of six projects, each lasting a half-term. Projects are currently being planned. The first five are entitled:

- Livin' here and lovin' it
- I'm a learner, get me out of here!

- Roamin' around
- All spaced out
- Spring into summer.

The required 5 hours of English are delivered in the pilot thematic time. However, mathematics has only 2 of its 5 hours within the pilot time. Science, PE, technology, music, French, and 3 hours of mathematics will be taught as discrete subjects by specialists outside the pilot time. All other subjects become part of the pilot themes and, in general, will be taught by a non-specialist. We have chosen five learning tutors to teach the pilot. The pupil-teacher ratio will be 1 : 20. While in mixed-ability groups for the pilot, outside the pilot time Year 7 will be in ability groups. Level 3 pupils (in mathematics and English) will be withdrawn from the pilot three to four times per week for 30- to 40-minute sessions. In these sessions they will receive extra tuition from the pilot coordinator and a mathematics specialist.

Construction of a major retail park adjacent to the school started in September 2005. We have agreed with builders and the City Council to work with architects, engineers and business to supplement our thematic work. For one day per half-term, we will take Year 7 off timetable to do this, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. This will supplement our required numbers of hours and give pupils the opportunity to apply their skills.

Drivers and blocks

A key driver has been the fact that we have been allowed to make radical changes – this has excited and energised teachers. This has not been a top-down imposition but a teacher-led initiative with few constraints. The creative power this gives back to staff has been dynamic.

Monitoring by the DfES, through regional meetings and visits to school, maintains the momentum and provides valuable networking opportunities. Funding supports one aspect that has gone really well: staff collaboration on the curriculum planning. Each theme is planned over six half-day sessions, one per week, by staff working off-site in teams of three or four. These teams consist of 24 teachers from very different disciplines. We have consciously mixed the teams, sciences with the arts, and these with subjects such as PE and technology. Often, this was the first time staff had worked together on the curriculum. Inevitably, there has been disruption to classes as staff are repeatedly covered for half-day blocks throughout the year. However, the gains we have made – greater cooperation and understanding among staff and a sharing of knowledge and techniques – far outweigh the difficulties we have had to overcome.

Another issue for us was raising the status of Key Stage 3 in teachers' perceptions. Some staff, with justification, were concerned that their careers, and therefore their futures, were only really measured by the number of A*-Cs achieved at GCSE. The headteacher has reassured anxious staff that being part of this curriculum development would prove beneficial to their professional development. It would enhance their teaching and effectively their pupils' learning in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Assessment of pupils' progress

We meet with our primary colleagues regularly. After Key Stage 2 tests, they advise us on the details of the new cohort. With Year 6 staff and LA support, level 3 papers are analysed to highlight areas of strength and where extra tuition is needed. We can then teach to specific needs in withdrawal groups. Level 3 pupils therefore have a baseline from which to work. Within their thematic time, the five learning tutors have common half-termly literacy and numeracy targets that are key to moving from level 3 to 4: for example, the correct use of paragraphs.

The school is developing a strong commitment to pupil self-assessment. Pupils will produce a portfolio with evidence of work, to be presented to their parents or carers on a portfolio review day prior to Christmas 2005.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Interest in and support for the pilot from our primary colleagues has prompted us to look at a transfer of teaching assistants for part of each week. With their knowledge of the Year 6 children and their obvious primary-based skills, this is an exciting initiative.

Joint meetings were held in spring 2005 to identify the level 3s according to their Year 5 optional test results and Year 6 teachers' observations. This has given us a head start and enabled us to plan with at least a tentative grasp of numbers.

The parents and carers of the new cohort of level 3 pupils will be invited to meet with us in September 2005, when we will explain the extra help and support their children will receive. Moreover, we want to provide some scaffold for them around homework to support their children's learning.

Finally, parents and carers of the new Year 7 cohort will be invited to school each Friday afternoon to see Year 7 present the pilot work they have completed that week. However, the parents and carers of the level 3 pupils will be more proactively involved – we intend to invite them by telephone, text message or letter, attempting to set up a strong and frequent interaction.

Interactive whiteboards

The interactive whiteboards have been welcome. We have employed external staff to install materials and resources that relate to our themes. We will test Year 7 pupils' multiple intelligences using the Activotes. An LA mathematics consultant is currently developing some level 3 resources for use with the interactive whiteboard.

This has not been a top-down imposition but a teacher-led initiative with few constraints. The creative power this gives back to staff has been dynamic.

Parents of the new Year 7 cohort will be invited to school each Friday afternoon to see Year 7 present the pilot work they have completed that week.

We felt that all pupils would benefit from a curriculum that looked at needs and skills as opposed to content: a curriculum that would prepare them for their future.

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School 12

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Discrete literacy units based on the LPUs
- Requirements for level 5 English and mathematics to inform schemes of work across the curriculum
- More active learning in science
- Integrated, topic-based humanities
- Active linked project work in technology and music

The school is a large 11–19 comprehensive with 1260 pupils. Although it is in a 'leafy suburb' the intake is predominantly inner city. It has a comprehensive intake with pupils coming from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. In 2005 pupils came from 51 primary feeder schools. The school became single-sited in 2002 with a new build, having been on three sites. It has been a designated specialist sports college since 2003.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot was initially led by a deputy headteacher and we appointed a pilot coordinator from September 2005. The coordinator previously undertook the role with increasing responsibility throughout this planning year in an unpaid capacity. Interested staff were asked to attend an initial planning meeting and there is now a committed cohort ranging from NQTs to Key Stage 3 coordinators. So far about 20 members of the teaching staff are involved in the planning and planned delivery of the pilot. Learning mentors and teaching assistants have also been involved and are an integral part of our arrangements for the pilot. The college has used the funds allocated to hold two residential planning weekends. We have invited speakers and trainers to both the weekends and school-based INSET. We have paid for cover and for work undertaken in teachers' own time. We have secured the services of advisers and creatives from Creative Partnerships. The pilot coordinator is also literacy coordinator and SENCO. The responsibilities lie within his overall responsibilities as a member of the leadership group, which carries 5 responsibility points. The coordinator is line-managed by the deputy headteacher.

Proposed curriculum changes for September 2005

English and mathematics will be taught both as discrete subjects and as additional components integrated into other areas. Teachers of other subjects are being helped through INSET and work with LA consultants to deliver aspects of English and mathematics, including the correct methodology and what is needed to meet the requirement for pupils to reach level 5 at Key Stage 3. Science teaching staff have opted to deliver modules of work that provide for more active learning. Humanities staff will teach integrated history, geography and RE in a topic-based scheme entitled 'Around the world in eighty days'. MFL will teach Spanish customs alongside language

skills and include grammar to reinforce English. For example, we will study 'The Day of the Dead' celebrations, using a creative partner to make masks and undertake language work in Spanish. Technology staff are running a course entitled 'We can dig it' in which a gardening project will see pupils making a garden, growing plants, designing areas for use by the music department and making a pond that science pupils can share, among other projects. There is a plan for pupils to build a pergola for the music department to use for outdoor performances. We have already fenced off a large area for this. Pupils will be making music and instruments in 'Making the band' in a more practical music scheme of work. Literacy will be taught through units such as 'In the news' with pupils producing newsletters and video reports, teleconferencing and using ideas from the LPUs. ICT lessons will provide support across the curriculum and will be looking at game design, role-play and using the Internet for research and DTP for recording and reporting. PSHE will be taught on a rolling programme. PE lessons will follow our mainstream pattern to reinforce our sports college status.

We will be incorporating aspects such as individual learning styles, multiple intelligences and Brain Gym active learning and will also be making changes to the learning environment. We have a designated teaching and learning area for use by pupils involved in the pilot.

Minor adaptations have been made to the timetable: for example one whole morning will be used to visit the CLC. The flexibility to move staff for special projects like whole-day visits has been arranged. Considerations regarding Key Stages 4 and 5 will be made and Key Stage 3 timetabling will usually be through blocking.

There will be a greater emphasis on skills needed to teach a more flexible curriculum. Understanding of learning styles and needs of pupils will be reinforced. We anticipate a greater emphasis on what we teach as well as how we teach. We have already had inspirational speakers and examined a wide range of educational approaches and expect to be able to train our teachers, teaching assistants and mentors to be able to use a wide range of skills and teaching styles.

Drivers and blocks

The funding provided has allowed the school to organise its own INSET as well as additional time to meet and plan. The freedom to innovate and use the skills of individuals in the school has been a huge advantage. Input from Creative Partnerships and the creation of special teaching areas and resources has been most welcome.

The pilot has provided a useful springboard to develop relationships and improve working practices. We have welcomed the chance to visit and share thoughts with like-minded colleagues and discuss innovations. Networking has been an essential feature of our planning year: we have had the opportunity to develop relationships across traditional boundaries and work with a wide range of professionals. The staff feel part of a worthwhile national pilot that could influence the life chances and experiences of the pupils who rely upon us.

The blocks have been some staff who are resistant to change – there is still a need to win the hearts and minds of some colleagues.

Assessment of pupils' progress

We will use Key Stage 2 results together with cognitive ability tests as a baseline. The present Year 7 have taken progress tests this year and we hope to use a diagnostic analysis of these tests to help inform future planning. We are still discussing and working towards other assessments. The planning documents have areas to record and track progress. Pupils' views and parents' and carers' feedback will also be used. Again, this has been built into our planning documents.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

We have tightened our procedures for transfer between the two key stages. We have secured greater liaison with many of our feeder primary schools. We have also attempted to involve parents and carers much more than previously. We have secured the help and advice of primary colleagues, especially with predictions for Key Stage 2 results, and have built up more effective ways of obtaining results from the LA. We have already placed the identified pupils into groups on two induction days. Parents and carers have been introduced to the two advisory DVDs: 'Getting Started' and 'I Can Help'. We are planning to hold regular celebratory days for parents and carers to attend. We will have informal sessions where parents and carers can become involved in activities.

Interactive whiteboards

Staff have become familiar with the use of interactive whiteboards. The boards are available to all faculties. We have initiated training for all staff. Pupils are benefiting from the software and whiteboards are now among a range of multisensory teaching aids. As a result of dispersing the resources through the school we expect that faculties will make increasing use of both software and the interactive aspects available.

The freedom to innovate and use the skills of individuals in the school has been a huge advantage.

There is a plan for pupils to build a pergola for the music department to use for outdoor performances.

School 13

National Low-Attainers' Pilot – review of the first year

- Core group of key staff set up to investigate the pilot and its inclusion in the school's overall activity
- 5 hours of English and mathematics
- Assessment of pupils every four weeks
- Elev8 to support Year 8 pupils who make no progress
- Local network for English and mathematics set up with a partner school

The school is a mixed comprehensive with 1650 pupils on roll, over 50% of whom are entitled to free school meals. We have recently received arts college status and have been a training school since 2003. It is a rapidly improving school which is engaged in some unique partnerships with schools across the country.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot is led by a deputy headteacher who is also the Secondary Strategy manager. Other responsibilities of the coordinator are line management of English and Year 9, transfer issues and primary liaison. After the initial briefing meetings a core group was set up consisting of the curriculum deputy, the member of staff responsible for the timetable and the assistant headteachers with line management responsibility for Year 8 and ICT respectively. The core group's purpose was to understand the implications of the pilot for the whole-school development plan for 2005–06 and to make curriculum recommendations to the rest of the senior leadership team.

The learning area coordinators for English and mathematics were the next group to be involved, followed by a coordinator appointed for the Year 8 element of the pilot. The funding for coordination has been used to pay for the equivalent of one day a week's salary for the coordinator, an allocation of time for the Year 8 project coordinator and the appointment of a numeracy teaching assistant.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

Pupils at level 3 in Year 7 already receive 5 hours of English through 4 hours of mixed-ability English and 1 hour of withdrawal using LPUs. From next year we have decided that pupils will be withdrawn from one humanities lesson a week. In mathematics they will receive 3 hours of mathematics next year, and in addition will have a 1-hour withdrawal from humanities or MFL taught by a specialist teaching assistant using *Targeting level 4 in Year 7* (DfES 0085-2003). They will have an extra lesson of mathematics on a Friday period 5, bringing the total to 5 hours.

The shift in focus from level 4–5 to level 3–5 has necessitated discussion and INSET with the learning area coordinators for English and mathematics. We have set up a local network for mathematics and English teachers with our partner school to facilitate the

sharing of good practice and so that our consultants can deliver joint INSET. The success of our current intervention strategies can be measured, in part, by the improvement in level 3–5 conversion at Key Stage 3 in English, from 6% to 30%. However, another crucial factor in this success has been the consistent and sustained implementation of the English Framework and the other elements of the English Strategy materials.

We have concerns in Year 8, as pupils who have not made the required progress at Year 7 do not then make any marked progress and some go back down. As a result we have decided to withdraw three groups of 20 Year 8 pupils from MFL to provide them with extra literacy support. We are also creating a new lesson called Elev8, a combination of English, humanities, media, ICT and thinking skills. This will be taught as a double lesson to give teachers the opportunity to incorporate trips for pupils, allowing them to research the written task they will be asked to complete. In this way we will attempt to make the experience more relevant and 'real'. To accommodate a double lesson for these groups we will be asking the pupils to come in for period 2 on the day of the lesson, and stay for a new period 6.

Elev8 will be taught by two English teachers and one humanities teacher and is being coordinated by an English teacher who is using the project as part of the work for an MA course. The coordinator is responsible for monitoring the provision and for tracking progress. As well as the double lesson, staff will also be teaching one extra lesson of English to these groups, which will be in addition to the three lessons of mixed-ability teaching they already have in Year 8. The teachers involved have all been given two hours a week of planning and INSET time in the second half of the summer term.

Drivers and blocks

The most significant driver has been the Strategy itself, the principles of which had already been fully embraced before we joined the pilot. The groundwork already done has meant that our work on the pilot is simply the next logical step. It was essential that the project was led by a deputy headteacher and that the core group decisions were taken by members of the senior leadership team who fully understood the whole-school implications of their recommendations. The pilot is now an integral part of our vision for the next three years and fully incorporated into our development plan.

The most successful network has been our LA network; the work that has so far come out of the English network has been impressive and useful to the staff concerned. The only real block has been trying to decide where to find the time to allow us to put in extra provision in Year 8 and then minimising the impact on MFL.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Pupils in Year 7 will be assessed according to the school biannual system. Those pupils who are doing LPUs will also be assessed by their teaching assistant and English teacher every four weeks. The Elev8 group will be assessed every four weeks and then set a reading, writing and learning target to be shared with their English and humanities teachers.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

In addition to our Key Stage 2 liaison teacher we have introduced a learning induction programme into Year 6–7 transfer. We have also asked all 60 partner primaries to provide us with teacher assessment data so that we can identify our Year 7 cohort earlier. We have ensured that primary colleagues know about the pilot and are fully supportive of its aims. Additionally, the coordinator has spent three days in primary schools gathering data and observing level 3 pupils.

Interactive whiteboards

Interactive whiteboards have been put into some of our English classrooms and all of our mathematics classrooms. Staff are still at the early stages of training and usage but response from pupils is positive. The pilot funds will help to provide boards in the rest of the English classrooms and we are moving our literacy classroom into the main English area so that literacy pupils will also have the full use of a board.

The pilot is now an integral part of our vision for the next three years and fully incorporated into our development plan.

We have set up a local network for mathematics and English teachers with our partner school to facilitate the sharing of good practice and so that our consultants can deliver joint INSET.

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School 14

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- A school improvement group (SIG) to guide the pilot
- Parents' and carers' drop-in centre and half-termly newsletters
- High profile given to the quality of the learning environment
- Literacy and numeracy support in cross-curricular themed days
- Videoconferencing between Year 6 and the secondary school

The school is a large, mixed, urban comprehensive school. Its multicultural intake reflects the rich and diverse nature of the local community. The pilot is known within the school as the Acorn project.

Coordination of the pilot

The formal launch of the Acorn project to staff will take place in September 2005. This will be a CPD day focusing on the level 3 learner and progression, and will be followed by a launch to governors and the parents and carers of the target group for the Acorn project. The pilot has been used to facilitate improved learning and teaching as a whole-school priority and has been incorporated into the whole-school assessment for learning CPD programme for 2005–06.

To inform planning of the pilot a school improvement group (SIG) was set up in January 2005. Membership of the group is vertical and includes assistant headteachers who are responsible for leading focus groups, core subject heads of curriculum areas, the SENCO, EAL coordinator and a representative from each of the foundation subjects including NQTs.

The focus groups involved in the planning of the pilot are concentrating on:

- transfer;
- induction;
- tracking and monitoring;
- literacy and numeracy;
- interactive whiteboards.

The groups meet regularly with assistant headteachers taking recommendations through meetings and minutes to the headteacher and senior leadership team.

There will be a parents' and carers' evening launch and the Acorn coordinator will hold a regular drop-in centre for parents with an Acorn newsletter sent home each half-term. Parents and carers will receive feedback on short-term and long-term objectives. Pupils will be tracked according to revised tracking and traffic procedures. *Every Child Matters* has a high profile and the pupil and parent and carer voice will enhance quality assurance and planning for the Acorn project.

Proposed curriculum change for September 2005

The programme for inducting new pupils and their parents and carers has been developed and extended. This will include a programme of workshops for parents and carers and staff on how to support learners, led by a member of the Kings College teachers and researcher project. The views of pupils and parents and carers on what they perceive to be barriers to learning will inform the planning and delivery of the programme.

Approximately 40 Acorn project pupils will be identified for English and for mathematics. These will not necessarily be the same pupils for each of the core subjects. The target group will attend English lessons in mixed-ability groupings and mathematics in set ability groupings. English and mathematics heads of curriculum areas have attended CPD on the level 3 learner and are currently updating schemes of work to enable a clear focus of the needs of the level 3 learner. A programme for 24 cross-curricular days for the targeted cohort is being planned, with a pilot day for level 3 science pupils taking place in the second half of the summer term, in conjunction with PGCE students from the Institute of Education.

An area attached to the library has been identified for the Acorn project and the coordinator will be based there. Serious consideration has been given to the importance of the learning environment for the project. The Acorn coordinator will mentor the identified pupils, support them in core subject lessons as appropriate and put in place an individual learning plan for each pupil. Following consultation with core subject leaders, plans will include elements from the materials for *Learning Challenge* (DfES 0393/2003), *Reading Challenge* (DfES 0293/2003), *Writing Challenge* (DfES 0314/2003) and *Mathematics Challenge* (DfES 0200/2003).

The programme for the delivery of literacy and numeracy in cross-curricular themed days is being planned, with thinking skills and learning styles being incorporated into the programme, overseen by the Acorn coordinator. There will be additional support for pupils with EAL needs.

Drivers and blockers

The SIG has proved to be a useful vehicle for the development of the pilot and for the development of pedagogy in general. It has also proved beneficial in helping to manage the National Strategy within the school, as there is now a wider group for both the school Strategy manager and LA representatives to consult.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Reviewed and updated systems with clear 'traffic lighting' have been put in place. A whole-school review of the use of data is being carried out in conjunction with the leading edge partner school on assessment for learning.

It will be the role of the Acorn coordinator to focus on progress within sublevels in collaboration with the class teacher in both mathematics and English. Pupils will take the progress test at the end of Year 7 and the optional test in Year 8. They will be assessed through teacher assessment and end-of-unit tests.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

A project with two feeder primary schools culminated in a transfer conference over a three-day period, involving pupils, staff, parents and carers and LA representatives. The conference provided a valuable insight into the issues surrounding transfer, as well as an opportunity for core subjects to link with primary teachers and LA transition coordinators to enhance understanding of core subject delivery at Key Stage 2. Year 6 children transferring to the school in September 2005 and school council members are now in email contact and take part in videoconferencing.

In order to enhance the transfer of information and data, a form for each transferring child has been sent to primary schools. Information requested includes teacher assessments by level and sublevel and curricular targets. An attendance printout for each child has been requested, together with their Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test papers when they are available. A letter explaining the pilot has been sent to each headteacher. While this will be of value for all pupils, it will also form the basis of diagnostic analysis of the identified level 3 pupils. A transfer CPD programme will be in place from September 2005.

A coordinator for the Acorn project has been appointed to liaise with the Year 7 achievement coordinator and pilot line manager in identifying the pilot cohort from Key Stage 2 data – this is likely to include identification through level 3a and level 3b. A programme of CPD in school and in conjunction with the LA is in place and the coordinator will attend the forthcoming Learning to Learn conference organised by the LA. An extensive programme of visits to primary schools is in place.

The Acorn coordinator, in conjunction with core subject leaders, will scrutinise the Key Stage 2 papers. An evaluation report on each pupil and the cohort overall will be produced. This will be formally updated each half-term.

Interactive whiteboards

To ensure that interactive whiteboards are used effectively and are incorporated into curriculum planning a CPD programme in liaison with Promethean and Crossways Federation is in place.

***Every Child Matters* has a high profile and pupil and parent and carer voice will enhance quality assurance and planning for the Acorn programme.**

Serious consideration has been given to the importance of the learning environment for the project.

School 15

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Specific writing programmes for identified groups of pupils
- Increased collaboration with feeder primary schools
- Older pupils trained as Challenge tutors
- More rigorous tracking systems, with pupils assessed every six weeks
- A specialist writing team to deliver whole-school INSET

The school is a mixed 11–16 comprehensive with a roll of 1319 – 762 boys and 557 girls. We have a mid-phase admission rate of 7.3%, which is higher than other schools in the local authority. We are a multi-ethnic school: 87.1% of our pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group, 30.2%, being Bangladeshi, followed by 17.8% Indian, 15% Pakistani and 13.1% Black African. At Key Stage 4, 40% of pupils attained 5 or more A*–C grades in 2004. At Key Stage 3, 52% of pupils attained level 5 in English, 55% in mathematics and 39% in science.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot is led and coordinated by an assistant headteacher. Three research teachers and a literacy coordinator are also involved in various aspects of the pilot. Some of the research teachers and English staff have been involved in the delivery of the LPUs. The heads of English and mathematics have also been involved, particularly with transfer. The senior leadership team has been fully supportive of the initiative. In addition, the LA Strategy consultants have been crucial in developmental aspects, for example the transferability of literacy skills.

The pilot coordinator is a member of the senior leadership team and line manages English and mathematics. The pilot is integrated into the school improvement plan, which focuses on improving teaching and learning to raise the attainment of our pupils.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

We are introducing a fourth period for English, which will be an intervention period. The extra period will subsume one lesson of the LPUs, material from *Reading Challenge* (DfES 0293/2003) and *Writing Challenge* (DfES 0314/2003) for level 3 pupils. For level 4 and gifted and talented pupils we will be developing their critical thinking skills. LPU pupils will still be withdrawn for another period. Teaching assistants, under the supervision of a senior teaching assistant and the literacy and learning coordinator, deliver material from *Reading Challenge* and *Writing Challenge*. LPUs will be delivered by English teachers and other trained staff. We have blocked the Year 7 intervention period into groups of three classes. This means that we will have the intervention period at three separate times during the week: this enables us to deploy staff more effectively.

We will train a specialist writing team during the autumn term who will deliver whole-school INSET in the spring term 2006. The focus will be on transferability of non-fiction writing skills. Following the INSET the team will work with departments and individual teachers using modelling, coaching and scaffolding techniques. We have asked the LA consultants to monitor the writing team during the latter part of the autumn term.

Drivers and blockers

A major plus is a headteacher who has prioritised learning and attainment and has the vision and belief that all pupils can achieve. Leadership qualities encourage people to take risks and in some cases perform beyond their capabilities. We have adopted a staged approach for moving staff forward, coupled with a rigorous monitoring schedule. The pilot is a part of our whole-school development and is integral to our school improvement plan. Having strong support from LA consultants is another plus. Overall, we have created a climate for change in which all staff are fully involved. There has also been a willingness by staff to change. Our intervention programme has been more coordinated this year and will be even more so next year.

The transferability of skills from the LPUs into other subject areas is an ongoing problem that is being addressed in the next school year within the writing project. Late availability of Key Stage 2 data is also a problem which makes planning for the new school year difficult.

Assessment of pupils' progress

We use Key Stage 2 data to plan our teaching and learning and to monitor progress, for example by sampling pupils' work. It is our expectation that pupils will progress at least 1.6 levels throughout Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 8, 75% of pupils should have progressed at least 3 sublevels. This means, for example, that a pupil entering with level 3b will be on an intervention programme, by the end of Year 8 will have progressed to level 4c and by the end of Year 9 will have progressed to level 5c. Pupils on 5c will have intervention activities in Key Stage 4 because they will be graded pupils. The conversion rate of level D pupils to level C pupils (5+) is approximately 60%.

We identify underachievement from the baseline data, the definition being insufficient progress between September and February. Staff strategically mark and level pupils' work every four weeks.

We also have an ongoing programme of book sampling and the senior leadership team observe lessons three times a year. All pupils on an intervention programme will be assessed every six weeks. In this way we will have a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of the provision and can be more proactive if pupils are experiencing difficulties. A more rigorous assessment schedule should ensure faster progression.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Ensuring continuity in teaching and classroom practice is vital. We will be extending the transfer activities with partner primary schools, involving the English and mathematics departments. We will timetable the English and mathematics departments for 2 hours each week to work with our primary colleagues on a number of initiatives including

jointly writing the transition units. Primary staff will visit the school during September to see how their secondary colleagues are delivering the transition units, which should enable us to have a greater understanding of the skills primary school children are developing and prevent duplication in secondary school.

We are in the process of training current Year 9 pupils as Challenge tutors to support the Learning Challenge with targeted Year 7 level 3 pupils, for example helping them with the development of organisational skills. We will be inviting level 3 pupils into the school during the second week in July to meet the staff who will be working with them on the various intervention programmes. There will also be a summer school.

Interactive whiteboards

Pupils pursuing the LPUs have had their learning enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards. Staff have had their first phase of training. We have an ICT development plan, which will be phasing in interactive whiteboards as well as other hardware. We are purchasing six laptops (writing tablets) specifically for pupils involved in the pilot and those working on *Writing Challenge* material, which should engage the pilot cohort more and thus accelerate their progress.

A major plus is having a headteacher who has prioritised learning and attainment and who has the vision and belief that all pupils can achieve.

Primary staff will visit the school during September to see how their secondary colleagues are delivering the transition units.

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School 16

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Additional literacy and numeracy delivered through the foundation subjects
- Initial key focus on oracy
- Key teachers from foundation subjects to lead on incorporating thinking skills into the pilot activities
- Interactive whiteboard training for all Year 7 staff

The school is a large, mixed, inner-city 11–18 comprehensive with 1700 pupils. It achieved performing arts status in September 2004 as well as being awarded Arts and Sportsmark Gold in the last three years.

Coordination of the pilot

The coordinator role has been shared by two main professional grade teachers, line managed by an assistant headteacher who is also the Strategy manager. There has been regular contact with subject leaders for mathematics and English, the LA inspector and the mathematics and English consultants.

The key priority in our school improvement programme for 2005–06 is improving teaching and learning. At Key Stage 3 the whole-school focus will be to increase the attainment of our level 3 learners with a deputy headteacher leading this strand of improvement and a newly appointed assistant headteacher leading the second year of the pilot.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The model for implementation in September 2005 places pupil integration at the core. Level 3 learners will continue to receive 3 hours of mathematics each week in sets and 3.5 hours of English in mixed-ability groups, with the additional time for literacy and numeracy delivered in cross-curricular mixed-ability groups. Four subjects will take the lead, incorporating key objectives into their lesson plans: history, geography and drama will deliver additional time in literacy, and science will deliver additional time in mathematics. The remaining departments will initially focus on oracy, expanding to include text and writing term by term.

The pilot has been incorporated into the school improvement plan to raise the pilot's profile and status. A pedagogical approach has been identified as core to the success and a CPD day for all staff took place in the autumn term 2004. The focus was appropriate teaching styles for level 3 learners. The main objective was to support reading and writing. LA consultants gave presentations and staff had the opportunity to work in cross-curricular groups, experiencing hands-on activities which were built into schemes of work during departmental discussion.

Subject leaders in English and mathematics have attended a one-day meeting with respective LA consultants to plan, amend and develop schemes ready for delivery in September and consultants have also worked in school. Subsequent departmental meetings have taken place to disseminate information to all staff teaching level 3 pupils. The pilot coordinators received initial interactive whiteboard training and have planned further sessions for those teaching Year 7 level 3 pupils.

Selected teachers from our lead departments have received CPD on thinking skills. The skills they have learned will be transferable to cross-curricular teaching and we plan for them to lead the pilot teachers for next year and guide in planning lessons which incorporate a focus on numeracy or literacy. Their experience was shared with the whole school during a recent CPD day.

Drivers and blocks

Network meetings gave clear directions for the development of the project over the year, and discussions with other pilot schools enabled us to learn about what had been tried and tested and what may or may not be adapted to work in our school. The support received from the LA school improvement officer, consultants and our partner school played a vital role in enabling the project to progress.

We have made considerable gains this year in using data to identify the target group and increasing our knowledge of our intake. We were able to involve subject leaders and arrange CPD for the whole school. We instigated cross-curricular links, developed pedagogies and shared good practice, gaining a greater understanding of how level 3 pupils learn. We forged closer links with our local primary schools, seeing at first hand the experiences of level 3 pupils and observing the teaching styles used. The LA mathematics consultant worked closely with our teachers and level 3 pupils.

We experienced difficulty in obtaining Key Stage 2 data sufficiently early to enable us to identify the target group for 2004–05. Owing to the evolving nature of this pilot many avenues were pursued and later dismissed, which was very time consuming. The appointment of coordinators who were not part of the leadership group was an issue, and it was important to ensure that their lack of seniority did not prevent effective decisions being made and embedded.

Assessment of pupils' progress

In mathematics and English lessons there will be regular formal assessments each term, with informal testing every 2–3 weeks. The four lead departments will use a tracking form to monitor carefully the progress of level 3 learners but assessment within the school will need to be adjusted. Modified forms for lesson plans noting details of level 3 learners, key skills and developmental feedback will be used to support the progress of pupils. A whole-school system of assessment will be developed to support assessment for learning further. The appointment of a data analyst will greatly enhance assessment across the pilot cohort and the whole school.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

The coordinators have visited primary schools to see at first hand the level 3 learners in their usual classroom environment. Our visits have established a valuable dialogue and we have been included in the transfer programme. We are working closely with our partner school when requesting information from our local primary schools. We have requested Key Stage 2 teacher assessments with sublevels, a history of intervention and a sample of Key Stage 2 test papers. We have worked closely with the LA and primary schools, and our English and mathematics departments have attended the transfer meeting.

In September 2005 we will inform the parents and carers of pupils who will be in our target group. They will be invited to attend a workshop to encourage them to help support their child's learning and we will be regularly informing them of the pupil's progress.

Interactive whiteboards

Interactive whiteboards were installed in many rooms through London Challenge and so were in place at the start of this pilot. All staff have received a wide range of training in using interactive whiteboards as part of a CPD day. Many have become very skilled and feel that there are great benefits in using interactive whiteboards as a powerful resource ideally suited to the needs of level 3 learners. All staff who will be teaching Year 7 in September 2005 will be offered further training in the use of interactive whiteboards with particular reference to level 3 learners.

A pedagogical approach has been identified as core to the success.

The appointment of a data analyst will greatly enhance assessment across the pilot cohort and the whole school.

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School 17

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- An action research approach adopted
- Additional English taught through humanities and drama
- Mathematics objectives taught through science
- Significant use of teaching assistants
- Learning to Learn induction programme

The school is a large, oversubscribed, inner-city specialist sports college. It has a comprehensive intake from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Each year 35–40% of pupils enter the school at below level 4 in English and mathematics. Pupils make very good progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, particularly in English. National Curriculum test results at level 5+ have been improving, particularly in mathematics. However, at Key Stage 3 conversions from level 3 to level 5 are below the national averages.

Coordination of the pilot

We have developed a collaborative leadership model for the pilot, which is overseen by the deputy headteacher who has overall responsibility for Key Stage 3. The pilot is led by two teams of staff representing literacy and numeracy.

The literacy team is well established and consists of the pilot leader for literacy who will monitor and evaluate the project, the cross-curricular writing project leader, the SENCO, the learning resource centre manager and the Creative Partnerships coordinator, who also has responsibility for drama. A senior teaching assistant also contributes to this team.

Developments in mathematics/numeracy are also team based. The team consists of the assistant head at Key Stage 3 (also a mathematics teacher) who will monitor and evaluate pupils' progress, the second in mathematics, a further mathematics teacher who has developed considerable expertise in the use of interactive whiteboards, two science teachers and the assistant SENCO, who also teaches mathematics.

Both teams have been supported by LA consultants who deliver CPD and support the collaborative planning, teaching and evaluation. The consultant support also facilitates networking within the LA.

The funding for the project has been used to provide development time for teachers collaboratively to plan and deliver lessons and support the research-based nature of our approach. Approximately three days per week of teacher time has been built into next year's timetable for the key staff to work together. Over the course of the next year we will bring both teams together to share practice and ideas. The whole-school guidance and support team will also have a significant role in assuring pupils' progress.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The identification and grouping of pupils has been done separately for English and mathematics. We do not believe that one intervention will be able to meet the needs of all level 3 learners. Our vision is to have a curriculum that has been developed through classroom-based research, to ensure appropriate provision for this very large cohort of the school population.

Literacy support for the pilot cohort will be delivered through English (3.5 hours), humanities (3 hours), and drama (1 hour). The major foci for improving standards in English will include improving teaching and learning so that the needs of the level 3 learners are met, creating an environment and climate for learning to promote continuity with Key Stage 2 and intervening to improve reading.

Typical activities will involve supporting humanities teachers to integrate English teaching objectives into their schemes of work; building upon the successful partnership with Creative Partnerships, which leads to improved standards of writing in Year 8; and additional reading support from the learning resource centre staff, using *Reading Challenge* (DfES 0293/2003).

There will be five hours of mathematics, consisting of mathematics lessons (3 hours), mathematics/science collaboration (1 hour) and three mental mathematics sessions during registration (1 hour). Following a successful small-scale trial this year one period per week of science will support the understanding of mathematical concepts. The lesson will deliver mathematics short-term objectives and science yearly objectives. Mental mathematics sessions will be delivered during the registration period, which has been extended to 20 minutes. The sessions will be delivered by teaching staff and teaching assistants and the use of interactive whiteboards will be incorporated.

Drivers and blocks

The most important driver for the pilot has been our action research approach, exemplified by the transition work we have undertaken with Nottingham Trent University and our primary partners. This enables us to embed and ensure ownership of change and build the capacity of the school. Our approach has been well supported by the LA consultants who are sympathetic to our approach, National Strategy regional directors and pilot network schools. We feel that this collaborative model will be essential in embedding the lessons learned and providing sustainable leadership over the remaining three years of the project.

Assessment of pupils' progress

A review of pupils' progress will be carried out annually using progress tests in Year 7 and optional tests in Year 8. The roles of data management, monitoring and evaluation have been clearly identified within the two teams of staff. Assessment for learning has been a whole-school priority for CPD over the past three years and we believe that implementing good practice in this area will be essential in ensuring pupils' progress.

A challenge to both the mathematics and English teams will be to ensure that appropriate assessment points are built in regularly to the developing schemes of work. Similarly, the humanities and drama staff have been identifying key literacy objectives which will be used to teach and monitor the progress of pupils.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Pilot leaders within the core subjects have been involved in an action research project with our partner primary schools. This project is part of our involvement as a networked learning community with NCSL, focusing on the issue of how we can maintain learning momentum at transition. Over the course of the last year, staff have visited Year 6 classrooms to look at teaching and learning styles. In return, primary staff have observed lessons and tracked pupils in the secondary school. The emerging knowledge and ideas were developed during a whole-school INSET day to form a two-week induction programme based upon the theme of health, sport and fitness. The focus is very much on inducting pupils on how to learn in the secondary environment, particularly on learning through speaking and listening and group work. This programme is seen as the launch by the school of a focus on Learning to Learn, which the school has identified as a whole-school priority.

Interactive whiteboards

The interactive whiteboards have been enthusiastically received and in mathematics in particular they have been well used and specific expertise has been developed. This has led to schemes of work and the corresponding resources being developed. CPD has been very well received by staff and networking has led to two visits to other schools with expertise in this area. Interactive whiteboard technology will also play an important part in the short mental mathematics sessions.

The most important driver for the pilot has been our action research approach.

The focus is very much on inducting pupils on how to learn in the secondary environment, particularly on learning through speaking and listening and group work.

School 18

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Focus on developing self-confidence and learning skills
- Additional English and mathematics delivered through the ‘homeroom curriculum’
- Consistency delivered by a small core of teachers
- Emphasis on partnerships with primary schools and parents and carers
- Summer school to be used as an introduction to the pilot

The school is a large, split-site 11–18 comprehensive serving an inner urban area. The socio-economic circumstance of the pupils is well below the national average. There are 1980 pupils on roll with approximately 900 on the Key Stage 3 site. The school was designated a technology college in 2002.

Pupils’ attainment is improving. At Key Stage 3 it is in line with, and at Key Stage 4 above, national averages. The percentage of pupils moving from level 3 to level 5 in core subjects is around the national average.

Coordination of the pilot

The pilot, which we call LEAP (Learning Enjoyment and Accelerated Progress), is being led by an assistant headteacher who is also the Key Stage 3 and National Strategy manager. Our pilot steering group comprises 18 staff selected to represent all the areas impacted upon by the pilot and an invaluable representative from one of the primary feeder schools. As a member of the leadership team, the assistant headteacher provides a vital link to all other developmental structures in the school. Much of the operational work of the pilot is undertaken by the two learning managers who monitor pupils’ progress and teach the homeroom curriculum.

The pilot coordinator role is funded from the pilot resources and provides two and a half days per week to drive the project forward. Additionally, pilot resources have been used to fund a residential team weekend and subsequent planning meetings.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The vision for the pilot is to create a radical curriculum based on engaging pupils and developing them as independent learners. To this end, the steering group considered as a starting point the characteristics and needs of the level 3 learner. We consider that there are essentially six areas of need for these pupils.

- Security – many level 3 learners find it difficult to adjust from a small primary environment to that of a large comprehensive, from one teacher in a fixed classroom, to 12 teachers in 12 different rooms.
- Consistency – some level 3 learners find it difficult to cope with 12 different teachers with 12 different personalities and teaching styles.

- Appropriate challenge – level 3 learners need to be challenged to learn at a level appropriate to their needs, learning styles and aptitude. They are often inhibited by their fear of failure and so a significant feature of our pilot will be to create self-confident independent learners able to return to the mainstream curriculum.
- Engagement – level 3 learners in a large comprehensive may be ‘lost’ or may find it easy to ‘hide’. Research shows that they have good evasive tactics and will disengage from their learning.
- Support – level 3 learners need much support, especially from parents and carers, and this is not always forthcoming for a variety of reasons.
- Success – level 3 learners respond to success and praise. In large comprehensives they do not always consider their efforts appreciated.

Groups were selected on the basis of Key Stage 2 test results and extensive discussions with Year 6 teachers and included children who were deemed to be insecure level 4s as well as level 3s. Consequently we will have two groups of 20–25 pupils in the pilot. An additional group of 20–25 pupils will follow the standard curriculum and act as an internal control group.

Our LEAP curriculum model for one week is:

- five English lessons (including one drama lesson per fortnight);
- four mathematics lessons;
- four science lessons;
- two PE lessons;
- 15 homeroom lessons (themed or topic approaches to learning) including humanities, technology, ICT, art, personal development and some modern languages and additional English and mathematics.

As a result the pupils will be taught by only five teachers per week. Accommodation for the homeroom lessons is in rooms equipped with interactive whiteboards and desktop computers. The homeroom managers have received significant levels of non-contact time funded from resources outside the pilot. They used this time to work with LA consultants to develop the homeroom curriculum, incorporating literacy and numeracy objectives as well as strategies to engage pupils and develop learning skills, self-esteem and independence. Additionally they have had training in the use of interactive whiteboards and *Leading in Learning* materials (DfES 0035-2005, DfES 0036-2005). English and mathematics staff have also had time to prepare schemes of work and receive interactive whiteboard training and they will receive *Leading in Learning* training from learning managers as the strand is rolled out across the school.

English, mathematics and science will be delivered in specialist classrooms by selected specialist staff. Schemes of work have recently been revised at Key Stage 3 to better incorporate progression from level 3 to level 5. Core subject teachers and learning managers have also collaborated to ensure that topics, especially in English and mathematics, are simultaneously a focus in the English and mathematics delivered in the homeroom curriculum.

Drivers and blocks

The development year of the pilot has gone well because of the full support from the headteacher and senior management, the enthusiastic and commitment of the steering group and the professionalism and dedication of the staff who volunteered to participate in this exciting, but in some respects daunting, project.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to summer school, which we intend to use as an introduction to the project, building the confidence and self-esteem of the pupils involved. In September we embark on what we feel will be an exciting period in the development of the school. We are confident that LEAP will not only accelerate the target pupils' learning in the key areas of literacy and numeracy but also give them the confidence, self-esteem and skills to gain access to and succeed in all curriculum areas.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Pupils in the pilot will be tracked closely and their progress assessed regularly. In the core subjects pupils will be assessed half-termly supported by annual progress tests. Reading ages will also be closely monitored. Assessment for learning is a whole-school priority and will be incorporated into both the core and homeroom curricula.

Key Stage 2 test and teacher assessment data will be used to establish a baseline from which numerical (National Curriculum sublevel) and curricular targets will be set. Learning managers will have an overview of pupils' progress and we are developing a spreadsheet to track all elements of pupils' progress in core subject and homeroom lessons.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

The pilot is regarded by our primary partner headteachers as a high priority and features as a standing item on meeting agendas. We visited the primary schools in January 2005 to identify potential level 3 learners, and this was followed up after the Key Stage 2 tests with meetings with Year 6 teachers to confirm children who would be included in the pilot. We held meetings with the children and their parents and carers to explain the nature of the pilot and enlist parents' and carers' support. Meetings were well attended and well received. We have received an enthusiastic response to including parents and carers in homework clubs, providing extra support at home, and parent and carer classes in ICT, reading and other relevant areas.

The pilot is regarded by our primary partner headteachers as a high priority and features as a standing item on meeting agendas.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to summer school, which we intend to use as an introduction to the project, building the confidence and self-esteem of the pupils involved.

School 19

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Focus on improving low self-esteem and engagement
- Additional English delivered through humanities and drama
- Additional mathematics delivered through science
- Extensive use of teaching assistants in English and mathematics
- Significant investment in liaison with primary schools

The school is a large, urban 11–16 school at a very exciting stage in its development. The ethos is positive with our low-attainers pilot, locally known as ‘Learn Effectively and Achieve Progress’ (LEAP). It has *Every Child Matters* at the centre of its strategic direction, and is integrated into our plans to develop our recently acquired status as a specialist college for engineering. While improving, standards at the school are below average at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the rate of conversion from level 3 to level 5 is around the national average.

Coordination of the pilot

Pilot funding was used to appoint a LEAP coordinator who joined the school leadership team. A teaching and learning group was formed, consisting of English and mathematics teachers, the SENCO, the librarian and two newly appointed Key Stage 3 achievement teaching assistants. These teaching assistants will support English and mathematics lessons and are members of the English and mathematics LEAP teams who further extend the influence of the pilot.

CPD opportunities will focus on making use of the *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools* materials (DfES 0423-2004 G), using interactive whiteboards, data analysis and tracking, and integration of English and mathematics objectives in geography and science. This will be supported by LA consultants and networking with other LA pilot schools. Similarly, time will be made available for development of schemes of work, especially in the core subjects.

In addition, our LEAP pilot includes several additional exciting features, for example:

- using pupils to video, observe and review the progress of the pilot;
- the integration of programmes run by the Nottingham Forest Study Support Centre as part of the DfES ‘Playing for Success’ programme.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

The LEAP preparation year enabled us to identify the needs of pupils, develop a responsive curriculum and try out some of the ideas. Our analysis of the performance of past level 3 learners showed that our current provision was problematic, with poor attendance for progress tests, limited use of intervention strategies and no focused in-class support.

We found that level 3 learners suffered from:

- low self-esteem;
- insecure knowledge and understanding;
- patchy attendance;
- unruly behaviour of a minority;
- limited attention spans and a significant difference in cognition between a level 3a and 3c learner.

We aim to address these issues over the course of the pilot.

LEAP pupils will be taught in two separate groups for English and mathematics: a group of around 15 pupils (at levels 3b or 3c) on entry and around 25 pupils (at levels 4c or 3a on entry). The LEAP teacher will be supported by two LEAP achievement teaching assistants.

There will be 3 hours of English per week, with 3 hours per fortnight of additional English, and further literacy support delivered through humanities. These lessons will incorporate problem solving, thinking skills and literacy, and learning strategies. Our objectives for the first year focus on creating exciting contexts for developing speaking and listening, providing purpose and focus for critical reading, interpretation and analysis of a range of texts as well as using drama to provide contexts for writing to express and explore ideas and develop a better sense of audience and purpose. The Ruth Miskin phonics scheme will be used to support poor readers building on previous success of the special educational needs department.

'Book Buzz', a book review website, will be launched in the first year after a successful pilot with a sample of Year 8 pupils. Its aim is to raise and maintain an interest in reading, create a greater reading ethos and atmosphere, maintain a high standard of diverse reading material and promote all aspects of reading. By becoming e.bookmailers, promoters, reviewers and selectors, LEAP pupils will see themselves as authors sharing their writing with a wider audience. Parents and carers will be invited to an evening of poetry, where LEAP pupils will perform work they have produced in conjunction with a professional writer. A Christmas book fair should, we hope, engage parents' and carers' spending power.

Mathematics provision will follow a similar pattern, with 3 hours per week, plus an additional 3 hours per fortnight and additional numeracy through practical activities in science lessons.

The schemes of work for mathematics will be based on *Targeting level 4 in Year 7* (DfES 0085-2003) and will continue to be adapted for needs of the school's LEAP intake. Considerable use will be made of ICT technology to better explain mathematical concepts, as well as interactive whiteboard technology.

The Learning Challenge will be introduced for 2 hours per fortnight. The emphasis will be on a theme-based approach incorporating citizenship and current affairs based around five key challenges. Tutors will reinforce the homework and organisation challenges. LEAP pupils will be taught science, DT, ICT, art, music and PE as part of the mainstream curriculum.

Assessment of pupils' progress

The school has made a serious commitment to assessment for learning. Assessments will be based on curricular targets and taken periodically using regular tests and teacher assessments. Pupils will produce learning achievement recognition folders based on Framework objectives. These will become a generic assessment for learning framework for use in English, library lessons and humanities, and devolved into Learning Challenge and other subject areas as part of literacy and learning across the curriculum. PAT will be used as a diagnostic assessment tool.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

The school has liaised directly with primary schools to ensure data transfer of teacher assessments, common transfer forms and picture profiles of level 3 learners (profiles that include strengths, weaknesses, reading age, preferred learning style and targets). Bridging work in English and mathematics will further inform our short-term curriculum planning.

Transition activities have included a new intake parents' and carers' evening followed by a summer evening disco for Years 6–7 pupils. A LEAP and form tutors' teambuilding day will be launched for pupils as a flying start to the school based on challenge, interaction and fun. Pupils will receive key messages about the 'big picture' of the year ahead, followed shortly afterwards by a 'tutor–parents and carers settling in' evening.

The LEAP teaching assistants will play a key role in ensuring consistent tracking of pupils and will help to develop primary teaching and learning strategies. Our long-term aim is to include primary colleagues as members of our teaching and learning working groups.

Interactive whiteboards

The interactive whiteboards have been enthusiastically received and clearly staff development is now a priority. Training will be focused on the needs of a core group of teachers who will then be able to share their expertise with others. The installation of boards is part of a whole-school drive on interactive whiteboard pedagogical development. The Activote toolkit is an exciting addition, providing instant formative assessment in lessons.

Our long-term aim is to include primary colleagues as members of our teaching and learning working groups.

Parents and carers will be invited to an evening of poetry where LEAP pupils will perform work they have produced in conjunction with a professional writer.

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School 20

National Low-Attainers Pilot – review of the first year

- Focus on raising self-esteem and independence
- Additional English and mathematics delivered through core English and mathematics and humanities-based ‘challenge time’
- Extensive primary liaison
- Parents and carers involved as active partners
- Major driver towards whole-school improvement

Our school is an 11–19 school of 1135 pupils with a catchment representing a comprehensive social mix. We have recently been awarded business and enterprise specialist college status. Current attainment is below national averages, though in line with local results, and represents a degree of unfulfilled potential. Roughly 20% of our Year 7 pupils arrive with level 3 in mathematics and English. Very few of these pupils have traditionally moved on from level 3 to level 5. Our data analysis had already identified the need to support low-attaining pupils, many of whom suffer from low self-esteem and limited aspirations.

Coordination of the pilot

We have been able to build a dedicated team consisting of:

- one teacher as form tutor, mathematics and science teacher;
- one teacher for English;
- two teachers, including the pilot coordinator, for cross-curricular lessons known as challenge time.

Funding was used to create an assistant headteacher post to lead the pilot and to provide planning, meeting and training time for the other members of the team. We have also involved the heads of mathematics and English in a consultative role. The key staff, including our two learning support assistants, have had fortnightly lunchtime meetings to discuss issues, plan and share ideas. Network meetings with the other pilot school in the LA, consultants and the learning leader for the LIG Collaborative have been helpful. Core staff have been supported by four training days focusing on how low-ability pupils learn and embedding the development of literacy and numeracy teaching in all the pilot lessons. Additionally, we have raised the awareness of teachers working outside the core pilot time with these pupils.

Proposed changes to the curriculum for September 2005

Within a 30-period week we will have:

Taught in a discrete group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ five lessons of English (one extra)■ five lessons of mathematics (one extra)■ six lessons of challenge time (incorporating history, geography, RE and some MFL input while also addressing literacy and numeracy through these subjects)■ three lessons of science■ PSHE, music and drama
Taught with the rest of Year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ six lessons shared between technology, dance and PE

This model allows specialists to teach the English and mathematics and provide six lessons per week for challenge time: a cross-curricular approach to foundation subjects. This approach gives us greater flexibility and allows us to focus on how we can best address the learning needs of the pilot cohort. Although these pupils are together for most of the week there are still opportunities for them to mix and learn with other Year 7 pupils. Additional English and mathematics will be delivered through challenge time and supported by two designated learning support assistants. Literacy and numeracy objectives are indicated in planning for challenge time.

There will be a 'base' room used by a group of 20 pupils. Timetabling has minimised the number of occasions pupils will need to move from this room. *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools* units (DfES 0423-2004G) will inform our delivery of lessons in English, mathematics, science and the challenge time lessons. Challenge time will additionally set targets and monitor progress for effective learners, supported in part by the use of *Learning Challenge* materials (DfES 0393/2003). Underpinning our work is a belief that we need to help the pilot cohort to become successful and satisfied readers: we are dedicating half an hour every day to 'reading for pleasure'.

Drivers and blocks

Critical factors in getting us where we are have been the full support of the senior leadership team, the LA and our primary partners. We have created a highly effective core team who are now driving the project forward. These has enabled us to overcome the negative reactions from some staff and the disadvantage of our late start.

We look forward to our cohort arriving in September 2005 and to the challenges they will set us. We will move these pupils forward in their learning and improve the quality of their educational experience. In doing so we will create enthusiastic, enquiring learners who will affect the way we look at teaching and learning in the whole school and influence our ideas about the curriculum of the future. We aim to address the issue of low self-esteem among the pilot cohort by developing a positive classroom culture that, while setting challenging targets, celebrates successes. Our tactics include a conscious effort to provide positive role models, a welcoming classroom environment, celebration assemblies and appropriate praise for effort and achievement.

Assessment of pupils' progress

Key Stage 2 data will be used to establish a baseline. Pupils will be assessed along with all Year 7 pupils at their normal termly milestones throughout the year, through progress tests and by having their performance monitored by the class tutor. Skills such as social awareness, self-confidence and study skills will be monitored during challenge time using a range of methods. The centrality of assessment for learning to our work will ensure that assessment is closely linked to intervention. Good communication through a range of formal and informal meetings will support both pupils and teachers.

Transfer and transition from Key Stage 2

Our most successful and effective activity has been establishing strong links with our feeder schools. We visited them before Easter to involve the headteachers and Year 6 staff in the selection of the pilot cohort, to work with Year 6 children and to adopt and share the good practice in primary schools. We held regular meetings, discussed curriculum continuity and sought their advice about meeting and working with parents and carers.

We are aware of the need to help parents and carers support their child as a learner, to overcome the negative attitudes towards school that the child may have. We aim to be approachable and to demonstrate to parents and carers the respect they deserve as experts on their child. We are tackling this issue by:

- involving parents and carers in the induction process. We have personally met all parents and carers, discussed the pilot and their expectations and concerns;
- using images of parents and carers, and encouraging comments by them, for a display in the pilot base;
- setting aside weekly time for parents and carers to meet their child's tutor;
- creating a role for parents and carers to play in homework activities.

Interactive whiteboards

Although initially daunting, interactive whiteboard training was both useful and stimulating and it supported our intention to make use of the latest technology.

Underpinning our work is a belief that we need to help the pilot cohort become successful and satisfied readers.

We aim to address the issue of low self-esteem among the pilot cohort by developing a positive classroom culture.

Annex 1

National Low-Attainers Pilot schools

LA	School	Gender
Bristol, City of	Ashton Park School	Mixed
Bristol, City of	Speedwell Technology College	Mixed
Sandwell	Alexandra High School and Sixth Form Centre	Mixed
Sandwell	Manor High School	Mixed
Essex	The James Hornsby High School	Mixed
Essex	Barstable	Mixed
Greenwich	Woolwich Polytechnic	Boys
Greenwich	The John Roan School	Mixed
Liverpool	Childwall Comprehensive School	Mixed
Liverpool	Parklands High School	Mixed
Manchester	North Manchester High School for Boys	Boys
Manchester	Burnage High School	Boys
Nottingham	Top Valley School	Mixed
Nottingham	Ellis Guilford School and Sports College	Mixed
Doncaster	Danum School Technology College	Mixed
Doncaster	Edlington School	Mixed
Lewisham	Crofton School	Mixed
Lewisham	Sedgehill School	Mixed
Newham	Little Ilford School	Mixed
Newham	Brampton Manor School	Mixed

National Low-Attainers Pilot – associate schools

Quarrendon Upper School
Buckinghamshire

Clough Hall School
Stoke

Bridgemaury School
Hampshire

Holyhead School
Birmingham

Bowring Comprehensive
Knowsley

Bishop Park College
Essex

Djanogly Academy
Nottingham

Shenley Court Arts College
Birmingham

Montgomery School
Blackpool

Havelock School
NE Lincolnshire

Trinity School
Newbury

Costessy School
Norfolk

Paignton Community College
Torbay

Charles Burrell School
Norfolk

Torquay Community College
Torbay

Ruffwood School
Liverpool

St Luke's School
Portsmouth

Annex 2

The schools have been encouraged to use the six levels of learning as a structure for planning their pilot activities. The following is an example of how one school used this tool early in the pilot.

Focus for autumn term 2004	
Level of learning	Activity
<p>Pupils' learning What we are going to do to improve pupils' engagement and achievement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan and deliver a Year 7 Learning to Learn course from September 2004 ■ Hold two Year 7 'super learning' days ■ Provide in-class and out-of-hours support for level 3 pupils ■ Adapt teaching to engage level 3 pupils – incorporate the use of ICT ■ Set curricular targets and plan a programme of support for level 3 pupils
<p>Adult learning What we are going to do to extend what adults know, understand and can do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inform teachers and support staff of strategies taught on the Learning to Learn course ■ Inform parents and carers of strategies taught on the Learning to Learn course and how they might support their child's learning ■ English and mathematics teachers to research strategies to engage pupils and raise standards, prepare lesson material and share with colleagues ■ Focus on teaching and learning at the conference for faculty team leaders
<p>Leadership learning What we are going to do to extend both the impact of leaders and the opportunities for leadership?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appoint two staff to plan and deliver a Year 7 Learning to Learn course ■ Course staff to share learning strategies with all teaching and learning colleagues via a booklet and teaching and learning sessions ■ Literacy coordinators, foundation subjects manager and MFL teachers to teach literacy skills via the foundation subjects, and share findings with teaching and support colleagues ■ Develop leading from the middle
<p>School-wide learning What we are going to do to encourage a whole-school impact for our project?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share key strategies to raise standards of teaching and learning via the curriculum management group, teaching and learning group and teaching and learning sessions ■ Inform colleagues of teaching and learning parents' and carers' evening and 'super learning' days ■ Focus on teaching and learning in faculty development time ■ Link the pilot closely with the whole-school focus on assessment for learning

School-to-school learning

What we are going to do to help us in our work with other schools?

- Analyse Key Stage 2 test papers of partner primary schools and share analysis with them
- Advanced skills teacher to develop mathematics bridging units with partnership primary school
- Share plans, progress and good practice with our linked pilot school
- Invite colleagues from our linked school to 'super learning' days
- Share findings from the Learning to Learn course with other schools

Network learning

What we are going to do to make our network effective and learn with others?

- Attend all network meetings
 - Share findings with the group
-

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Ref: 1836-2005DCL-EN

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