

High Performing Specialist Schools

Interim Evaluation

PricewaterhouseCoopers



**Research Report No
DCSF-RW034**

High Performing Specialist Schools
Interim Evaluation

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Executive summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Specialist Schools Programme (SSP) began in 1994. Its primary aim is to enable schools to become centres of excellence in their chosen specialism and to contribute towards raising educational standards across the system. There are currently 2,799 specialist schools in existence, which is approximately 80% of all maintained secondary schools in England. Schools can choose a specialism (or combine any two) from one of ten: arts, business & enterprise, engineering, humanities, languages, mathematics & computing, music, science, sport & technology. Alternatively, schools may take on a Special Educational Needs (SEN) specialism in one of the four areas of the SEN Code of Practice.¹
- 1.2 Since 2004, 393 schools have re-designated and taken on one or more HPSS (High Performing Specialist Schools) option(s).² Schools have the choice of taking on an additional curricular, vocational and/or SEN specialism; obtaining Training School status; participating in Leading Edge Partnership Programme (LEPP) activity; Raising Achievement Transforming Learning Programme (RATL) and the Youth Support Trust School Leadership Programme. In 2005, the Training School programme was incorporated into the HPSS programme. Training schools are at the heart of the Government's agenda for a world class teaching profession. They aim to innovatively lead the way in recruiting, training and developing their staff by ensuring that this expert knowledge and practice is disseminated through collaborative outreach with partner schools, local authorities, HEI providers and other relevant agencies that contribute to the well-being of the child.
- 1.3 In return for the additional funding, schools are expected to develop expertise in their chosen HPSS option, primarily for the benefit of partner schools and the wider community. Central to the HPSS concept is that schools which have the capacity to lead others should form collaborative networks to share and disseminate good practice.
- 1.4 It is this latter group of schools (those which have re-designated and taken on an HPSS option as outlined in 1.2 above) that is the focus of this evaluation. Whilst there have been numerous research studies undertaken to evaluate the impact of the SSP on specialist schools and the wider community (NFER, 2002; DCSF (formerly DfES), 2004; RISE, 2006),³ there have hitherto been few, if any, research studies undertaken to examine the impact of the HPSS programme *per se*. The purpose of this Interim Report, therefore, is to provide a qualitative evidence base for examining the early impacts of the programme.

¹ The SEN specialisms available include the following: Cognition & learning; communication & interaction; behavioural, emotional & social development; and, sensory and/ or physical needs. See <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007/?version=1>

² The 393 schools have a total of 654 HPSS options. For more details, please see analysis presented on Page 11.

³ NFER (2002) *'High performing specialist schools - what makes the difference?'* Slough: NFER.

DCSF (2004) *'Evaluation of the specialist - conditions survey outcomes.'* London: DCSF.

RISE (2006) *'Specialist schools - what do we know?'* London: Institute of Education.

Terms of reference and methodological approach

- 1.5 In Spring 2007, the Department for Children Schools and Families commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP to evaluate the impact of two areas of the SSP; firstly, HPSS, including training schools; and secondly, SEN schools, undertaking a curriculum or a SEN specialism.
- 1.6 The overarching aim of the evaluation is to further the evidence base of specific specialist schools policy strands, and to provide guidance, including examples of good practice, for all specialist schools, including those with a SEN specialism. The specific aims of the research are to:
- Collate and inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme;
 - Consider the longer term impact of the HPSS programme;
 - Address the question of sustainability of the programme; *and*
 - Consider (though not explicitly undertake) the value for money of each of the three strands of the programme (Curricular, SEN and Training School). This will involve elucidating what the extra funding has provided and how this has impacted.
- 1.7 This Interim Report presents findings from Year 1 of the research undertaken over the period August - December 2007. In total, 25 school visits took place, where 158 interviews were carried out with headteachers, members of the Senior Leadership Team; the governing body; class-based teachers, and a range of interviewees from partner secondary and primary schools. In addition, 11 stakeholder interviews were carried out with bodies such as the SSAT. The sections which follow provide an overview of the key findings from Year 1 of the evaluation.

Entry to the HPSS programme

- 1.8 Interviewees were asked to comment on the planning and application process for the HPSS initiative, and on the funding arrangements for the programme. The following provides a summary of the key findings:
- The majority of schools are satisfied with the **entry criteria** for HPSS, apart from training schools which existed before HPSS was introduced. A number of these expressed concern that the entry criteria were too focused on attainment, which could pose challenges;
 - Whilst one-half of schools indicated that the ability to collaborate more effectively had influenced their choice of specialism, fewer than one-half of HPS (High Performing Specialist) schools indicated that they had actually canvassed the views of potential partner schools prior to **choosing their specialism**; where this had taken place it was generally with primary schools - few schools had sought the views of partner secondary schools. A key reason for schools not feeling in a position to fully engage with potential partnering schools was the short timeframe for putting together and submitting their application.

- The **application process** for HPSS was considered to be straightforward by the majority of schools. However, schools taking on a SEN HPSS option stated that there was less guidance provided to them, which posed challenges to the timeframe they were operating within;
- **Support and guidance** is being adequately provided to the majority of schools at the entry state of the Programme; apart from schools with a SEN HPSS option, who believe there appears to be less guidance available. This might be explained by the small number of schools in existence (4 in total) and the distinctive nature of the SEN specialism;
- The **timescales** for producing the School Plan Annex appeared to be challenging for around one-half of all schools;
- The **funding** for the HPSS option was generally delegated to the Director of Specialism in the majority of schools, and was considered adequate to meet the objectives of the programme; and
- Three-quarters of **schools with an initial specialism only** (i.e. currently not part of the HPSS programme) had no prior knowledge of the HPSS initiative and had no plans in place to pursue the HPSS status. However, perhaps this is not surprising as many of these schools were special schools and the level of knowledge about the programme is likely to be greater among mainstream secondary schools.

Implementation of the programme

1.9 The progress made in implementing the Programme was explored in detail. This research examined the extent to which schools had achieved the objectives of the programme; the delivery models in place; monitoring procedures; and enablers and barriers to successful implementation. The following points summarise the key findings of this chapter:

- The **stage of implementation** appears to depend on when schools joined the programme, their objectives for the programme, and the degree to which they have been able to engage collaboratively with their stakeholders;
- Schools had adopted a number of approaches to the **delivery of the HPSS option**: a strategic approach, characterised by planning and delivering more than one specialism in a strategic way throughout the school (e.g. members of staff from one of the initial specialisms, contribute to/devise courses for delivering the HPSS option); a focused approach, characterised by channelling the operation of a particular specialism (for example, by employing a dedicated person to deliver some/most of the HPSS objectives); and a whole school approach, characterised by a high degree of ownership of the specialism, with a view to impacting the whole school (this was most evident in training schools which took responsibility for training and developing members of staff across the school);
- Formal **monitoring procedures** are well developed internally (within the HPS school) in the majority of schools visited; however external monitoring systems (i.e. HPS schools monitoring the impact of the HPSS option on partner schools) are less well developed;

- Three key factors were impacting upon the **implementation** of the programme: resourcing (time, staff and finance); communication; and collaboration. These were acting as either barriers or enablers, depending on how they were being managed by schools; *and*
- Examples of **good practice** were identified in the research. These included effective planning for the specialism prior to the funding coming on board, and choosing and planning the specialism with the needs of the local community in mind. These strategies may be useful to consider by schools contemplating entering the HPSS programme or for schools at the early stages of implementation.

Impact of the programme

1.10 The HPSS programme has a number of aims including raising pupils' aspirations, achievement and attainment; improving curricular choice and extending personalised learning; enhancing staff development and recruitment and retention, and; improving collaborative working. In addition, the programme may also impact, directly or indirectly, on the achievement of wider Government objectives. The key findings on the impact of the HPSS programme to date are set out below:

- Schools are optimistic that the HPSS option is contributing positively to **raising pupils' aspirations and attainment**. A small number of interviewees (mainly those schools with a SEN HPSS option) emphasised the importance of assessing the impact upon achievement as well as attainment, as this was important for pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- Approximately one-half of interviewees believed that **recruitment and retention** of staff had improved as a result of the school taking on the high performing role;
- Schools were generally positive about the opportunities that the programme has provided to enhance and extend **training and development opportunities** for staff. Approximately four-fifths of headteachers indicated that training and development opportunities have improved as a direct result of involvement in the programme;
- **Staff workload** has increased in two-thirds of the schools visited (in particular for the Director of Specialism(s) and class teachers), but this was not generally resented by staff; as interviewees suggested that job satisfaction has simultaneously improved. A large number of interviewees suggested that workload peaked during the planning stage and the early implementation of the specialism and that it would reduce as the programme was being implemented;
- Over 90% of headteachers believed that **curricular choice and personalised learning opportunities** for pupils have improved as a result of the HPSS option;
- Many HPS schools are **collaborating** effectively with partner primary schools, but the outreach activities with local secondary schools, the wider community and local businesses are less well developed. Many of the examples of best practice in terms of collaboration with local secondary schools and businesses exist in training schools and schools with a vocational specialism; *and*

- Over one-half of interviewees believed that HPSS contributed specifically to the achievement of **wider Government objectives**, including the 14-19 agenda, the workforce remodelling agenda, extended schools and Every Child Matters.

Suggestions as the programme moves forward

1.11 The following issues may be useful to consider as the programme moves forward:

- More appropriate information and support should be provided for schools taking on an HPSS SEN option at the application and entry stage;
- The criteria for entry to the programme, linked to attainment targets, might provide challenges to some training schools that existed before HPSS was introduced, some of which expressed concern that the entry criteria were too focused on attainment, which could pose challenges;
- Sharing of good practice in implementing the specialism would be beneficial. This appears to be linked to effective planning *prior* to the additional funding coming on board, and planning with the needs of the wider community in mind;
- HPS schools should continue to effectively collaborate with partner primary schools; however, more attention should be given to collaborating with businesses and secondary schools; the latter is most progressed in training schools and schools with a vocational HPSS option;
- Effective monitoring procedures for assessing the impact of the specialism in partner schools need to be put in place by HPS schools; *and*
- Achievement (rather than attainment) is a more appropriate measure of impact for pupils with SEN.

Next steps in the evaluation

1.12 The findings from this Interim Report provide a context for exploring the early outcomes of the HPSS programme, and for informing the research tools for Year 2 of the research, which will investigate schools that have had HPSS status for longer than two years. Ten schools will be revisited and, in addition, a census survey of HPS schools and a stakeholder consultation exercise will be carried out.

1.13 Building on this year's research, the following key areas will be explored in greater detail:

- The impact of the high performing role on schools and their partners more widely;
- The impact of HPSS status on the school's initial specialism;
- The extent to which the new role is embedded throughout the school and more widely through partner schools;
- Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on raising schools' aspirations, relative to those schools currently with an initial specialism only;
- Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on curriculum provision, relative to schools currently with an initial specialism only; *and*
- Evidence on shared good practice between schools and also in relation to collaboration with business and the local community.

2 Introduction

Background to the Specialist Schools Programme (SSP)

- 2.1 The SSP began in 1994. The aim of the Programme is to enable secondary schools to establish distinctive identities and become centres of excellence in their chosen specialism(s), with the ultimate goal of achieving attainment targets and raising educational standards. The SSP operates in partnership with private sector sponsors, supported by additional Government funding. Specialist status is available to any maintained secondary school, provided they meet the set criteria.⁴ Schools are encouraged to ensure that their specialist plans and targets are at the heart of their School Development Plan⁵ (SDP) and Self Evaluation Form⁶ (SEF).
- 2.2 As of September 2007, 2,799 schools have taken on an initial specialism. Schools can choose from one of the following ten specialisms, or can combine any two: arts, business & enterprise, engineering, humanities, languages, mathematics & computing, music, science, sports & technology.⁷ Alternatively, schools can take on a SEN specialism in one of the four areas of the SEN code of practice. In 2005, the Training School programme was incorporated into the HPSS programme. Training schools are at the heart of the Government's agenda for a world class teaching profession. They aim to innovatively lead the way in recruiting, training and developing their staff by ensuring that this expert knowledge and practice is disseminated through collaborative outreach with partner schools, local authorities, HEI providers and other relevant agencies that contribute to the well-being of the child.
- 2.3 The SSP was evaluated by Ofsted in 2001 and again in 2005 when it was noted that:

"Many schools taking on specialist status have seen it as a natural step in their development. It has been a catalyst for innovation and in most cases has helped to sustain or accelerate the momentum of whole-school improvement."⁸

"The SSP is now an established part of the national system of secondary education, and has grown and developed substantially since Ofsted carried out its first evaluation in 2001. The influence and challenges of the programme continue to be catalysts for accelerated school improvement, and five out of six of the specialist schools visited for this survey are now achieving the aims of the programme."⁹

⁴ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007/?version=1>

⁵ The School Development Plan needs to be submitted to DCSF six term weeks after the publication of a Section 5 Ofsted report. It should inform the Department of the school's plans and priorities for the school and specialism for the next 3 years. The plan should include all the essential attainment targets for the relevant key stages. (<http://www.schoolsnetwork.org>)

⁶ SEF is a record of the outcomes of work in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a school. Ofsted inspectors will use the SEF, alongside other published documents, as a starting point for discussion and in deciding what to focus on during an inspection. (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk>)

⁷ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007/?version=1>

⁸ Ofsted (2001) Specialist Schools: an evaluation of progress. London: Ofsted.

⁹ Ofsted (2005) Specialist Schools: a second evaluation. London: Ofsted

High Performing Specialist Schools (HPS schools)

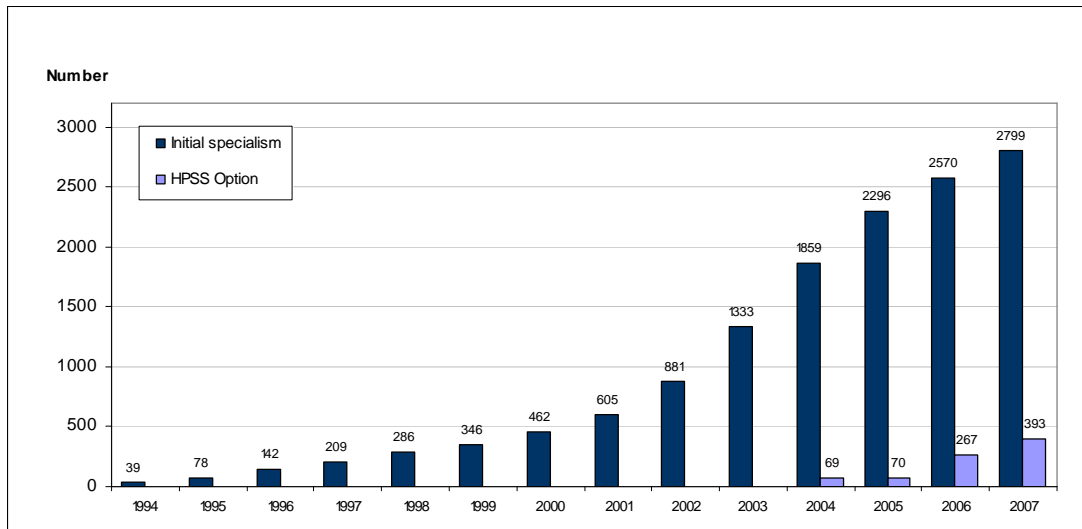
- 2.4 Since 2004, 393 schools have met the HPSS criteria. The entry criteria to become part of the HPSS programme have changed over the last number of years. These changes have principally involved the alignment of the criteria for re-designation with the Ofsted inspection process. Consequently, HPSS criteria are now dependent, to a large extent, on both the Ofsted judgements along with school performance data. In 2007, the criteria for becoming a HPS school were as follows:

Entry criteria for HPSS
(a) An overall Grade 1 Ofsted marking; <i>or</i>
(b) An overall Grade 2 Ofsted marking with a Grade 1 in 'Achievement and Standards'; <i>or</i>
(c) An overall Grade 2 marking and with 60% or above 5+ A*-C GCSE including English & Maths in the 2006 Key Stage 4 results; <i>or</i>
(d) An overall Grade 2 marking and in the top 20% Contextual Value Added (CVA) national ranking and a minimum 35% 5+ A*-C GCSE including English & Maths in the 2006 Key Stage 4 results.
As in previous years, schools will be allowed to 'graduate' if they meet the 60% or top 20% CVA and 35% thresholds in their summer 2007 results.
For special schools, criteria (a) and (b) above also apply, but (c) and (d) are replaced with an overall Grade 2 Ofsted and schools must be able to demonstrate secure and robust tracking of pupil progress, informing challenging individual and cohort target-setting. In addition, there must also be clear and current evidence that pupil progress and outcomes remain very good. ¹⁰

- 2.5 At the point of a school's Ofsted inspection, they are now required to re-designate their initial specialism and they will be assessed against the high performing criteria in place for that year. If successful, schools may have the opportunity to take on an HPSS option - a second subject specialism from a range of priority areas (e.g. Modern Foreign Languages in 2007); the Vocational Specialism; the SEN/Inclusion Specialism; the YST School Leadership Programme; or to become a Training School, Leading Edge School or RATL mentor school. In return for receiving additional funding, schools are expected to develop expertise in these additional roles, primarily for the benefit of partner schools and the wider community. Central to the HPSS concept is that schools which have the capacity to lead others should form collaborative networks to share and disseminate good practice.
- 2.6 The Figure overleaf indicates the total number of schools involved in both the SSP and those which have re-designated as high performing and which have taken on an HPSS option.

¹⁰ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007/?version=1>

Number of schools with 'initial' specialism and HPSS option



Source: DCSF (compiled by PwC)

- 2.7 The Table below provides details of the specialisms for those schools with an initial specialism only, and those schools which are high performing and have taken on an HPSS option. A number of the HPSS options detailed below are no longer available to those schools which are entering the programme in 2007 (e.g. humanities). Our sample of HPS schools has been selected in consultation with DCSF and includes many of the specialisms that were available in 2007 (e.g. science, languages etc.), along with a small number which were not available (e.g. humanities).

Breakdown schools with an initial specialism and those with HPSS option(s) (2007)

Initial specialism	Number	HPSS option	Number
Arts	473	Arts	32
B&E	260	B&E	7
Engineering	65	Humanities	31
Humanities	121	Language	71
Language	226	Leading Edge	101
M&C	265	M&C	29
Music	26	Music	15
Science	335	RATL	17
Sports	379	SC Programme YST	4
Technology	579	Science	31
SEN Behaviour, Emotional and Social	11	Sports	26
SEN Cognition and Learning	31	Technology	3
SEN Communication and Interaction	15	Vocational	107
SEN Sensory Physical	13	Training School	176
		SEN Cognition and Learning	1
		SEN Communication and Interaction	2
		SEN Sensory Physical	1
Total	2799	Total	654

Note: Analysis undertaken jointly by PwC and DCSF using data supplied by DCSF.

Terms of reference and methodological approach

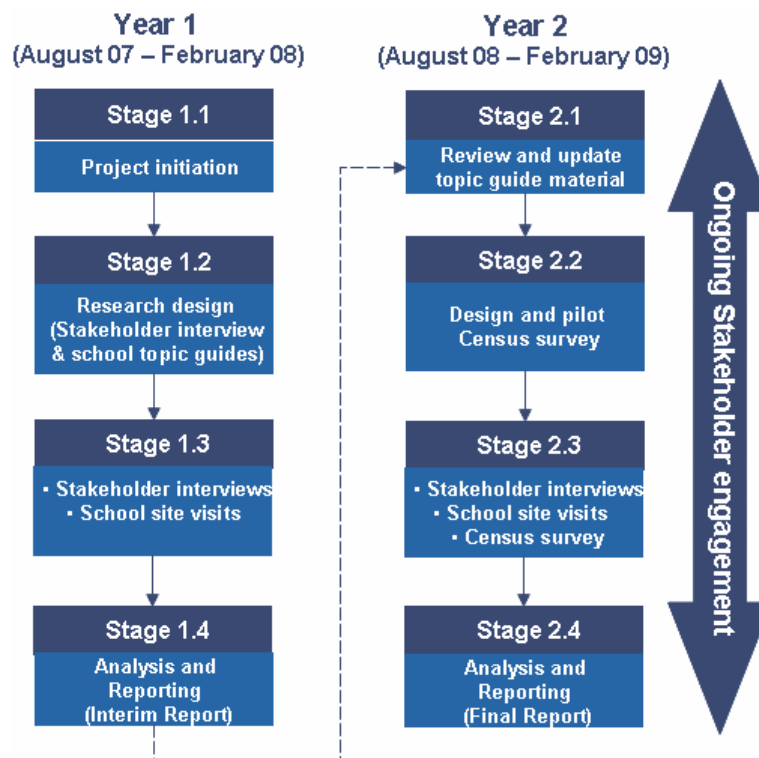
- 2.8 In August 2007, DCSF commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP to evaluate the impact of two areas of the SSP; firstly, HPSS, including training schools; and second, SEN schools undertaking a curriculum or a SEN specialism. The fieldwork will be carried out over a two-year period (2007-2009).
- 2.9 The overarching aim of the evaluation is to further the evidence base of specific specialist schools policy strands, and to provide guidance and good practice examples for all specialist schools, including those with a SEN specialism. The specific aims of the research are to:

Aims of evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate and inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme; • Consider the longer term impact of the HPSS programme; • Address the question of sustainability of the programme; <i>and</i> • Consider (though not explicitly undertake) the value for money of each of the three strands of the programme (Curricular, SEN and Training School). This will involve elucidating what the extra funding has provided and how this has impacted. 	

- 2.10 There are two distinct phases to the research. The Figure below provides a summary of the methodological approach.

Overview of methodological approach

2.11



The Table below sets out the research activities, together with the numbers of interviewees/ respondents involved in each year of the evaluation. The sampling was undertaken jointly by the DCSF and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Overview of research activity

Year 1			Year 2		
Research Activity		Number	Research Activity		Number
Stakeholder interviews		11	Stakeholder interviews		Up to 10
School visits	HPSS	15	School visits	HPSS	10
	Initial specialism	10	Census survey		700 (approx)

Year 1

- 2.12 The fieldwork for Year 1 of the research was conducted between August and December 2007. Whilst the methodology was primarily qualitative, the interview schedules included both open and closed questions. Consequently, where appropriate, the data presented has been quantified and this is reflected throughout the Report.
- 2.13 The research centred on examining how schools were adjusting to their new HPSS role. Areas investigated included:
- Entry to the programme, including the application process and funding arrangements;
 - The extent to which HPS schools are fulfilling the requirements of the programme;
 - Delivery models and monitoring procedures;
 - The extent to which HPS schools have implemented their plans;
 - Evidence of good practice in implementation;
 - Concerns arising from the implementation of the high performing role;
 - Evidence of collaboration and partnership working;
 - An assessment of the early evidence on the impact of HPSS status on raising aspirations and attainment; curriculum provision, staff recruitment and retention; CPD, and teacher workload; and
 - HPSS and wider government objectives.

2.14 A breakdown of the characteristics of the schools visited is provided in the Table below.

'Initial' specialism and HPSS option of schools visited

	Type school	N	Initial specialism	N	HPSS option	N
HPS schools	HPS school (with a curriculum specialism)	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Sports • Arts • Science • Engineering 	2 2 2 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational • Science • Languages • Humanities 	2 2 2 2
	HPS school with Training School status	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology • Arts • Languages 	2 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training School option 	4
	High Performing Specialist Schools with a SEN specialism ¹¹	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports • Science • Technology 	1 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN Cognition & Learning • SEN Communication & Interaction • SEN Sensory Physical 	1 1 1
Initial specialism Schools	Training schools seeking HPSS re-designation	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology • Languages • Arts 	1 1 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training School option 	3
	Curriculum specialists seeking HPSS re-designation	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science • M&C 	2 1	n/a	-
	SEN Specialists seeking HPSS re-designation	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN Cognition & Learning • SEN Sensory Physical • SEN Communication & Interaction 	2 1 1	n/a	-
	Total	25		25		18

2.15 A number of interviewees were interviewed in each of the schools visited. Interviewees included the headteacher; up to two members of the SLT; usually one member of the governing body; up to three class-based teachers and; staff from partner secondary schools and feeder primary schools. The number and type of participants interviewed depended on the availability of interviewees. In addition, a range of stakeholders were interviewed. In total 158 interviews were carried out in schools, together with 11 stakeholder interviews.

¹¹ At the time of the research there were a total of 4 schools in the country.

- 2.16 The Table below provides details of the number and type of interviewees that participated in this year's fieldwork.

Profile of interviewees

Interviewees	Number of interviews completed
<i>School site visits</i>	
Headteacher	25
Other SLT members (including business managers)	28
Governing body representatives	19
Class-based teachers (including Heads of Department)	66
<i>Partnering schools</i>	
Primary	16
Secondary	4
Total	158
<i>Stakeholders</i>	
Training and Development Agency	1
Specialist Schools and Academies Trust	2
Youth Sport Trust	1
National College for School Leadership	2
Ofsted	1
DCSF	3
Learning and Skills Council	1
Total	11

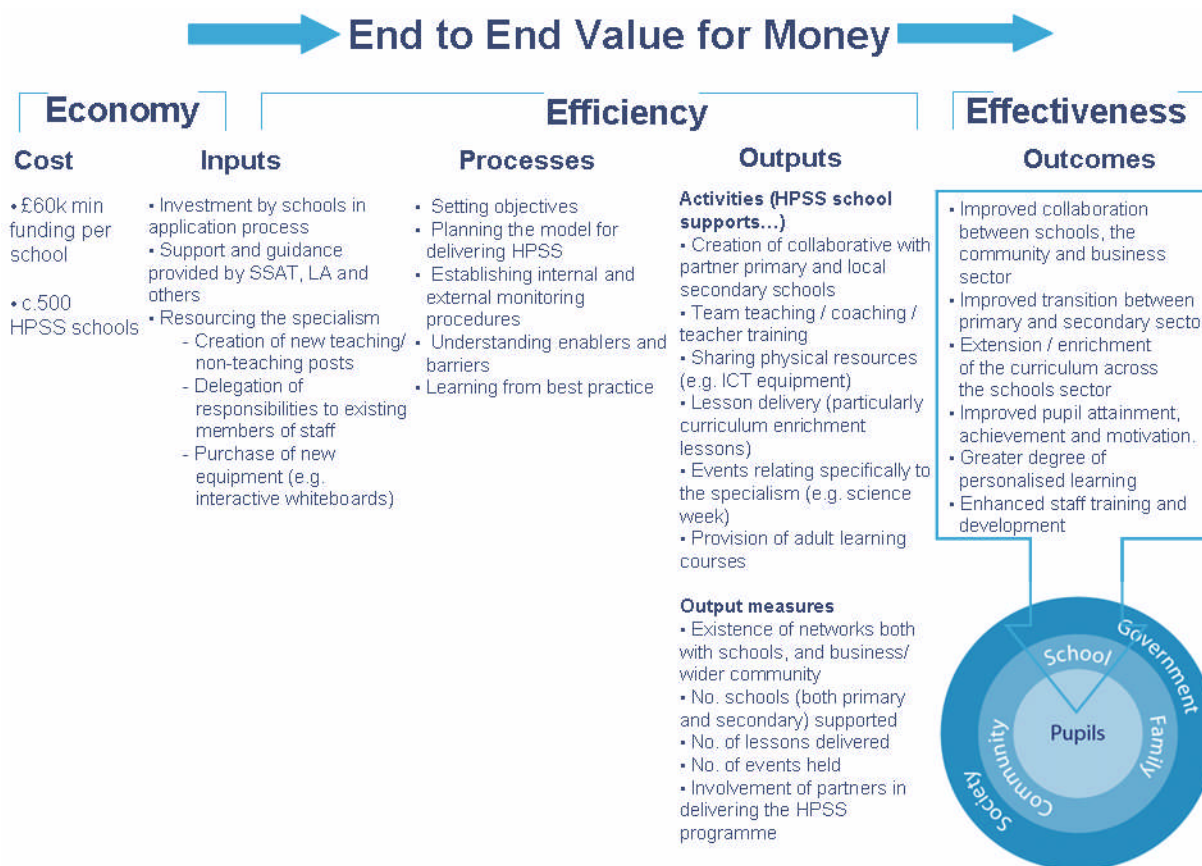
Year 2

- 2.17 The fieldwork for Year 2 of the research will be completed between August and December 2008. The fieldwork will build on this year's findings by examining how HPS schools have further embedded their HPSS option, as well as investigating the longer term impact of the programme on a range of outcomes, including pupils' aspirations and attainment; curricular choice; staffing issues; and collaboration.

Evaluation model

- 2.18 We have adopted an input, output and outcome model for the purposes of undertaking this evaluation. This is illustrated in the Figure overleaf. In summary, the model illustrates the costs (funding received per school) and inputs of the programme at a school level (e.g. creation of new teaching/non-teaching posts etc.); processes involved in delivering stated outputs and outcomes (e.g. setting objectives), outputs (e.g. number of collaboratives created, provision of adult learning courses) and outcomes (e.g. impact on pupil achievement, attainment). Each of the chapters which follow broadly mirror each of the stages of the model although, in a number of areas there may be overlap; for example, Chapter 5, Impact of the programme, examines a range of outputs and outcomes.

Evaluation model¹²



Scope and structure of the report

- 2.19 This Interim Report focuses primarily on the early evidence from schools that have been re-designated as HPSS. Areas discussed in the Report include the application process and funding arrangements; delivery models and monitoring procedures; evidence of good practice in implementation; concerns arising from the implementation of the high performing role; collaboration and partnership working; early evidence relating to the impact of the HPSS status on raising aspirations and attainment; curriculum provision; staff recruitment and retention; staff training; workload, *and*; wider government objectives.
- 2.20 For schools with an initial specialism only involved in this year's research, the Report highlights existing knowledge of the HPSS programme, and plans, if any, for taking on a 'HPSS' option (if they meet the criteria and are offered an option), as well as good practice in implementation of the initial specialism:

¹² Source: PwC (2008)

2.21 The remainder of the Report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3: Entry to the HPSS programme;
- Chapter 4: Implementation of the programme;
- Chapter 5: Impact of the programme; *and*
- Chapter 6: Conclusions.

3 Entry to the HPSS programme

Introduction

- 3.1 One of the aims of this evaluation is to inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme. This chapter reports schools' experience of the planning and application process, and the funding arrangements for the programme. The chapter goes on to present findings from schools with an initial specialism only on their knowledge of the HPSS programme, and to identify what plans are in place for taking on an HPSS option (if they meet the criteria and are offered an option).¹³ This chapter broadly examines programme inputs in terms of the evaluation model presented in Chapter 2. This chapter addresses the following aims and objectives of the research.

Aim(s)

- Collate and inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme;
- Address the question of sustainability of the programme; *and*
- Consider (though not explicitly undertake) the value for money of each of the three strands of the programme (Curricular, SEN and Training School). This will involve elucidating what the extra funding has provided and how this has impacted.

Objective(s)

- Evidence on shared good practice between schools.

- 3.2 The remainder of the chapter is structured under the following headings:

- Entry criteria;
- The application process;
- Funding for HPSS; and
- Views of schools with an initial specialism only on the HPSS programme.

Entry criteria

- 3.3 The criteria for entering the HPSS programme are set out in Section 2.4 of this Report. Overall, interviewees in schools were satisfied with the entry criteria and did not raise any issues.

Results are a fair way of assessing entry to the programme

"I think that results are a fair way of assessing whether a school can become part of HPSS. I think the criteria do reflect back to the capabilities of your training in school. The Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) and their work also have an impact on pupil attainment and the specialism encourages shared planning between departments and schools and this impacts on results as well." (Class-based teacher. HPSS School)

¹³ Note: Schools must first successfully re-designate their initial specialism and meet the HPSS criteria before being invited by DCSF to take on an HPSS option.

- 3.4 The Training School programme has now been aligned with the HPSS programme. Consequently, all training schools are required to meet the HPSS criteria in order to remain in the programme. This year the research explored with Training School participants their views on the entry criteria for HPSS.
- 3.5 Interviewees were asked to comment on the fairness of the HPSS entry criteria for training schools entering the programme. Generally speaking, respondents expressed the view that both obtaining and maintaining high attainment levels may pose a challenge for some training schools.

Training schools' views on the entry criteria for HPSS

The criteria should not primarily focus on attainment

"The criteria are focused too much on attainment and moving forward. That will be a challenge to a school like ours... it shouldn't always be about attainment." (Head of technology and performing arts, HPSS School)

The criteria should take more account of Contextual Value Added (CVA)

"They should look at CVA more. You could have a school with a high CVA and with 25% A* - C and they would not gain entry to HPSS. I think it should be more about achievement rather than attainment." (Headteacher, HPSS School)

The commitment and passion of staff are not always reflected in exam results

"In some ways the criteria are fair but in other ways it isn't. It is based on exam results – other schools have better exam results than us but their staff don't have the enthusiasm. When it is based on exam results it is mechanistic and doesn't gauge the commitment or passion of staff. You do need reasonable results but I feel the criteria should be broader than that." (Class-based teacher, Specialist School)

The application process

- 3.6 This Section presents the findings in relation to research participants' experiences of the application process. It is structured under the following key headings:
- Selection of the HPSS option;
 - Consultation and involvement;
 - Support and guidance; *and*
 - Efficiency and effectiveness of the process.

Selection of the HPSS option

- 3.7 Interviewees presented a number of reasons for choosing their HPSS option(s). In general, choice of the specialist option tended to be influenced by the needs and context of the school. Three broad rationale for choosing a particular HPSS option emerged from the research:

- **Teaching and learning:** for some schools their choice of specialism came from a desire to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their own school, and ultimately to raise educational standards (attainment/achievement). A number of interviewees spoke about the importance of a particular specialism in increasing the uptake of certain subjects amongst the student body, or in improving the overall quality and choice of the curriculum across the school.
- **Staffing:** A small proportion of schools chose their HPSS option to bring about transformation in their staff structures through using their specialism in conjunction with the recently introduced Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs). In addition, a small proportion of interviewees indicated that it was intended that their chosen HPSS option would impact positively upon staff recruitment and retention, whilst a high proportion of schools indicated their specialism was chosen with a view to providing enhanced opportunities for staff training and development.
- **Collaboration:** A large proportion of schools (more than one-half) indicated that their choice of specialism was influenced by the opportunities it would provide to collaborate more effectively with local partner schools (both primary and secondary), and with businesses and the wider community.

3.8 The Figure below provides an overview of the rationale schools put forward for choosing a particular specialism. The Figure distinguishes between schools with a curricular specialism, schools with a SEN specialism, and schools with a training school specialism.

Rationale for choosing a particular HPSS option(s)

RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING SPECIALISM	Curricular specialisms	Training specialisms	SEN specialisms
Teaching and learning	<p>Raising standards "I think our first aim was to raise standards in science. Standards were reasonably high but we did think it would take us to the next stage." (Headteacher, HPSS School)</p>	<p>Changing the way lessons are taught "At the time (in 2001) we were trying to change the way we teach lessons in school. We had signed up to accelerated learning and we felt that the training school would embed that." (Head of Learning, HPSS School)</p>	<p>Provided a strategic fit "We have a huge range of special educational needs in the school. It was felt that the specialism fitted well with what we were developing on teaching and learning and 'assessment for learning' as a whole school." (SENCO, HPSS School)</p>
Staffing	<p>Provided the opportunity to radically restructure staffing "We were able to take the radical approach of restructuring our staffing to actually think about meeting not just the vocational agenda but the whole 14-19 agenda that we consider to be very much a part of that. (Deputy headteacher, HPSS School)</p>	<p>To develop ITT further "We had a strong background in ITT training which we wanted to develop further. At the time we were trying to change the way we teach lessons and we felt the training schools would help to embed that." Head of Learning, HPSS School)</p>	<p>Enhanced opportunities for staff to develop "We applied for the second specialism to enhance the opportunities for staff (including teaching assistants) to attend courses and be able to share and disseminate information and good practice." (SENCO, HPSS School)</p>
Collaboration	<p>Embedding a collegiate approach to education "I was keen to have a collegiate approach to education and learning and I felt we could offer more to our secondary schools if we went for humanities." (Headteacher, HPSS School)</p>	<p>Encourage collaboration "We took on the training school specialism to encourage collaboration with other local schools." (Class-based teacher, HPSS School)</p>	<p>Extending support for partner schools "Our intention was to use the specialism to further support for our partner schools in this area." (Director of Special Educational Needs, HPSS School)</p>

Consultation and involvement

- 3.9 This sub-section presents research findings relating to the nature and extent of involvement of stakeholders in the application process. Stakeholders are classified as internal (those within the school setting: pupils, parents, teaching staff and the governing body), and external (those outside of the HPS school's setting but who will benefit from the specialism: partner schools and the wider community).
- 3.10 The nature and extent of involvement in the application process of these stakeholders varied considerably. In terms of *internal* stakeholders, headteachers, other members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and heads of departments were, in most instances, responsible for co-ordinating and writing the bid (i.e. the School Plan Annex). In the majority of schools, other internal stakeholders (e.g. class-based teachers and subject heads) were consulted effectively, and provided with opportunities to directly feed into the process. The role of the governing body was to support, advise and endorse key decisions. This involved examining the bids put forward and deciding upon which specialism would be most beneficial from the perspective of the school. However, in most cases governing bodies were happy to endorse what was proposed by the headteacher and the SLT. In a large proportion of schools (more than 90%), parents and pupils were *informed* as opposed to being *consulted* during the process, and only a small number of schools formally involved parents in the decision-making process through a representative body, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). In schools where pupils were involved, this usually took the form of informing them, *after* the school had been successful in its

bid and this was achieved through bulletins and school assemblies. It was suggested by a small number of schools (around one-quarter) that the tight timescale to respond was responsible for not more effectively involving and engaging parents and pupils.

- 3.11 In terms of involving *external* stakeholders, less than one-half of all HPS schools involved in the research indicated that they had canvassed the views of partner schools prior to choosing the specialism. However, some schools were consulted about the potential benefits of the chosen specialism, although there appears to have been more consultation and engagement with primary schools than with secondary schools.
- 3.12 The Table below provides a selection of views from internal and external stakeholders in relation to consultation and involvement in the process of the school taking on the HPSS option.

Taking on the HPSS option: consultation with stakeholders

Internal stakeholders	Extent and nature of involvement	Supporting evidence
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were fully informed and helped with writing the bid • All Staff were consulted, but staff directly connected with the specialism were most involved • The process was led from the top down, with staff being consulted at key stages 	<p>“They [the teaching staff] helped write the bid and the Community Co-ordinator helped me put the bid together.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the teaching staff had significant involvement in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“The first people that we spoke to were the teaching staff in the school. We obviously highlighted some departments that we felt could push the initiative for an HPSS option forward. We spoke to the whole staff to start with. Through the process, it was more than apparent that the department that really wanted to get involved and that we felt had the capacity to develop an HPSS option was science.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the teaching staff had significant involvement in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“The Head, Assistant Head, myself and a few of teachers were very involved in drawing up the plans... it was a case of consultation (with teaching staff) when we were at draft stage. There was a middle leaders’ meeting where we were asked which HPSS option to go for... and when it was narrowed down, we invited staff to comment – they saw the draft plans before they went.” (SENCO, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the teaching staff had a small input in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p>
Governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body was supportive but the headteacher had the final say • Governors played a key role in all decisions and were regularly consulted 	<p>“We went to the governing body and spoke to them at length and they were very supportive but they left very much the decision-making process up to the school... but they did feel that science had the capacity to manage an HPSS option.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the governing body had significant involvement input in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“The Governors were consulted regularly...as we were going through the plans, we went to the Governors’ meetings and discussed our plans with them... before anything went to the Specialist Schools Trust (SSAT) they had sight of it.” (Head of English, HPSS) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the governing body had significant involvement input in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p>

Internal stakeholders	Extent and nature of involvement	Supporting evidence
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PTA were involved on behalf of all parents Parents were not consulted in a meaningful way due to the limited timeframe 	<p>“We have a very large PTA. We took initial plans to them and once it was finalised, they fed back. No concerns or issues were raised.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the parents had a significant involvement in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“There was no meeting with parents.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the parents had no involvement in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“Parents were involved in a minimal way... we floated the notion with parents... but the time-span didn’t make for meaningful consultation with parents.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the parents had a small input in the processes associated with taking on the HPSS option.]</p>
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils were informed about the aims of the HPSS programme Pupils were provided with information after the bid was successful 	<p>“They were not involved in deciding what the subject should be but they were informed of the aims.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils had no involvement in the processes associated in taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“It was a relatively pressurised time scale... there was less involvement of pupils at that time than there has been since.” (Head of Science, HPS school) [Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils had no involvement in the processes associated in taking on the HPSS option.]</p>
Partner Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some local schools were consulted about the potential benefits of the chosen specialism Primary schools were more likely to be informed than secondary schools 	<p>“We did contact other local schools to find out if there was anything they felt we could offer them in terms of languages support. We only contacted the schools that we were working with as part of the science specialism.” (Deputy headteacher, HPS school) [Overall, the headteacher believed that the Local Authority a small input in the processes associated in taking on the HPSS option.]</p> <p>“We had a meeting in the school for the heads the science staff from each of the feeder primary schools... we explained what we were doing; what the outcomes were hopefully going to be... we went around individually to each of the schools and all agreed that it was something that they wanted to do...” (Headteacher, HPSS option) [Overall, the headteacher believed that the Local Authority had a small input in the processes associated in taking on the HPSS option.]</p>

3.13 The case study below describes how one school adopted an inclusive approach to taking on its HPSS option in humanities. This case study illustrates the benefits of gaining ‘buy in’ from all stakeholders at the bidding stage in order to ensure and sustain effective implementation of the specialism and the achievement of the HPSS objectives.

Case study: An inclusive approach to taking on the HPSS option

Background

The school is an 11-18 selective school with specialisms in languages and the humanities. The enrolment of the school is just over 1,000, and pupils are drawn from a very wide area. The attainment range of pupils entering the school is wider than would be found in most other selective schools. The school's choice of specialism was informed by national priorities, and by the needs of its feeder primary schools, and the application for the HPSS option (in humanities) was fully supported by the governing body, which had a link humanities Governor. There was a strong emphasis placed on building on the success of the initial specialism. The headteacher and other members of the teaching staff expressed the view that an inclusive approach at the planning and application stage was essential in order to ensure effective and sustained implementation of the specialism. The outcome of this approach was a high level of communication between all stakeholders, resulting in a high level of engagement and ultimately a greater likelihood of sustainability.

The approach

- Grounding the specialism in national priorities "Our main emphasis in the beginning was looking at the development of literacy and ICT as these were national objectives at the time." (Headteacher)
- Making the specialism relevant to feeder primary schools "I had been involved in assessing history in primary schools. I was worried that history was disappearing from primary schools. So it came out of a desire to get more history into primary schools." (Head of History)

"From the history point of view, it started about four years ago. I spoke to the [HPS school] about my concerns... we had to focus so much on the basics that I was getting really worried about losing the humanities focus completely." (Headteacher, Partner Primary School)
- Building on the experience and expertise of the initial specialism "There was a great deal of sharing of good practice as part of the process involved humanities staff spending time with the language specialism co-ordinators." (Deputy headteacher)
- Engaging the support of the governing body "The vice-chair of the governing body worked very closely with me – she was interested in citizenship and was very supportive. Our Governors were very supportive of us." (Class-based teacher)

"I know a bit about humanities - I am a humanities Governor. We saw the bids and it was the enthusiasm, planning and commitment of the bidders who were successful from the governing body's point of view." (Member of Governing Body)

The benefits

- A high level of engagement "I don't think there is anything we haven't done that we said we would do. We are now working with six schools instead of four." (Class-based teacher)
- A high level of communication. "The strength of our approach is listening to the parties involved – whether partner schools or pupils or the wider community." (Headteacher)

"The success of the humanities specialism is down to the level of collaboration internally." (Class-based teacher)
- A high level of sustainability. "I would say that the impact and continual support is better here and it feels as if they actually want to help us. There is a feeling of sustainability which I don't get with other schools which we partner with for other subjects." (Headteacher, Partner Secondary School)

Support and guidance

- 3.14 Support and guidance throughout the application was provided by a range of bodies, including the Local Authority (LA), the SSAT, and the DCSF.
- 3.15 Interviewees were asked to comment on the overall quality of the support they had received. Around three-fifths of interviewees from schools with a SEN specialism indicated that the support and guidance available to them was limited. However, a lack of support was less evident in the remaining schools, with three-fifths of the interviewees expressing the view that the support and guidance they had received was helpful or very helpful.
- 3.16 LAs have a responsibility for examining the strategic context of the HPSS programme, and for assessing the extent to which there is adequate coverage of each of the specialisms across an LA area. The research evidence suggests that whilst most schools did consult their LA, and whilst most interviewees agreed that LAs were generally supportive of the programme, they tended not to be involved in a direct way at the application stage; although it is important to note that in some cases this was the school's choice.
- 3.17 The advice and support provided by the DCSF was generally considered to be helpful and adequate. However, most of the guidance and support provided to schools at this stage came from the SSAT; in approximately four-fifths of schools visited, this was found to be both adequate and helpful.
- 3.18 The Table below provides the views of interviewees on the support and guidance they received during the application process.

Source	Support evidence
LA	<p>Helpful and adequate “The advice and support provided by the Local Authority was excellent. I wouldn’t have liked to have said that we would have got our bid through without them, but I felt that it was important we were doing the same sort of strategic things as the Local Authority.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher strongly agreed that the advice and support provided by the Local Authority was adequate]</p> <p>Less helpful “...the Local Authority was not really helpful...SEN is very expensive...they didn’t show much interest...” (Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: overall, the headteacher disagreed that the advice and support provided was adequate]</p> <p>Advice was not required “We certainly consulted them, but we just got on with it... I am not saying the low level of involvement is negative - it’s not - we have a positive relationship with the Local Authority. The choice of science specialism had the support of the Local Authority from the start.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Overall, the headteacher believed that the LA had no involvement in the processes associated with their school taking on the HPSS option.]</p>
SSAT	<p>Helpful and adequate “Advice came from the SSAT. They facilitated a workshop day but it was mostly through discussion with other humanities teachers that really helped.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: overall, the headteacher agreed that the advice and support provided by the SSAT was adequate]</p> <p>“...the advice we received from the SSAT is appropriate. The advice we were given is from very experienced people and they continue to be very good friends of the school. The SSAT conference is very well regarded.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: overall the headteacher strongly agreed that the advice and support provided by the SSAT was adequate]</p> <p>“Our SSAT consultant checked the bid before submission and spent one hour on the phone going through the fine detail with me and provided me with enthusiastic feedback.” (Director of SEN specialism, HPS school) [Note: overall the headteacher strongly agreed that the advice and support provided by the SSAT was adequate]</p>
DCSF,	<p>Helpful and adequate “We have found that the Department has been excellent in that our bid writer has often written to them for clarification on certain issues and we have found them really good...and there has been a big improvement in the last 6 or 7 years. I have been a Head for 11 years and we noticed a big improvement in the last number of years.” (Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: overall the headteacher strongly agreed that the advice and support provided by DCSF was adequate]</p>

Efficiency and effectiveness of the process

- 3.19 Overall, the vast majority of interviewees (over three-quarters) welcomed the straightforward nature of the process, and were satisfied that the process for entering HPSS required less detailed plans than for the initial specialism.
- 3.20 As part of the process, schools are required to produce a School Plan Annex, which is typically up to five pages in length and outlines, in broad terms, how schools will approach the implementation of the specialism. A number of respondents indicated that they welcomed being able to draw on existing school documents (e.g. the SDP and SEF). Some concerns were expressed by a small number of schools (i.e. some of the first schools in the country to re-designate before 2006); there was a lack of clarity about how they should structure their bid and what they should include in the document. However, the findings would suggest that the process has improved for those schools re-designating since 2006.

- 3.21 The timescales were highlighted as a particular problem for around one-half of all schools (regardless of the year in which the school re-designated); schools with a SEN specialism highlighted this as a particular issue. A small number of all schools stated that there were delays between being informed of the HPSS option and actually receiving funding. The time gap between being awarded the option and receiving the funding may be intentional in order for schools to more fully develop their plans for implementation. Specialist schools receive their HPSS funding through the normal channel of the standards fund.
- 3.22 The table below summarises the views of interviewees in relation to the efficiency and effectiveness of the HPSS process, including the appropriateness of the timelines. Examples are provided from schools which re-designated before and since 2006.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the HPSS application process

Date of re-designation	Efficiency and effectiveness of the process	Supporting evidence
Before 2006	Conflicting information A lack of clarity	<p>“The advice we were given was constantly conflicting... it was all a bit up in the air...” (Assistant Headteacher, HPS school)</p> <p>“The process was difficult. No one seemed to know anything about taking on an HPSS option. There was no form so we had to devise one ourselves.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school)</p>
In or after 2006	A positive experience Clearer guidance as the Programme has developed	<p>“The whole process was very good. I worked with different people and saw how the dynamics of the team worked. It really did show the strengths of different individuals... it was a really good experience and worthwhile.” (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, HPS school)</p> <p>“The new five-page School Plan Annex... that was really easy to do relatively speaking. You had to attach all the other bits of evidence (like the SDP). They have got it right.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)</p> <p>“It is a totally different world... the HPSS process was short and swift.” (Headteacher, HPS school)</p>
Timelines for the process		
Stakeholder interview	A very condensed timescale	<p>“You only have a very limited amount of time to submit your re-designation plans. There is a very condensed time scale - more time is required.” (<i>Stakeholder consultation</i>)</p>
Before 2006	Delays in receiving the funding Pressure to complete the application Adequate time provided	<p>“It wasn’t until December that we were able to employ staff to take on some of the things that we needed to do... it was a three-month delay.” (Headteacher, HPS school)</p> <p>“We are good at working under pressure but we still found it hard to complete it within the time given.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school)</p> <p>“I think it was okay... it was longer than we have been given for our third specialism. It was a bit of a rush but it was adequate.” (Head of Science, HPS school)</p>
In or after 2006	Timeframe not in line with school timetable Some difficulties hitting the timeline	<p>“Because of the timing of re-designation we had already planned our timetables for the year... and we had to squeeze these timetables to find room for the outreach work that we now conduct.” (Head of Languages, HPS school)</p> <p>“We were a trailblazer, so it was difficult... the timelines were short... to be honest it was horrendous hitting the deadline for submission.” (Headteacher, HPS school)</p>

Funding for HPSS

3.23 The entry criteria for the HPSS programme are that the school achieves:

- An overall Grade 1 Ofsted marking; or
- An overall Grade 2 Ofsted marking with a Grade 1 in 'Achievement and Standards'; or
- An overall Grade 2 marking and with 60% or above 5+ A*-C GCSE including English & Maths in the 2006 Key Stage 4 results; or
- An overall Grade 2 marking and in the top 20% Contextual Value Added (CVA) national ranking and a minimum 35% 5+ A*-C GCSE including English & Maths in the 2006 Key Stage 4 results.

3.24 Language Colleges receive additional funding to support the implementation of the National Languages Strategy.¹⁴ Vocational schools also receive additional funding in recognition of the need to develop stronger collaborative networks for local 14-19 delivery.

3.25 This Section presents the views of respondents in relation to the funding of the HPSS programme and on the potential for the programme to provide value for money. It is divided into the following sub-sections:

- The funding arrangements;
- Adequacy of funding;
- Sustainability; and
- Value for money.

The funding arrangements

3.26 There are few stipulations in the HPSS guidance relating to the appropriate use of funding, although the guidance does state that a proportion of the funding (between 30% and 50%) should be spent on collaboration and partnership working.

3.27 A small number of interviewees expressed the view that the allocation of the HPSS funding should be more flexible.

Flexible use of funding enables co-ordination of the activities of the specialism throughout the school

"...the rest of the money is centrally managed for a variety of training purposes...we look at bids from various groups to see what they need for various projects...we leverage other funding for training as well." (Headteacher, HPS school)

¹⁴ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007>

- 3.28 The research findings indicate that the practice in the majority of schools (four-fifths) was to delegate the funding for the specific work of the specialism. It was suggested by interviewees that this had enabled the funding to be specifically targeted on developing the activities of the specialism, as set out in the School Plan Annex, and had also enabled schools to account for and monitor the impact of the additional funding.

Delegated funding enables more effective monitoring

“It is kept separately from the main pot... we have separate pots for each of the three specialisms and each Director of Specialism is responsible for their funding and directly responsible to me. It is checked on a regular basis....There is always a chance that if you stick it in a central pot that it gets lost and it is difficult to decide where it has gone and what impact it is having... it is easy to monitor the impact when it is held in a separate pot.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

“The head of science is given his budget... it works well.” (Deputy Headteacher, Art and Science)

Delegated funding enhances accountability

“We have control of the budget... we make a 15% contribution to school for running costs... but everything else is in the budget and the budget is tied to the original bid so we know how much money is going towards each of the activities. The money is mapped out and we are accountable for what we do.” (Head of Science, HPS school)

Adequacy of funding

- 3.29 Respondents were asked to comment on the adequacy of the HPSS funding, and how this compared with the specialist schools funding. In general, respondents indicated that the funding was adequate to enable the school to meet its objectives for the programme. However, some interviewees expressed the view that the funding for HPPS should be brought in line with the specialist school funding, which for most specialisms is approximately double.

The funding is adequate and gives the school confidence to plan ahead

“£60,000 funding is sufficient in this school. I think if we were in a mixed ability community school, I would probably have so many calls on that money that I would think it not worth it just to get that. In this school it works very well and is sufficient and it gives us the feeling of confidence to go ahead and plan things and do things and know that we have sufficient money there to do it.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

“Yes I think it is adequate, because you know how much money there is going to be, you design your plans accordingly. We work with five schools because we realised that was manageable in terms of manpower but also financially manageable.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPSS School)

“We get £90,000 for the HPSS option. I think that this is sufficient for the plans that we have drawn up. We have been able to increase staffing (which enables smaller sets and more subject options); we have been able to give responsibility allowances and additional time for people who are looking after the specialism.” (Director of Specialism, HPS school)

More funding would enable greater outreach activities

“No we haven’t got enough funding...if we wanted to be truly innovative with how we run the programmes and do more outreach we would try to unlock more funding for this.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPSS School)

Sustainability

- 3.30 The majority of interviewees (approximately three-quarters) expressed the view that the activities of the specialism would not be sustainable without the funding provided by the programme. However, a number of respondents stated that having commenced and progressed with their plans, it would be difficult, at this stage, for the school to draw back. These views are summarised in the box below:

The school would struggle to make up the shortfall if funding was discontinued

“It is not sustainable if funding is taken away because you use that money for those activities. If we were told that we were losing £60,000 then we would have to make up that shortfall somehow...it wouldn’t come out of languages... we would just have to squeeze everybody.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)

Some activities would continue without funding but the resources and staffing would be diminished

“I would hope that the support from the High School would continue but I am worried about the funding...the activities’ days and the linkages between our school and theirs would continue even if the funding stopped but the teaching resource would have to stop.” (Headteacher, Partner Primary School)

Staff would be affected but the work would probably go on

“I think it would be sustainable in certain aspects... we would probably go on doing some of the work... but staffing would be affected... it is a huge resource.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

Value for money

- 3.31 It is not within the remit of the evaluation to carry out a full comparative value for money exercise. However, the extent to which the HPSS programme was considered by interviewees to provide value for money was explored both in schools with HPSS status, and in their partner schools. It should be noted that many schools are in the early stages of the programme and had not yet begun to evaluate the impact on their own school, nor in their partner schools and were, therefore, unable to comment on whether it was providing value for money. That said, a number of suggestions were provided.
- 3.32 One research participant highlighted the need for a quantitative value-for-money exercise to assess the quantitative outputs of the programme. In addition, a number of interviewees expressed the view that, in their experience, the HPSS funding was already providing excellent value for money, both internally and in relation to the activities with partner schools.

The funding provides value for money

“Every penny from the funding has provided additionality that would not be available at this time. Some parts would become available in time through the funding for the SIP but the funding has enabled us to make a difference now.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)

“Value for money, sums it up very well... clearly people have done a lot with the funding provided.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

“The funding has led to more dynamic forward thinking and has resulted in improved teaching and learning.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

It is too early to assess value for money

“Value for money has not been fully assessed...we are going to be working on this next...we know that the money pays for the room we work in and that there is funding for outreach work for our ASTs and that the rest is being put into research and development.” (Training Manager, HPS school)

“...we haven't up to now looked at how we have impacted on partner schools. However we are starting to do this from now and we may look at the impact of training outside the school.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)

“There is great potential for HPSS in that it provides different diversity and a different focus and that has to be welcomed in the network... the difficulty is that the programme has not been running long enough to make any statements about whether it has led to systemic change.” (Stakeholder consultation)

“It is important for a judgement to be made in a clearly defined way - outputs versus inputs, rather than a 'touchy-feely' approach. There is a definite need to tighten up on learning outcomes to consider the added value.” (Stakeholder consultation)

Views of schools with an initial specialism

- 3.33 A number of schools with an initial specialism only were visited in this year's fieldwork (these are termed 'control' schools in the methodology). These interviewees were asked to comment on their knowledge of the HPSS programme and on what plans their school might have in place to take on an HPSS option.
- 3.34 Around three-quarters of respondents had limited knowledge of the HPSS programme, and only a small number of schools were considering taking on an HPSS option. Notably very few schools indicated that they would contemplate taking on a SEN specialism. A number of schools stated that they were unaware of the specific criteria for entry into HPSS. This lack of awareness appeared to be a particular issue for special schools. Notably, the criteria for entry to the programme are slightly different and perhaps less clear than for mainstream schools. However, when asked, all of the schools stated that they were positive about the opportunities HPSS status could bring in terms of enabling their school to enhance its outreach activities. The table below provides a range of views expressed by respondents in schools with an initial specialism on their plans to become part of the HPSS programme, and on what they perceived this would mean for their school.

Schools with an initial specialism only - views on the HPSS Programme	Key point	Quotation
What plans are in place	<p>No plans in place</p> <p>No prior knowledge of the programme before the visit</p> <p>Will be planning for HPSS status in the future</p>	<p>“We don't have any plans in place as we were unaware of the specific criteria pertaining to this particular category of schools.” (Headteacher, Specialist School)</p> <p>“We knew nothing about HPSS prior to your visit. As soon as I heard, I made it my business to find out.” (Headteacher, Specialist Special School)</p> <p>“We will plan for it in 2009 and it will fit in with the BSF programme and our new location.” (Headteacher, Specialist Special School)</p>
What HPSS status would mean for the school	<p>Would enable the school to work towards a national centre of excellence</p> <p>Would validate the hard work of staff</p> <p>Would encourage stronger links with the community</p>	<p>“For me becoming a HPS school would be a very valid and justified way of moving the school forward. I think the dissemination of skills and knowledge is essential... it's about working towards a national centre of excellence.” (Class-based teacher, Specialist School)</p> <p>“We would regard it as a huge honour and validation of the hard work that the staff here do. I think you picked up on the commitment and passion that staff have for their work which can go unrecognised in the special sector.” (Director of Specialism, Specialist Special School)</p> <p>“It would give us enormous kudos... it would mean more money and it would enable the school to look beyond its current strengths... It would enable stronger links throughout the community.” (Governor, Specialist School)</p>

- 3.35 A number of schools with an initial specialism commented on their plans for entering the HPSS programme.

Plans for entering the HPSS programme - schools with an initial specialism only

We are collecting and distributing the relevant information about the HPSS programme to the relevant parties

“Information has been readily made available in relation to SIP and SEF meetings in September 2007.” (Headteacher, Special School, Science Specialism) [Note: This school was actively planning and preparing to take on an HPSS option (in one of the areas of Special Educational needs.)]

We are thinking ahead of time about our choice of specialism

“It is notable since our last Ofsted the improvements we have made. So we are looking at taking on an HPSS option in the area of SEN... it is four years usually before you can take on an HPSS option so we need to start thinking about it next year.” (Headteacher, Specialist Special School) [Note: This school had no pre-existing plans to formally take on an HPSS option.]

- 3.36 It should be noted that these schools may not have recognised the HPSS links with Ofsted as this would be the next point at which they would be considered against the HPSS criteria.

Summary

- 3.37 The following points summarise the key findings presented in this chapter.

- Overall, the majority of interviewees in schools were satisfied with the **entry criteria** for the HPSS programme and did not raise any major concerns, apart from **training schools**, where it was suggested that obtaining and maintaining high attainment levels might pose a challenge for some training schools and, consequently, that the entry criteria for HPSS should not focus primarily on attainment.
- The **choice of specialism** (curricular, training school or SEN) tended to be influenced by the needs and context of the school. Three broad rationales for choosing a specialism emerged from the research: To impact upon teaching and learning; to address staffing issues; *and* to provide greater opportunities for collaboration.
- The nature and extent of **stakeholder consultation and involvement** in the application process varied. Internal and external stakeholders were identified. Internal stakeholders included headteachers, staff, parents and pupils. In most instances, headteachers and heads of department were responsible for writing the bid. In the majority of schools members of staff were consulted effectively throughout the process. The role of the governing body in the majority of schools was to support, advise and endorse key decisions. In a large proportion of schools (greater than 90%) parents and pupils were *informed* as opposed to being consulted during the process. External stakeholders included partner primary and secondary schools. Less than one-half of the HPS schools indicated that they had canvassed the views of partner schools prior to choosing the specialism. Partner primary schools were more likely to be

consulted at this stage than partner secondary schools.

- **Support and guidance** throughout the application process is provided by a range of bodies, including the LA, the SSAT and the DCSF. The majority of schools were happy with the support and guidance received; and most support came from the SSAT. However, schools with a **SEN** HPSS option stated that more guidance would be helpful given the small number of schools with this type of specialism and the distinctive nature of the HPSS SEN option.
- Overall, around three-quarters of interviewees welcomed the straightforward nature of the **application process**, and were satisfied that the process was less burdensome in comparison to their application for the initial specialism. The findings would suggest that the process seems to have improved for those schools that re-designated since 2006. Notwithstanding this, the timescales were challenging for around one-half of all schools, and there were particular issues for those schools taking on a **SEN** HPSS option.
- Approximately four-fifths of the HPS schools indicated that the **funding** received by their school was delegated to the specialism and that this enabled the schools to effectively target and monitor the impact (as set out in the School Plan Annex). Most respondents indicated that the funding received (£60,000 or more) was adequate for them to meet their objectives, although many agreed (approximately three-quarters) that without continued funding, the activities would not be sustainable in the long-term.
- A number of schools with an initial specialism were visited. These schools were asked to explore their understanding of the HPSS programme and to identify their plans, if any, for entry. Three-quarters of schools with an initial specialism had limited or no knowledge of the HPSS initiative, prior to the visit, and consequently had no plans to become a high performing school. However, when probed, all schools were positive about the opportunities that HPSS status could bring, in terms of enabling them to enhance their outreach role in the wider community and in the Local Authority, more generally. At the time of the research, a small number of schools were considering taking on an HPSS option; however, very few were considering taking on a SEN HPSS option.

4 Implementation of the programme

Introduction

- 4.1 The purpose of this Chapter is to examine the progress made by schools in implementing the HPSS programme. The first Section examines the progress of schools in achieving their objectives for the programme as set out in their School Plan Annex. The chapter goes on to identify delivery models in schools. The following Section focuses upon the internal and external monitoring arrangements in place to enable schools to gauge the success, or otherwise, of the programme. The chapter then presents findings in relation to the enablers and barriers that exist in implementing the programme, and to highlight the extent to which these are impacting on the delivery of the programme. Finally, the chapter identifies examples of good practice in implementation, with the aim of informing the future development of the HPSS programme. In terms of the evaluation model identified in Chapter 2, this chapter presents an account of the processes schools employed to deliver programme outputs / outcomes.
- 4.2 This Chapter addresses the following aims and objectives of the evaluation.

Aim(s)

- Collate and inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme;

Objective(s)

- The extent to which the new role is embedded throughout the school and more widely through partner schools; *and*
- Evidence on shared good practice between schools.

- 4.3 The remainder of the chapter is structured under the following headings:
- Progress in achieving objectives;
 - Delivery models;
 - Monitoring procedures;
 - Enablers and barriers; *and*
 - Good practice in implementation.

Progress in achieving objectives

- 4.4 It is not surprising that schools were at different stages in implementing their HPSS option, as the stage of implementation appears to depend on when the school joined the programme, their objectives for the programme, and the degree to which they have been able to engage collaboratively with their stakeholders.
- 4.5 Most schools reported they had either made significant progress (four-fifths) in implementing their plans, or had fully implemented their plans (one-fifth). This involved achieving their stated aims and objectives as set out in the School Plan Annex. The Table below provides examples of schools at various stages in the implementation of their plans.

Stage of implementation	Re-designation	Supporting evidence
Full implementation	2004	"I don't think there is anything we haven't done that we said we would do...we are now working with six schools instead of four, so we have done everything and far more." (Class-based teacher, HPSS School)
Significant progress	2004	"We have moved forward in our teaching and learning and we have re-designed different work and patterns. The liaison with schools has improved. We have always had strong liaison but it is better now because we have put more into it and we have all sorts of things going on." (Headteacher, HPSS School)
	2006	"I would say that we have made significant progress. I mean, for example, the extended project (hands-on way of up-skilling students) that we have trialled, the grades the students achieved were very good and this has been cascaded to staff in the school. I have noticed that people who have actually started implementing vocational courses (associated with the specialism)... that this has actually started to impact in terms of the way they approach planning and teaching. So there have been lots of spin-offs." (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)
	2006	"There is always something new you can do...I think we have made very good progress with primaries." (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)
	2006	"The school has implemented the majority of its action plan...and many aspects for years 1 and 2 have been completed. Our Outreach worker was only appointed for September 2007... later than we hoped, but it was worth waiting for the quality... this means that the outreach work has only just begun, but all parts of our community school plan are in place... our parents' group is under development." (Deputy Headteacher and Director of SEN, HPSS School)
Early stages - some progress	2007	"The school has only made some progress in implementing its plans due to the SENCO being on maternity leave...when we got the specialism we found out our SENCO was pregnant... it was out of the blue. So although we have some things in place, we are not as far forward as we would have been. We have people in place to do things..." (Headteacher, HPS school)
	2007	"I think that we were pretty much on schedule of where we thought we would be. We are looking at the first year plans and we are pretty much on schedule. There were one or two objectives that we haven't fulfilled and they are to do with the community. Our school has such a wide community that we find this one quite hard." (Director of Specialisms, HPS school)

Delivery models

4.6 A range of delivery models were identified. It should be noted that some schools did not operate one model exclusively, and there were aspects of more than one model in operation. Moreover, the nature of the specialism may also influence the delivery model. Delivery models in schools visited can be summarised as follows:

- **A strategic approach to delivery** - characterised by planning and delivering more than one specialism in a strategic way throughout the school;
- **A focused approach to delivery** - characterised by channelling the operation of a particular specialism. This approach was identified in SEN schools ; and
- **A whole school approach to delivery** - characterised by a high degree of ownership of the specialism with a view to impacting the whole school. This approach was most evident in training schools where the specialism had more potential to directly impact a wide variety of staff.

Delivery model	Examples
Strategic approach to delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="405 331 1500 817"> <p>• A school with three specialisms in sport, science and vocational has adopted a strategic approach to choosing, planning and delivering the specialisms. There are joint teaching responsibilities between departments which has improved pupil attainment and widened the curricular options available:</p> <p>“Biology was a relatively weak area at A level. It is not anymore. We have a teacher who has now become an AST in the PE department. She has done a lot of work to help the biology department at A level. The results are now good. In fact, they are better than the physics and chemistry, so her contribution has made a real improvement. We have also decided to introduce human biology at A level as a direct link with our Sports College.” (Assistant Headteacher, HPSS School)</p> <p>“A brilliant link has already been made in terms of the vocational specialism. I now teach applied science at Years 10-13, and one of the things in my performance management this year is to improve resources for applied science.” (Class-based teacher, HPPS School)</p> <li data-bbox="405 851 1500 1064"> <p>• A business manager has been employed to work across the three specialisms and this has contributed to staff collaboration:</p> <p>“As a direct result of our vocational specialism, we have appointed a business manager. This has been very helpful for the science specialism...it has had a massive impact on applied science. It is an incredible link...we have been able to undertake many activities together.” (Class-based teacher, HPSS School)</p> <li data-bbox="405 1097 1500 1435"> <p>• Another school has been strategic in its approach by appointing staff to lead on specific strands across its two specialisms of Sport, SEN Cognition and Learning. The strength of the school's approach is its staffing structures which enable the specialisms to be interlinked:</p> <p>“The strength of the school’s delivery of the specialism is in its staffing structure ...we have appointed three staff internally to take responsibility for three strands, partnership, new technologies and CPD and they will work across the specialisms...they have been in post since April, 2007... so they have had time to get up to speed... from September they get additional time and money from our recruitment and retention budget.” (Director of Specialism, HPS school)</p>

Delivery model	Examples
Focused approach to delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One school with a SEN, communication and interaction specialism has taken the unusual step of seconding a speech and language therapist from the Health sector to work within the school and with partner schools to drive the delivery of the specialism. The school has thought outside the box: <p>“...another big strength is that the school thought outside the box and employed me as a speech therapist rather than a teacher, as I have the understanding of speech disorders. I worked within education over the past 14 years.” (Communications and Interaction Co-ordinator)</p> The appointment is having a measurable impact on partner schools: <p>“...our excellent SEN outreach worker will provide a real, measurable impact on our partner schools.” (Deputy Headteacher and Director of SEN)</p> Parents and pupils are benefiting from the specific skills of a speech and language therapist on site within the school: <p>“...Parents are delighted as up until now there has been nothing like the service we currently provide. Speech and language therapy service is very stretched and what they can offer is very limited. My appointment enables me to have regular, weekly contact with pupils that continue to parents as well.” (Communications and Interaction Co-ordinator)</p>
Whole school approach to delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A school with Training and Technology specialisms has established a cross-departmental Research and Development Group. The Group is made of up a wide range of staff and pupils across the whole school and exists to research best practice in the classroom. The research is used as a key driver in improving teaching and learning. There is strong commitment of all staff to the Research and Development Group: <p>“...staff offer to be involved without the small payment that comes with it.” (Head of Learning)</p> Staff and school are involved in conducting the research which informs best practice throughout the school: <p>“pupils and staff are involved in conducting the research...we have changed the uniform this year... two sociology teachers assessed the impact of this by surveying pupils...six children are being trained as lesson observers to see how different methods of teaching impact on certain children.” (Head of Learning)</p>

Monitoring procedures

- 4.7 Interviewees provided information on the monitoring and assessment procedures in place, both internally and externally. Responses indicate that internal monitoring of the specialism was well developed in schools and tended to be more formal. Procedures for monitoring the specialism include: School Improvement Plan (SIP); Self Evaluation Form (SEF); Progress reports; Reviews of examination results and attainment targets; Research activities, including surveys and feedback forms; and internal and external meetings and committees. However systems for monitoring the impact of the HPSS option externally (i.e. the impact on and by partner schools) were less well developed and tended to be operating on an ad-hoc or informal basis.

- 4.8 The findings from partner schools also indicate that few formal monitoring arrangements are in place to assess the impact of the additional resources on their school.

“I don’t think we are quite as good at informing primary school governors which would actually be quite a good thing to do because I don’t think we report to primary schools. Whether they report in the same way to their governors I’m not sure.” (Headteacher, HPS school)

- 4.9 Internal monitoring procedures include the following:

- School Improvement Plan (SIP);
- Self Evaluation Form (SEF);
- Progress reports;
- Reviews of examination results and attainment targets;
- Research activities, including surveys and feedback forms; *and*
- Internal and external meetings and committees.

- 4.10 The Table below provides examples of internal and external evaluation procedures operating in schools.

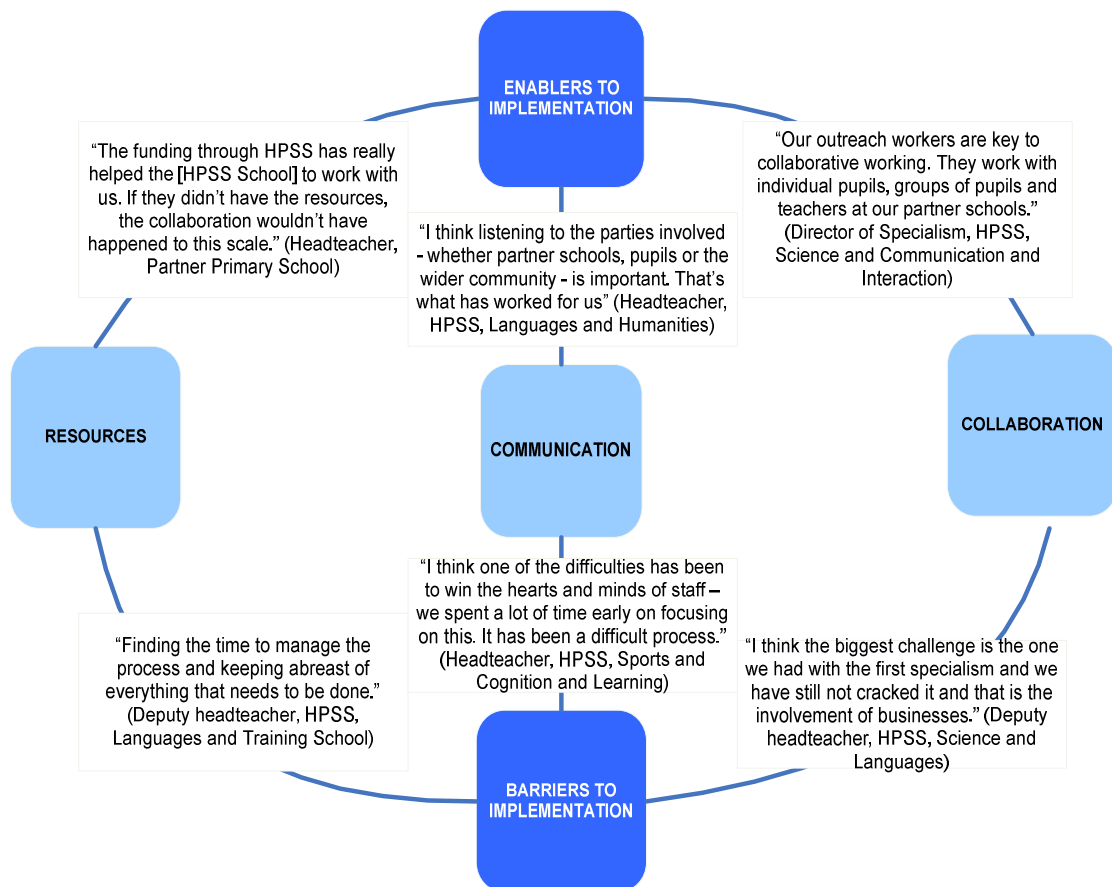
Examples of internal and external monitoring procedures in place	
<i>Internal evaluation procedures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEF: “There is quite a lot in our SEF that describes the impact of our specialisms.” (Headteacher, HPS school) • Governing body committees: “We also have a school development committee which is led by our governors – the three specialisms are all pivotal topics for the school development committee. We have 6 of these meetings in a school year.” (Headteacher, HPS school) • SIP: “Because the targets are part of our SIP – the monitoring is there...so there is an overall responsibility for that and we look at the targets and evaluate on an ongoing basis. Some targets are absorbed into CPD targets. So we have evidence gathered in a number of different ways.” (Deputy Head, Specialist School) • Progress Reporting: “The Deputy Headteacher always said when we first started to keep reporting as you go along...this means we have a clear summary of everything we have done and why we have done it; what has been successful and unsuccessful and why we have changed. The deputy Headteacher reports to governors; it is a standing item on their agenda.” (Community co-ordinator, HPS school) • Review of examination results and attainment targets: “I meet with the Director of Science on a regular basis and we are monitoring examination results associated with the specialism very closely.” (Headteacher, HPS school) • Survey of staff and pupils: “We set targets and we survey staff and pupils; we evaluate the specialism every year and look at trends across time.” (Head of Learning, HPSS School)
<i>External evaluation procedures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Meetings: “We have planning meetings with primary and secondary schools and this has been productive.” (Head of Department, HPS school) • Feedback Forms: “We have a standard evaluation sheet for all our specialisms that is filled in at the end of each term and at the end of the year. The Director of Specialist Schools who looks after the Training School and Languages collects all these forms in, undertakes analysis and feeds back on these.” (Director of Specialisms, HPS school)

Enablers and barriers

4.11 Three key factors were impacting upon the degree to which the HPSS programme has been implemented by schools:

- **Resourcing:** time, staff, and finance available in the school;
- **Communication:** the extent to which the school has communicated its vision and plans and has taken on board the needs and views of all stakeholders; *and*
- **Collaboration:** the use of effective timetabling to enable collaboration and the extent to which buy-in of collaborative partners has been achieved.

4.12 The diagram below illustrates that, depending on how schools were managing each of the above factors, they could act as either barriers and/or enablers:



Good practice in implementation

- 4.13 A number of schools with an initial specialism only have been very effective in implementing the SSP. Where effective implementation has been achieved, this has been largely due to effective planning, *prior to* the additional funding coming on board; and planning with the needs of the wider community in mind. This may be useful to consider by schools entering the HPSS programme.
- 4.14 The case study below sets out how one school planned and developed activities ahead of the specialism in order to maximise the impact of the additional funding:

Preparing for the additional resources the specialism will bring

One of the key initiatives contained within one school's application for Specialist School status in SEN (learning and cognition) was the development of Schemes of Work (SoW) that were creative and inclusive in their design. During the audit of provision that preceded the school's application for specialist status it was identified that the school's current SoW relating to subjects of the National Curriculum were not very motivating and neither were they particularly inclusive, as their content and teaching approaches tended to be aimed at the most able pupils. It was also identified the assessment of learning outcomes, associated with each SoW, were very difficult to correlate with the assessment criteria associated with the corresponding National Curriculum P scale levels. It was decided that a useful way of raising standards in teaching, assessment and pupil attainment would be to revise every SoW against a set of governing criteria designed to ensure good standards of creativity and inclusiveness in keeping with the key outcomes associated with Every Child Matters that every child should be able to enjoy, achieve and make a contribution.

With the award of specialist status and the flexibility provided by its associated revenue grant, steering groups of teachers and teaching assistants began revising each SoW in readiness for their delivery in the classroom. Trials of the materials during academic year 2006-2007 resulted in findings that teaching was indeed more enjoyable and motivating for pupils, that pupils of all abilities were attaining at higher levels than previously and that teacher assessment was easier to undertake and of a more consistent standard. These findings were later endorsed when the school was inspected by a joint team of Ofsted and HMI inspectors who reported:

"Teachers and highly trained specialist teaching assistants make learning fun by using very effective teaching strategies, such as sensory and therapeutic learning, that fully match pupils' needs. As a result, all pupils thrive." (Ofsted, 2007)

This school was judged to be an outstanding school in which, "both the highest and lowest attainers make equally impressive gains." (Ofsted, 2007)

- 4.15 Working collaboratively with schools and the wider community is a challenge for all schools in the HPSS programme. The following case study provides a good practice example of how one school with an initial specialism planned its specialism in order to meet the needs of the community.

Planning the specialism in line with the needs of the local community

The overall aim of this special school in taking on the specialist school status was to provide equality of opportunity for SEN pupils. At that time, there were no special schools offering maths and computing in the area and as the school had a strong history of success in maths and ICT, this was its chosen specialism. The school has worked hard to implement the specialism to the benefit of parents and pupils with EAL, local schools, and deprived adults in the surrounding community.

The school set out to develop strong links with primary and secondary schools in order to effectively implement the specialism. The specialism was targeted at feeder primary schools in an effort to ease the transition of SEN pupils (and parents) from primary to secondary education

“...I link with the year 6 - and it improves the transition from year 6 to our school and we also included the parents and we invited the parents to lessons and they did. It is a very big step for parents as well as children. It gets more difficult to involve parents as the children get older as we offered some training for parents in ICT and we had no takers for that.” (Deputy headteacher)

“Also we have parents in and we aim this at the newer parents - year 7 and they can see the set up and we run a crèche for little kids and the older students sit with their parents.” (Class-based teacher)

Whilst it has been hard work to implement the specialism in local secondary schools, the school persevered and has been successful in forging lasting relationships. Schools are now appreciative of the expertise offered to SEN pupils, and the collaboration now extends to staff training

“...You do have to put the work in to enable the collaboration to happen and the groundwork has to be done... but the relationship builds up.” (Deputy headteacher)

“...we are welcomed with open arms and we are very experienced in the early national curriculum stages and they expect kids to be above level 3 and yet they are getting kids at level 1 and even below, and this is where our expertise is based.” (Class-based teacher)

“...We provide advice and guidance to the schools and training for their staff and they can have access to our resources. We are flexible...we can do things because of our additional funding and the secondary schools are constrained more by finance.” (Class-based teacher)

“I went to a secondary school and worked with them and myself and a technician went there and showed them how our software could be used. We are moving site and we are going to share a site with a high school - a mainstream school.” (Class-based teacher)

Community outreach has been a key element in implementing the specialism

“...we have a definite outreach element...One of our community partners was the nursery and they did a little audit and got names of parents and staff who were interested in doing ICT courses at Piper Hill to enable them to get jobs. We run a 6-week course for them to learn ICT skills and we teach them how to use the website and get the information they need.” (Class-based teacher)

“We also bring in the young mums during nursery time for a 6 week course and we have offered this twice now...it has been very useful.” (Class-based teacher)

“...the area has a high level of unemployment and teenage pregnancy and there was a group of people whose employment would have been interrupted... one person got a job at the end of the course.” (Deputy headteacher)

Summary

4.16 The purpose of this chapter was to examine the progress made by schools in implementing the HPSS programme:

- The research findings suggest that the **stage of implementation** of the school's plans appears to depend on when the school joined the programme;
- The research identified three **delivery models** or approaches in schools. A strategic approach to delivery, characterised by planning and delivering more than one specialism in a strategic way throughout the school; a focused approach, characterised by channelling the operation of a particular specialism. This approach was evident in *schools* with a **SEN specialism**; and a whole school approach to delivery, characterised by a high degree of ownership of the specialism with a view to impacting the whole school. This approach was most evident in **training schools** where the specialism had more potential to directly impact a wide variety of staff. The delivery model in operation in schools was influenced by the type of specialism(s). Some schools had more than one delivery model in place;
- All of the schools in the sample had undertaken either formal and / or informal **monitoring of the specialism**. Internal monitoring of the specialism was well developed in schools and tended to be more formal. Procedures for monitoring the specialism include: School Improvement Plan (SIP); Self Evaluation Form (SEF); Progress reports; Reviews of examination results and attainment targets; Research activities, including surveys and feedback forms; and internal and external meetings and committees. Systems for monitoring the impact of the HPSS option externally (i.e. the impact on and by partner schools) were less well developed and tended to be operating on an ad-hoc or informal basis;
- Three factors were acting as **barriers and enablers** to the successful implementation of the specialism in schools, depending on how they were being managed by the school;
 - Resourcing: time, staff, and finance available in the school;
 - Communication: the extent to which the school has communicated its vision and plans and has taken on board the needs and views of all stakeholders;
 - Collaboration: the use of effective timetabling to enable collaboration and the extent to which buy-in of collaborative partners has been achieved; *and*
- Good practice in implementing the Specialist Schools Programme was identified. This centred on effective planning, with the needs of the school and the wider community in mind, and planning *prior to* the additional funding coming on board. These strategies might be useful to consider by schools entering the HPSS programme.

5 Impact of the programme

Introduction

- 5.1 The HPSS Programme aims to impact upon a range of stakeholders. This includes *pupils* through raising aspirations, achievement and attainment and extending the curricular choice available (enhanced resourcing may also lead to better personalised learning experiences for pupils); *staff in the high performing school* through increased workload, improved staff morale, enhanced opportunities for staff training and development and improvements in staff recruitment and retention; *staff in partner schools* (feeder primary and secondary schools) through enhanced collaboration and sharing learning resources (e.g. ICT equipment), mentoring (e.g. sharing schemes of work or team teaching), and joint planning (e.g. development of courses for pupils across a specific geographical area); and, the *wider community* through effectively collaborating with businesses, and people living in the vicinity / catchment area of the school. In addition the HPSS programme is also aimed at contributing to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives (e.g. 14-19 Agenda, Every Child Matters etc.). In terms of the evaluation model presented in Chapter 2, this chapter provides an account of the outputs and outcomes achieved by the schools as a result of their participation in the programme.
- 5.2 This Chapter addresses the following aims and objectives of the evaluation.

Aim(s)

- Collate and inform on the early outcomes and experiences of new entrants to the HPSS programme; *and*
- Consider the longer term impact of the HPSS programme.

Objective(s)

- The impact of the high performing role on schools and their partners more widely;
- The impact of HPSS status on the school's initial specialism;
- The extent to which the new role is embedded throughout the school and more widely through partner schools;
- Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on raising schools' aspirations, relative to those schools with an initial specialism only;
- Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on curriculum provision, relative to those schools with an initial specialism only; *and*
- Evidence on shared good practice between schools.

- 5.3 This Section of the report presents the findings on the impact of the HPSS programme to date. It is structured under the following headings:

- Raising aspirations, achievement and attainment;
- Staffing issues;
- Curricular choice and personalised learning;
- Collaboration and partnership; *and*
- Wider government initiatives.

Raising aspirations, attainment and achievement

- 5.4 One of the central purposes of the HPSS programme is to contribute to improved opportunities and standards for pupils, and to raise standards.¹⁵ This Section of the report presents early evidence of the impact of the HPSS programme on raising pupils' aspirations and on raising attainment and achievement.

Raising pupils' aspirations

- 5.5 It was suggested by interviewees that the effect of raising pupils' aspirations can be seen in improved pupil motivation and behaviour, as well as improvements in attainment and achievement; four-fifths of respondents indicated that the HPSS programme had impacted on raising pupils' aspirations.
- 5.6 The Table below illustrates that this was being achieved through better choice of curricular subjects, curriculum enrichment activities, and improvements in teaching and learning.

The impact of the HPSS programme on raising pupils' aspirations

Wider career options

"From a humanities point of view, the specialism has influenced my career. I wouldn't have chosen a law degree, so it definitely impacts." (Year 10 pupil, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils' aspirations had improved as a result of the HPSS option)

Higher attainment and achievement

"...pupils' aspirations have improved... and this has led to improved pupil attainment and achievement and that is a fact." (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils' aspirations had improved as a result of the HPSS option)

Motivated students and teachers

"It is motivating learners and it is highlighting their strengths. It is allowing students who are perceived as relatively weak academically to find what their strengths are and work towards those strengths, which is a very motivating way of teaching." (Vocational Co-ordinator, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils' aspirations had improved as a result of the HPSS option)

Added value for lower and higher attaining students

"I think we are gaining more at the two polarised ends – the gifted and talented and the pupils with SEN... those are the two kinds of pupils that are affected." (Head of English, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the pupils' aspirations had stayed the same as a result of the HPSS option)

¹⁵ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007>

Raising attainment and achievement

- 5.7 Isolating the impact of a particular initiative on these measures is a difficult and complex task. Notwithstanding, many interviewees commented that the programme had the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to improved pupil attainment and achievement. About two-thirds of headteachers stated that the HPSS programme had already contributed to improved pupil attainment, whilst the remainder believed that it had stayed the same (neither contributing positively nor negatively), or that it was too early in the implementation of the programme to make a judgement on impact. Notably, in schools where the attainment profile had stayed the same, approximately one-half of these schools had already a high proportion (in excess of 95%) of pupils achieving 5A*-C at GCSE *prior* to entering the HPSS programme.
- 5.8 The Table below provides an overview of those schools where interviewees indicated that the specialism had impacted positively on raising pupil attainment.

Positive impact on pupil attainment

A massive impact on results to KS5

"The science specialism makes a difference to the results - so at Key Stage 5, the bit that I have control over, the science specialism has had a massive impact on results completely. That's where I can say yes, it has made a difference without a doubt." (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: The headteacher stated that results had improved as a result of the specialism. Over the period 2003-2006, the proportion of students achieving 5+A*-C had increased by 17pp]

Improved attainment in vocational courses

"We certainly can point to improved attainment in specific vocational courses - well in all the vocational courses - our value-added in post-16 vocational, which we have direct evidence for, is very strong... and the Key Stage 4 courses, we are getting good results." (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: The headteacher stated that results and/or achievement had improved as a result of the specialism. Over the period 2003-06, the proportion of students achieving 5A*-C had increased by 4pp]

More effective data tracking which has enabled early intervention

"Pupil attainment is just short of the 70% mark (in the proportion of pupils achieving 5A*-C). The training school is contributing to this through data tracking and through putting in place systems so that we can intervene earlier with pupils who are not achieving as we expected. It is improving and I think it will improve further this year." (Deputy headteacher, HPS school) [Note: The headteacher stated that results and or pupils achievement had improved as a result of the Training School. Over the period 2003-06, the proportion of students achieving 5A*-C had increased by 5pp)

- 5.9 Notably, a number of respondents in SEN schools highlighted the importance of making a distinction between raising *attainment* and raising *achievement*.¹⁶ The point was made that assessing the impact of the programme should not be limited to assessing attainment levels, as raising achievement was as important, if not more so, for pupils with SEN.

¹⁶ A number of schools talked about the importance of measuring achievement as well as measuring attainment. Many of the interviewees who pointed to the importance of this distinction did not define precisely what they meant by achievement, e.g. whether it meant using Contextual Value Added (CVA) as an alternative measure for raw GCSE results.

Raising achievement is as important as raising attainment - SEN schools

GCSE results are not a complete measurement of a SEN children

“Raw GCSE results are not a complete measurement of a school and are not a measurement of SEN children. Some of our kids will not attain but they will *achieve* in other areas.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note the headteacher stated that results and/or achievement had improved]

The specialism will meet the needs of the academically gifted pupils, as well as the less academic

“The specialism will enable the academically gifted to continue to do well, but it will also attend to the needs of the less academic and hopefully they will achieve vocational qualifications. The specialism will allow pupils to achieve across a broader spectrum.” (Member of Governing Body, HPS school) [Note: the headteacher stated that overall it was too early to asqswertyess whether results and / or pupil achievement had improved]

- 5.10 Making provision for and developing the skills and aptitudes of gifted and talented pupils in both HPS schools and, where appropriate, in partner primary and secondary schools is one of the explicit aims of the HPSS programme. Less than 20% of interviewees identified this as one of their key aims. Notwithstanding, there was evidence in many of the schools visited that provision was being made to stretch and challenge more able pupils.
- 5.11 One HPS school provided an example of an innovative approach to the provision of additional support and resources for gifted and talented pupils. The case study below highlights the key features of this approach and the impact it was having on the school and on its partner primary schools.

Case study: Enhancing provision for gifted and talented students

Background

This school has an enrolment of almost 1,400 pupils. Few students come from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. Lower than average numbers of students have learning difficulties or disabilities or statements of special educational needs. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school is designated as a specialist arts college with science as a HPSS option. The school will, in the near future, have a third specialism (Leading Edge).

The HPSS funding has enabled the school to focus more on gifted and talented pupils by...

... **encouraging increased uptake of science:** "I thought that by going for the HPSS option, that that would open up a lot more doors to additional funding and being able to use that to encourage more kids to do science. This school has got an awful lot of able children and a lot of able scientists who I want to go on and have careers in science." (Head of Science)

... **more effective identification of pupils who have high levels of ability:** "Having the funding for someone to take on board a gifted and talented role has made us more aware about it. The gifted and talented co-ordinator has gone on a lot of training courses and has fed back strategies and therefore we are more aware of what we can do as a department." (Class-based teacher)

The funding has also enabled more gifted and talented activities

The activities

Year 10 pupils mentor pupils in local primary schools	"We do a variety of different things, for example, tomorrow we are bringing some of our Year 10 pupils into local primary schools... they will be working on a presentation, working on how they could explain science..." (Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator)
Local primary school children will come to the HPS school to use their laboratories	"There is an opportunity for some of our brighter children to come up here and work in the science labs here. That is a really good thing that has just started since the science specialism came about." (Class-based teacher, Partner Primary School)
Delivering lessons to gifted and talented pupils from partner primary schools	"We also have gifted and talented Year 6s coming up to us through our primary schools and we deliver lessons to them..." (Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator)

The benefits

Enhancing opportunities for the primary school to meet the needs of their pupils	"We have always been aware of the needs of gifted and talented children, but we haven't been always able to offer them that sort of opportunity." (Class-based teacher, Partner Primary School)
Making pupils feel special and encouraging them to develop an interest in science	"It makes them feel special and perhaps it encourages them to take their science a bit further." (Class-based teacher, Partner Primary School)
Stretching more able pupils and improving their transition	"It allows us to stretch them (primary school pupils) in the skills and areas that we want to have when they come here." (Gifted and Talented Coordinator)

Staffing issues

Recruitment and retention of staff

- 5.12 It is intended that the impact of the HPSS programme will extend to improvements in recruitment and retention of staff. In addition, enhanced status and funding can impact positively by attracting high calibre staff to a school, and by increasing the opportunities available for training and CPD.
- 5.13 There was a mixed response from interviewees as to whether involvement with the HPSS programme had improved recruitment and retention of staff, with approximately one-half of interviewees stating that it had improved, and the other one-half stating that it had stayed the same. However, none of the headteachers interviewed indicated that the recruitment and retention of staff had got worse as a result of the school having achieved HPSS status. In schools where staffing was an issue, recruitment, rather than retention, was the key issue identified.

Recruitment and retention of staff	Key message	Quotation
Improved	<p>Enables school to recruit high quality staff</p> <p>Strong system of internal promotions aids retention</p>	<p>“I think it really means that the school will grow and it will enable us to continue attracting good quality staff.” (Member of Governing Body, HPS school)</p> <p>[Note: Overall the headteacher believed that recruitment and retention of staff has improved as a result of the HPSS specialism.]</p> <p>“We regularly employ 2-3 of our trainee teachers and not many people leave here other than to go to promoted posts. We have a strong system of internal promotion here.” (Head of Learning, HPS school)</p> <p>[Note: Overall the headteacher believed that recruitment and retention of staff has improved as a result of the HPSS specialism.]</p>
Stayed the same	No evidence either way	<p>“I have no evidence either way that the specialism makes any difference to recruitment and retention of staff. We are like many schools in that we find it difficult to recruit in a number of subjects.” (Deputy headteacher, HPS school)</p> <p>[Note: Overall the headteacher believed that recruitment and retention of staff has stayed the same as a result of the HPSS specialism.]</p> <p>“It is too early to say. We tend to have staff that stay for a long time . . . our staffing is quite stable.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school)</p> <p>[Note: Overall the headteacher believed that recruitment and retention of staff has stayed the same as a result of the HPSS specialism.]</p>

CPD opportunities

- 5.14 Schools were positive about the opportunities that the programme was providing to enhance and extend training and development opportunities. Approximately four-fifths of headteachers indicated that training and development opportunities had improved as a direct result of the involvement with the programme. These ranged from providing greater training in the use of equipment (e.g. interactive whiteboards) to attending conferences, undertaking specific projects relating to the specialism, and increasing leadership opportunities. The remaining one-fifth of respondents stated that training and development opportunities for staff had stayed the same.
- 5.15 Many schools stated that the programme had enabled them to provide partner schools with training and development opportunities, with around three-fifths of headteachers indicating that increased funding had contributed positively to this. Two-fifths of headteachers indicated that training and development opportunities for staff in partner schools had either stayed the same or stated that they could not currently comment on this as it was too early to comment.
- 5.16 The following Table provides examples of increased training opportunities for staff in HPS schools and in partner schools as a result of their involvement with the HPSS programme.

Increased training and development opportunities for staff in HPS schools

“There are a lot of courses disseminating and sharing information that staff are able to attend. I have been able to offer *training to all teaching assistants* on subjects that are relevant to what we are doing. I am able to buy someone in to train everyone.” (SENCO, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the training and development opportunities in their school had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

“It provides so much more opportunity for career development within the department. Because we have extra funding, it is benefiting everyone in the department.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the training and development opportunities in their school had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

“I think HPSS has an impact on workforce development. It has enabled advanced practitioner models to emerge and allows teachers in schools who have particular knowledge and skills to be recognised.” (Stakeholder consultation)

Increased training and development opportunities for staff in partner schools

“We have offered training for our partner schools, both primary and secondary. We led an in-service day for primary staff and we have carried out leadership training.” (Head of Learning, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the training and development opportunities in for staff in neighbouring schools and the wider community had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

“The AST has visited the schools and assessed the training primary schools need. If they require any training, she sends them up here. She has provided training to help them with schemes of work and a base of resources has been set up which they can tap into if they require them.” (Head of Languages, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the training and development opportunities in for staff in neighbouring schools and the wider community had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

Staff workload

- 5.17 Interviewees were asked to comment on the impact of the programme on staff workload. The findings indicate that staff workload (in particular the Director of Specialism(s) and class teachers) has increased in two-thirds of the schools visited. This has been largely due to the additional planning involved in the early stages of the programme. There was little evidence to suggest that this was resented by staff, and there was clear evidence that staff in schools were committed to working to embed the specialism. Whilst workload may have increased for some, job satisfaction had simultaneously improved, and there was optimism that the workload would reduce once the specialism was up and running.

HPSS has increased staff workload but this is not resented

There is a willingness to take on additional tasks in order to embed the specialism

"The workload has increased but they [the specialism staff] are prepared to commit their own time to it. This has enabled them to break down barriers with partner schools, put the resources into the schools and convince them of the benefits of collaboration." (Governor, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that her workload and the workload of other members of staff had got worse as a result of the HPSS option]

The benefits of the HPSS programme outweigh the workload

"It is obviously more work, but the impact has been a positive one. I haven't heard too many moans... the benefits have been enough as has the money and you can do more to benefit our schools as well." (Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that her workload and the workload of other members of staff had got worse as a result of the HPSS option]

Job satisfaction has increased

"Can I turn that around and say that my job satisfaction has been enhanced massively by all three specialisms - it really has had an affect on my job satisfaction and therefore, I have more energy. I have a quicker step in my feet... some of the best days of my career have been when we heard that we had been given a specialism and then seeing things happen like appointing new staff, buying new equipment and working with new schools." (Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that her workload and the workload of other members of staff had got worse as a result of the HPSS option]

The impact on staff depends on size of the school and its ability to manage workforce capacity

"It depends on the size of the school. If you are looking at a special school and a mainstream school, the impact of embracing the programme in each is slightly different. In a special school you might already have members of staff with multi-functions... for them just to prepare the paperwork in some respects might be a significant undertaking... then you have got a multilayered set of responsibilities on top... some schools are able to embrace this as they have managed their workforce capacity." (Stakeholder consultation)

The workload should reduce once the specialism is up and running

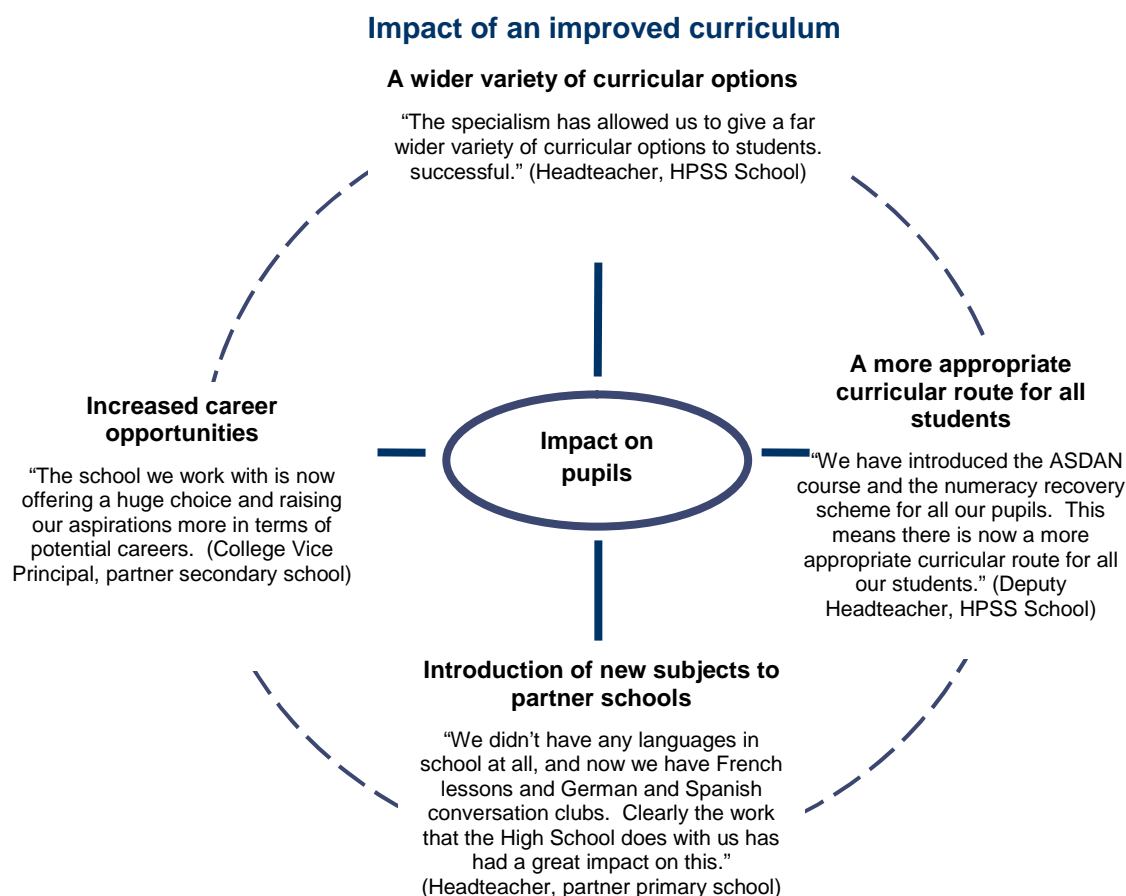
"...the first time you set up something is difficult... but once it is up and running and you know what you are doing it is not so bad. Initially there is going to be an extra workload but that goes without saying." (Class-based teacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that her workload and the workload of other members of staff had stayed the same as a result of the HPSS option]

"With the outreach we plan to do in the future, I would expect that this would increase my workload. I hope that once the systems are in place we won't have problem. I will be able to delegate some work which will help." (Deputy Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that her workload and the workload of other members of staff had got worse as a result of the HPSS option]

Curricular choice and personalised learning

Curricular choice

- 5.18 HPS schools can enhance their specialist role by establishing a HPSS option, enabling them to develop a second curriculum centre of excellence, to raise standards of teaching and learning and to increase attainment in the specialist subjects and across the whole school.¹⁷
- 5.19 The findings indicate that headteachers were almost unanimous in their belief that the HPSS option had led to improved curricular choice for pupils. Over 90% of headteachers stated that both the quality and choice of the curriculum had improved as a result of the specialism.
- 5.20 The Figure below illustrates the impacts of an improved curriculum for pupils in HPS schools and in their partner schools. These include providing a wider variety of curricular options, a more appropriate curricular route for all students, the introduction of new subjects to partner schools, and increased career opportunities for pupils.



¹⁷<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007>

Personalised learning

- 5.21 Improving personalised learning opportunities for pupils is one of the objectives of the HPSS Programme. Over 90% of headteachers indicated that involvement with the programme had enabled their school to provide a more personalised curriculum, which better meets the specific needs and interests of pupils. The following text box provides some examples of how the specialism is contributing to good practice in personalised learning.

Personalised learning tailored to the needs of all pupils

Tailored assessment in accordance with pupils' strengths

"We look at the strength of individual learners and examine the career progression that learners want. You can't alter the syllabus but you can certainly tailor the assessment towards pupils' strengths... the specialism shows education to be a much more holistic tool." (Vocational Coordinator, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the school's ability to personalise curriculum provision for pupils had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

E-tutorials tailored to the needs of under-achieving pupils

"We had a look at some of our students who are not achieving as well as some of the teaching staff had expected. On a year 11 parents' evening we said to them whether they thought their child would benefit from work being sent home by email and they were overwhelmingly positive about this, so we introduced E-tutorials." (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the school's ability to personalise curriculum provision for pupils had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

Tailored lessons for pupils at both ends of the attainment spectrum

"The teaching assistant, recruited as part of the specialism, will work with some of the less-able kids. In year 8 we haven't got proper flexibility in timetable to 'set' properly, but we wanted to ensure that the kids who are more able in science will be pushed on. So, our teaching assistant takes out 2-3 kids in year 8 classes and works specifically with them." (Head of Science, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that the school's ability to personalise curriculum provision for pupils had improved as a result of the HPSS option]

An enriched curriculum tailored towards pupils' personal learning needs

"Certainly, what we have seen is a far more enriched curriculum and far more tailored towards pupils personal learning needs. There is more applied learning and more vocational opportunities in certain geographical locations." (Stakeholder consultation)

Collaboration and partnership

- 5.22 Schools involved in the programme are expected to develop expertise, primarily for the benefit of partner schools and the wider community, although, of course, the school will also experience benefits.¹⁸ The re-designation Guidance states that schools which are re-designating must demonstrate that they have made at least adequate progress in delivering:

Purposeful learning outcomes for pupils and students in named partner schools, and groups in the wider community.” (DCSF, Re-designation Guidance, 2007)

- 5.23 In addition, the DCSF have also stipulated a requirement on all schools with an ‘initial specialism’, and which are seeking re-designation, that a community element is included within the SDP.

“The community element is an integral and essential part of the (Specialist Schools) programme. The community element will focus on enhancing learning and achievement, developing and extending the quality of partnerships with other schools and engaging with your [the school’s] local community through the specialism(s).” (DCSF, Re-designation Guidance, 2007)

- 5.24 The 2007 Guidance issued for schools considering taking on a HPSS option, after they have received an invitation to be involved in the HPSS programme, further affirms the importance of schools promoting outreach and greater collaboration. The guidance indicates that between 30% and 50% of the funding received to implement the HPSS option should be spent on partnership working, and that the collaboration with partner schools should contribute to improved opportunities and standards for young people. There is a need to recognise, however, that community work within the initial specialism is in a slightly different context to HPSS system wide reform outreach. We provide specific examples of how HPS schools are implementing the community element of their School Plan Annex in paragraph 5.33 below.
- 5.25 Wider stakeholders interviewed as part of the research indicated that, in their view, the community element was a key feature of the programme and that it was a ‘good fit’ with the HPSS programme. However, there appeared to be consensus that the implementation of the community aspect of the programme was generally weak, although it was beginning to show signs of improving.

¹⁸ <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/specialistschools/guidance2007>

- 5.27 From the above Figure it can be seen that HPS schools are collaborating *most* effectively with partner primary schools and *least* effectively with businesses. The Figure illustrates that effective collaboration involves consulting partners in the choice of the specialist option, and planning the activities in line with their needs and aspirations. In addition, steps should be taken to raise the profile of the specialism in order to ensure buy in, and to maximise the use of available resources. Finally, monitoring the impact of the specialism is essential, both internally (on the HPS school) and externally (on partners).
- 5.28 The following Table provides an example of this model in operation in one HPS school.

The Cycle of effective collaboration in operation in one HPS school

Stages in the cycle	Supporting evidence
Consult with partners in the choice of the specialism	"We consulted with schools through our LIG and we met with the heads of the five local schools." (Headteacher)
Assess the needs of the partners	"They were asked to be partners... their needs were assessed through the Local Authority... we hold conferences for languages and literature at the school, and we went out and spoke to the heads of departments across the local authority. The Local Authority supported and encouraged us." (Headteacher)
Plan the activities of the specialism	"It's important to listen to parties, whether partner schools, pupils or the wider community." (Headteacher) "From a history point of view, it started off 4 years ago. I spoke about my concerns about my kids. A teacher came in from the (HPS) school and talked about how we could integrate history into our lessons." (Headteacher, partner school)
Raise the profile of the specialism	"I really thought we had lost history. The school started by providing us with a project for year 6 - if you can attract the headteacher by providing the stimulus of a school, they can write it off against experience... it really has inspired our boys to write about history..." (Headteacher, partner school)
Utilise resources to meet needs	"Over 50% of our funding has been spent on outreach as opposed to 40% which is the required target. We have used the resources to improve the training of our staff and pupils which has enabled us to enhance what the children get in this school. We have also bought in extra resources for us and for the partner schools. The initial cost was high, but it has had an impact on all our schools." (Headteacher)
Monitor the impact internally and externally	"We meet once a week and monitor where we are up to. I meet the governor once a term and we brief her on what we are doing." (Head of subject specialism) "As part of our monitoring, we have planning meetings with primary and secondary schools and this has been productive." (Head of subject specialism) "After every activity we asked those involved to fill in a form. This allows us to monitor the activities we deliver to partner schools." (Class-based teacher)

- 5.29 Collaboration between HPS schools and each of the above partners is discussed in more detail overleaf.

Primary schools

- 5.30 Collaboration between HPS schools and partner primary schools appears to be most progressed. Overall, in approximately three-quarters of the HPS schools visited collaborative arrangements were in place between the HPSS and partner primary schools, and the findings would indicate that these are working well. A number of schools had worked hard to develop strong collaborative links with partner primary schools over time, and often prior to becoming part of the HPSS programme, and consequently good relationships were in place.
- 5.31 HPS schools with dedicated outreach staff appeared to be most successful at engaging primary schools and in embedding effective collaboration. In one school a Science Specialism Co-ordinator had been appointed, and it was felt that this appointment had been a key to the school's success in sustaining the engagement and participation of its feeder primary schools.

Case study: The role of a science specialism co-ordinator in promoting outreach work

School background

This school is a large 11-19 Voluntary-aided comprehensive school with a pupil enrolment of around 1,300. The school has three specialisms: languages (initial specialism); science (HPSS option) and it is a designated training school. The socio-economic status of the school is average, although the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is below average. Students' attainment on entry is a little above average.

The role of a specially appointed science specialism co-ordinator has enabled a range of positive outcomes to be achieved including better organisation within the school (e.g. properly labelled and stored resources); more events taking place inside the HPS school and outside; improved communication between the HPS school and the feeder primary schools, and; a better understanding of the needs of primary schools and greater sharing of resources across the collaborative.

Benefits	Supporting evidence
Better organisation within school	"One of the things that makes a department so efficient is your technical support at the back of it... just making it more efficient. Initially, we really lifted the science specialism by putting in place certain systems for doing things." (Science Specialism Co-ordinator)
More events to take place inside and outside school	"We have used the money to recruit a science co-ordinator. It has been a godsend because she has the non-contact hours that we don't have. We have science weeks, presentations and pupils in from other schools... which having a science co-ordinator has enabled." (Science teacher)
Improved communication between schools	"We, as administrators, are getting better at giving each other information that makes sense to the teachers at the other end (in primary schools). I have built up a very good rapport with the school secretaries in the primary schools." (Science Specialism Co-ordinator)
A better understanding of the needs of primary schools and co-ordinating the sharing of resources:	"We support the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and we looked at the experiences that they didn't have at Key Stage 2 so that we could bridge those gaps. We spoke to primary schools and one of the main things was the lack of equipment which their [primary schools'] budgets did not

Case study: The role of a science specialism co-ordinator in promoting outreach work

cover... so, we helped with that... we developed the kit and we rotated it amongst the schools. My role in that was to coordinate with the schools their timetables; what equipment we had available and what our teachers were going to provide when they went out to those primary schools.” (Science Specialism Co-ordinator)

The science specialism is having a positive impact on the primary schools and has led to an increased focus on science; improved transition arrangements and a better understanding of the curriculum and improved training and development opportunities in partner primary schools.

Benefits for partner primary schools	Supporting evidence
An increased focus on science	“I think it certainly has raised the focus of science with our feeder primary schools.” (Science specialism co-ordinator)
Improved transition arrangements and better understanding of the curriculum	“Primary outreach work is well embedded... I think the links with the primary schools make the transition easier... I think the challenge of collaborating more with Key Stage 2 is being aware of the actual scheme of work and realising what level to teach at... it has made us more aware of the overlap there was in the QCA syllabus.” (Science teacher)
Improved training and development opportunities in partner primary schools	“I sometimes deliver the lessons... sometimes we are there for the support, looking at their schemes of work and providing advice or training.” (Science teacher)

5.32 Interviewees identified some benefits of effective collaboration between HPS schools and partner primary schools.

Benefits of collaboration with partner primary schools	Supporting evidence
<p>Increasing training and development opportunities for teachers in primary schools</p> <p>Enhancing the capacity of primary schools to deliver extended and community services</p>	<p>“We have also had teachers from clusters of primaries to come train together here in ‘twilight’ sessions. That involves our staff working with a group of adults, showing them ways of teaching dance.” (Deputy headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>“The high school has provided us with the resources to plan after-school activities such as language clubs and they also help to plan lessons with our teachers. The high school is paying for some of our teachers to be trained in languages and is providing support to us to do outreach work with parents through our languages club.” (Headteacher, Partner Primary School)</p>
<p>Improving the transition of pupils</p>	<p>“That has been a real benefit as far as I am concerned... we want to make the transition of pupils from primary to secondary as smooth and as positive for them as possible.” (SENCO, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>“We have got a new bridging unit [of study] which is taught after the SATs in the feeder schools so that when they come to our school, the pupils bring that bridging unit with them. That helps with the transition.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>
<p>Acting as a resource for primary schools</p> <p>Acting as a resource for primary schools (continued)</p>	<p>“They have a certain amount of funding each year which they can buy resources with. Last year, the funding was used to buy electronics kit which is kept here, but can be borrowed by the feeder schools whenever they want it.” (Head of Science, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>“I know that they are outreaching to quite a few primary schools and they offer a lot in terms of staffing but also the incentive... the cash incentive... that is extremely useful because it is allowing us to purchase equipment that we would never have been able to get on our budget and also to get the things, the little extra things, the icing on the cake, which is necessary I think.” (Headteacher, Partnering Primary School)</p> <p>“We have substantial language help as a primary school. As we don’t receive any funding for running language lessons in school and it is becoming mandatory to do so - the secondary school has helped us to deliver this.” (Headteacher, Partnering Primary School)</p>
<p>Creating links between the HPS school, partner primary schools and the business community</p>	<p>“We do a lot of collaboration with primary schools... we are planning a primary community dinner to raise the involvement of business and get ourselves out there... we are going to invite staff from all the feeder primary schools and from local businesses to let them see what we are doing.” (Head of Learning, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates ‘to some extent’ with primary schools and ‘to some extent’ with community/wider associations in implementing their plans locally.]</p>

5.33 A number of factors were highlighted as essential to ongoing and sustained collaboration. These included:

- **Dedicated resourcing for individuals to engage meaningfully in collaborative activities:** Those schools which had a dedicated person (primary liaison co-ordinator/ subject specialism co-ordinator) to engage in collaboration with primary schools appeared to be successful at delivering this requirement of the HPSS programme. It is difficult for timetabled teachers to find the time to co-ordinate and deliver specific activities / events in primary schools in addition to their main teaching responsibilities in their school. In addition, a key role can also be played by Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) who, in some schools, may have more flexibility to work with primary schools off-timetable.

“Teachers cannot be out of school all the time. Last year, we were able to put time in for primary liaison, but it is extremely difficult. The AST role facilitates such working as the AST has more flexibility in his timetable.” (Deputy headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]

- **Understanding the needs of partner primary schools:** More than one-half of the schools visited had formal systems in place to monitor and receive feedback from partner primary schools through a variety of different mechanisms (e.g. pyramid groups of primary schools). Understanding the impact of the specialism on meeting the needs of the partner primary schools is important in the context of promoting effective outreach to primary schools.

“We have a pyramid group which is us and the feeder schools and regularly we would ask primary schools if everything is going well in terms of the service we provide them in relation to the specialisms. It’s a two-way dialogue.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]

“We monitor the impact as an annual review cycle... we ask the primary schools to feedback at any time and we use that and any other suggestions they have got to make next years plans.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]

- **Nurturing relationships between members of staff across the schools:** A fundamental aspect of collaboration is developing effective relationships between members of staff of the HPS school and their partner primary schools. This involves developing a deep understanding of the needs of each of the schools in the collaborative; ensuring that there are open lines of communication and strong relationships, and; ensuring that it is a two-way process and that there are mutual advantages for both the HPS school and partner primary schools.

Remembering collaboration to be a two-way process

“It is a two-way process. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator has learned a lot about what is needed in the primary schools and what we need from the collaboration.” (Governor, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]

Developing strong links and relationships

“We have good links and relationships with our feeder schools and I think that is important.” (Head of English, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with primary schools to implement their plans locally.]

Inspiring a culture of partnership working

“The partnership has inspired us to go into more partnerships.” (Headteacher, Partner Primary School)

Collaboration with the wider community

- 5.34 The research findings indicate that, on balance, collaboration with the wider community is more progressed than with secondary partners and with local businesses. However, the experience of schools is mixed, and a small number of schools highlighted that this was a key development objective as the Programme moves forward. The following table sets out good practice and challenges for schools with a range of specialisms in collaborating with the wider community.

Collaboration with the wider community: good practice and challenges

Type of Specialism	Good practice	Challenges
<i>Curricular</i>	<p>HPS school supports partner primary school to deliver language classes to parents with great success</p> <p>“Last year we tried a Spanish class for our primary school parents and children. We ran this as a ten-week class, but it was so popular we had to extend it. The parents like the idea of being able to learn with their children. The High School supported us to deliver this by sending us a Spanish teacher to take the class.” (Headteacher, partner primary school)</p>	<p>There has been some reluctance to get involved with the wider community</p> <p>“We haven’t used the specialism to get involved with the wider community. Our HMI visit indicated that this was very much felt as an area that we ought to look at in more detail.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Headteacher could not comment on the extent to which they collaborate with the community to deliver the objectives of HPSS]</p>
<i>Training</i>	<p>Collaborative working with community groups helps parents to support their children with homework</p> <p>“We have a lead practitioner who works with the social services department and the local study centre. She also works with local community training organisations helping parents to help their children with homework.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with the community and wider associations/agencies to implement their plans locally.]</p>	<p>Providing the community with what they want is a challenge</p> <p>“In the past we have tried doing mother and daughter things and working with computers, but people just don’t want to do that, and the problem is staffing them; how do I pay for them?” (Headteacher, HPSS, School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with the community and wider associations/agencies to implement their plans locally.]</p>
<i>SEN</i>	<p>The emergence of the first self-help group in the country for parents of teenagers with Asperger’s</p> <p>“The school has started an Asperger’s Parents’ Group which is for teenagers which is a first. We also run a community lecture programme and a communication workshop and employer mentor programme.” (Director of SEN Specialism, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with the community and wider associations/agencies to implement their plans locally.]</p>	<p>Creating links with the community is slow, and will take years to embed</p> <p>“Community involvement is one area where perhaps we haven’t done as much consulting as we maybe could have, but it is growing, but it will take years before we see the results of these links.” (Head of English, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher could not state the extent to which they collaborate with the community/wider agencies to implement their plans locally.]</p>

Secondary schools

5.35 As noted in earlier sections of this Report, progress by HPS schools in developing links with partner secondary schools has progressed relatively slowly in comparison to partner primary schools. Overall, more than three-quarters of the schools visited reported that developing productive links with partner secondary schools was much more demanding than developing links with partner primary schools.

5.36 Many schools reported low levels of engagement on the part of partner secondary school(s), despite having invested proportionately more time than invested with partner primary schools. This may be due to a number of issues, such as competition for pupil numbers and attainment levels, and resources.

“We wrote letter after letter... and said we would like to arrange a visit and discuss how we could help the secondary school... they never replied.” (Assistant headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]

“The year before, I invited pupils from other local secondary schools to come to a talk given by a couple of lecturers from a local university and very few people came. It’s quite hard to get other secondary schools involved.” (Community Co-ordinator for Languages, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]

5.37 However, some optimism was expressed that collaborative working might improve with the implementation of the 14-19 Agenda. In addition, some schools in the early stages of the programme stated that collaboration with secondary schools was a priority for their school moving forward.

“Setting up links with other secondary schools is one of the harder things... that is the thing that has taken the most time to happen.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]

“I think we have not yet grasped that opportunity but the curriculum changes that are coming on stream will make that much more easy to collaborate because everybody will be in that kind of mindset rather than it being an initiative.” (Member of Governing Body, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]

“I don’t feel that links are particularly well made.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher could not provide a response in relation the degree to which they collaborate with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]

5.38 Collaborative working with secondary schools was more progressed in schools which had a training school or vocational specialism. In the case of schools with an SEN specialism, the picture is more mixed, whilst in the remainder of schools, collaboration with secondary schools, for a whole host of reasons, appears not be functioning as well as HPS schools would like.

Type of Specialism	Mixed experience of collaboration
Training specialism	<p>Strong collaboration between all schools throughout the borough “Collaboration has increased. We have regular meetings (heads of training schools) and this helps to coordinate the collaboration that happens in the borough.” (Training School Manager, HPS school). [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>Secondary schools benefit from HPSS best practice “We became part of the West London Student Voice Hub. We are running the Hub jointly with another school. This involves other schools coming and observing and taking away best practice.” (Class-based teacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>
Vocational specialism	<p>Close collaboration with secondary schools in construction and sport “We collaborate closely with secondary schools in terms of construction and sport.” (Deputy Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher could not provide a response in relation the degree to which they collaborate with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>Joint 6th form timetable and joint report writing between Vocational Specialist schools “The Deputy Headteacher of the partner school and I work very closely with schools across the region’s learning federation. Most of the meetings I go to are joint meetings between myself and the other vocational specialist schools in the area. In fact, we have a joint 6th form timetable and we do joint report writing. There is lots of integration happening.” (Vocational coordinator, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>
SEN	<p>Mainstream schools and Special Schools collaborate to meet the needs of individual pupils and parents “Some parents actually want their kids in a special school, rather than mainstream. Some of these pupils have mental health issues and my staff are not qualified to deal with these, so we sometimes recognise that they are best suited to a residential special school... On the other hand, other parents don’t want their child in a special school... and we work with these families... we took one child to a special school but he was frightened so we took him back. We work in partnership to meet the needs of the child.” (Headteacher, Partner Secondary School)</p> <p>Geographical location impacts negatively on collaboration “Being in a rural community, there aren’t a lot of secondary schools close by. Geographically it is not so easily to get yourself transported over.” (Governor, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>Competition between schools may be a barrier to collaboration “There is also more competition between secondary school and no school likes to be told we are better at this than you are.” (Governor, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘a great extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>
Curricular specialism	<p>Using resources to collaborate with a local secondary school “... the basis of collaboration is staffing... we pay for resources for them using the funding we have received. We pay for resources in terms of staffing and we provide a Spanish language assistant to our local secondary school. Other members of our staff have been invited into their school and we have invited them to use our facilities.” (Head of languages, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their schools collaborates ‘to some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>

	<p>Collaborating with 6th form to aid the transition of pupils “...the Head of Science is working with 6th form college to understand what they are teaching at A level. He is talking to their teachers and telling them about the new science syllabus because they are not aware of the changes that have taken place. The Head of Science communicates with the 6th form colleges and tells them what we are teaching and how we are teaching it. This will enable a smoother transition for our kids when they arrive there.” (Class-based teacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their schools collaborates ‘to some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>Internal pressures on low attaining schools create barriers to collaboration “The two schools involved have been engaged, but they are both in special measures. They have lost whatever enthusiasm they had, but think they are still keen, interested and willing to be involved in the sorts of things we do...” (Headteacher, Science and Languages) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that their school collaborates to ‘some extent’ with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p> <p>“... I do have some concerns... we have struggled to get secondary schools on board, but it has not been for the lack of trying. Secondary co-operation is proving very difficult. The school is in special measures.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher could not provide a response in relation the degree to which they collaborate with secondary schools to implement their plans locally.]</p>
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5.39 The case study below illustrates how one school has used its vocational specialism to improve collaboration with other schools. The school offered some useful advice to other HPS schools.

Case study: Offering a broader curriculum - a gateway to successful collaboration	
<p>School Background The school is a non-selective single sex secondary school with around 1,200 pupils aged 11-18. The school has two specialisms: performing arts (initial specialism); and vocational learning (HPSS option). Students are from above average socio-economic backgrounds. Student attainment on entry is below average. In their last Ofsted report, they received positive feedback on the degree to which they collaborate with other providers locally and regionally: “The school’s links with the community, other schools and colleges are excellent.” (Ofsted, 2003)</p> <p>The school’s approach to collaboration The school wrote a Gateway bid with local secondary schools and FE colleges. The aim was to provide a broader offering to students through the joint delivery of vocational courses.</p>	
Collaborative approach	Supporting evidence
Examine the curriculum offer strategically	“Our collaboration was set up primarily to look at: vocational courses we offered geographically in [this region]....We have been working very closely... [with a local secondary school]. We put a gateway bid together on behalf of the ... [region’s] learning federation. It is a huge collaborative project because it has involved seventeen schools and two local colleges.” (Vocational co-ordinator)
Examine the curriculum internally	“We are starting with the creative and media diploma... and we have got the lead on that; the college hasn’t. I am really pleased about that because I think that we do have the resources and the staff base to be very successful. We are also going to run the diploma in society, health and development... the college is leading on that because they have got a Centre for Vocational Excellence.”

Case study: Offering a broader curriculum - a gateway to successful collaboration

Implement changes across the collaborative to support delivery (e.g. joint timetabling)

“Now we have split into different factions. We have got a Headteachers’ group across these seventeen schools and two colleges, who are looking at the strategic procedures that we need to put in place to run the diplomas. If we are running a diploma... and we are offering it to seventeen schools and two colleges then that has repercussions on timetables... The Headteacher’s group are looking at putting together comprehensive timetables. We already have a [regional] prospectus where every single school and college put down their offering, so any learner can now go online and say I want to do... where can I go?... That is a major impact... we are also looking at the learners and trying to work out how to get the diplomas into what we already deliver.” (Vocational co-ordinator)

The HPS school (and partner secondary school) provided a range of suggestions for other HPS schools seeking to improve their collaborative arrangements with other schools/providers. Suggestions included communicating as equals/on the same terms; taking the time to get to know each other (e.g. through the use of a joint training day), and; starting small and getting the commitment from the top.

Suggestions to improve collaboration	Supporting evidence
Communicate as equals	“We haven’t come across any form of prejudice... because I don’t think we put ourselves across that way. We are very gently, gently... It seems to me that we are collaborating on a very amicable basis at the moment... Education is not about different providers doing better than everybody else. It is about an area of the country offering a wider range of qualifications that suit the aspirations of the learners, to do that you have got to talk to each other.” (Vocational co-ordinator)
Take the time to get to know each other	“Initially we had a joint training day, which had all of the staff [from both schools] in the same place. Both of the Heads talked about the vision for the schools and then actually allowed us time. Time is the one thing that teachers never get... We did... team building exercises... there were fifty per cent [from each school] in every team... There was no agenda... What came out of that was absolutely fantastic!” (Vocational co-ordinator)
Start small and get commitment from the top	<p>“Launch the forums, even if it is minor at first; start small. It is from little tiny meetings... that much bigger things come. Use the LSC [learning and skills council], because the LSC have people that should be interested in bringing schools together. Use the Specialist Schools Academic Trust.” (Vocational co-ordinator)</p> <p>“Collaboration needs to come from the commitment of people at the top and there is a need to establish a core set of values. “(Deputy Headteacher, Partner Secondary School)</p>

Collaboration with businesses

- 5.40 The HPSS programme requires schools to engage and create partnerships with local and/or national businesses, and a proportion of the funding provided for outreach work should contribute towards achieving these objectives. It should be noted that, unlike the guidance for the wider SSP, the guidance for the HPSS programme does not require schools to raise additional funding or sponsorship from businesses.
- 5.41 Overall the findings would suggest that collaboration with businesses has not progressed significantly as a result of schools entering the HPSS programme. Schools identified a number of challenges, which centre on effective marketing of the school to the business community.

Collaboration with businesses - the challenge of marketing the school

Businesses are unclear about what engagement with schools can offer

"I think the biggest challenge is the one we had with the first specialism and we have still not cracked it - that is the involvement of businesses...I don't know if businesses know what they want and I don't think we can guess what businesses want. I have one of our languages teachers trying to approach businesses to see if there is any way we can support them."
(Deputy Headteacher, HPS school)

School offers languages classes to local businesses but no uptake

"We lay on languages in the evening and we have sent out an invitation to all the businesses and industries in the local community. None of the people from business has attended, but at least we made it available to them." (Head of Languages, HPS school)

Businesses are sympathetic but schools struggle to get them on board

"There is not much involvement with business. They are mostly not interested. I think the reality is that many schools struggle to get business involvement. They are sympathetic enough but when it comes down to it, we haven't been particularly successful."
(Headteacher, HPS school)

- 5.42 However, there are some emerging examples of good practice in schools with training and vocational specialisms. Moreover, it would appear that collaboration is more effective where a dedicated individual has been employed for the purposes of developing business links, as the following case study indicates.

Case study: A clear strategy for engaging with local businesses

School Background

The school is a non-selective single-sex secondary school with around 1,200 pupils aged 11-18. The school has a vocational HPSS option. Students are from above average socio-economic backgrounds. Student attainment on entry is below average.

The school have used some of the funding for their vocational specialism to appoint a Careers and Business Partnership Manager. This additional resource has been well received by existing staff and is viewed as pivotal in developing the school's business links. The school identified a number of benefits the appointment has had for the school including the coordination of work experience placements and development of relationships with employers; providing a dedicated point of contact for businesses, and; ensuring that pupils get the appropriate skills and development.

Benefits	Supporting evidence
Co-ordination of work experience placements and developing relationships	"He gives a lot of careers advice; he works in partnership with our local Connexions officer... He operates an 'open door' drop-in policy with the kids and he informs new staff of where their learners can go [for work experience] and how they can do that. He also informs new staff of relevant, up-to-date employers who will come in and talk to our students." (Vocational co-ordinator)
A dedicated point of contact for local businesses	"I have been absolutely amazed by the businesses I have approached and how helpful they want to be, because of the time. The most common comment that is made to me is, 'at last we have got somebody to talk to.'... There are still difficult areas. There are certain industries that are very 'stand-offish, but we are cracking it. We will get there... I am amazed because I have come here thinking that it would be difficult, but actually it has been an open door." (Careers and Business Partnership Manager)
Positive impacts for staff, pupils and teaching and learning in the school.	"He is such a major help to me." (Class-based teacher) "He is getting enterprise going in the school... He is meeting local employers, getting them involved in the school. He is sorting out work placements, which are much more relevant... Going out there and exploring the personal development skills that these learners need." (Vocational co-ordinator)

The school offered a small number of suggestions for other schools wishing to improve their business links including:

- *Ensure there is a named contact in the school that is available:*

"The feedback that has come back from businesses is to ensure that there is a named person in the school, who is available. Because dealing with a school is probably not their priority. They will ring once and if you are not there, that is it!" (Careers and Business Partnership Manager)

- *Ensure that the person has a relevant business background:*

"The other thing is that that person must have business experience. They must understand business protocols... Schools by their nature have to plan everything in advance... businesses don't work that way... Schools need to understand that this is an extra thing for businesses, so do not push them." (Careers and Business Partnership Manager)

- 5.43 A small number of other schools were working to effectively market their HPSS option:

Working to effectively market the HPSS option
<p>Using the initial specialism to secure business links</p> <p>“We are working with our community links for our initial specialism, and we are currently offering courses in the Chinese language to Engineering employers in the city, as they indicated they wanted this. We are also branching out into the Tourist industry, which involves translating material.” (Director of specialisms, HPS school)</p>
<p>Taking the initiative to create links with businesses</p> <p>“We have formed some links with businesses. The Head of Science had organised a science fair, which is partly about careers and enhancing careers in science. The initiative for involving businesses come from us rather than outside.” (Headteacher, HPS school)</p>

Wider Government Initiatives

- 5.44 Over one-half of all interviewees agreed that the HPSS programme had already contributed or had the capacity to contribute towards the achievement of wider Government policy agendas including the 14-19 Agenda; Workforce Remodelling Agenda; Extended Schools Programme, and Every Child Matters. The following table summarises the range of positive impacts identified.

Contribution of HPSS to wider Government initiatives

Policy agenda	Key point	Supporting evidence
14-19	HPSS has led to the creation of specialist diplomas	<p>“It has contributed massively to the 14-19 Agenda... our science (HPSS option) will play a significant part in the development of a specialist diploma although our vocational specialism will lead on it.” (Headteacher, HPSS School) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that HPSS contributed ‘to a great extent’ in terms of its contribution to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives]</p> <p>“14-19 is a key Government agenda. We are using the specialism to deliver a vocational element across our languages department.” (Head of Languages, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that HPSS contributed ‘to a great extent’ in terms of its contribution to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives]</p>
Workforce Remodelling Agenda	The HPSS option has enabled staff to take on enhanced roles and responsibilities	<p>“There is some degree of workforce remodelling and workforce development and that is around roles and responsibilities of key personnel... it’s more about people taking on enhanced roles and functions in schools.” (Stakeholder consultation)</p> <p>“It will lead to wider workforce reform... the major contribution is split between ITT and CPD... but the high performing school will also be very involved in the training of the wider workforce.” (Stakeholder consultation)</p>

Policy agenda	Key point	Supporting evidence
Extended Schools Programme	HPSS specialism has enhanced extra-curricular activities	<p>“It definitely contributes towards the extended schools policy. In terms of science, the school takes the pupils and their families away for a weekend in the science museum and they have a range of after school clubs.” (Headteacher, Partnering Primary School)</p> <p>“We are part of a local community group. We meet with local primary heads also in relation to the Extended Schools Programme. We work heavily with primary schools in relation to our sport - so we already had the link. We teach languages in 24 primary schools. And now with humanities we have a massive input to providing extended services to schools in the area.” (Headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that HPSS contributed ‘to some extent’ in terms of its contribution to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives]</p>
Every Child Matters	The Every Child Matters is at the centre of everything we do	<p>“Collaboration is vital and Every Child Matters is right at the centre of everything we do... we cannot offer everything and we need to be able to signpost our children to make sure that they make the most of the education that is supplied to them.” (Deputy headteacher, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that HPSS contributed ‘to a great extent’ in terms of its contribution to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives]</p> <p>“Because I am tracking children throughout the system, Every Child Matters is core to this. That is what my work is all about... at primary level right through to adolescence - developing relationships and improving communication and easing transition for pupils.” (Communication and Interaction Co-ordinator, HPS school) [Note: Overall, the headteacher believed that HPSS contributed ‘to some extent’ in terms of its contribution to the achievement of wider Government policy objectives]</p>

Summary

5.45 The purpose of this chapter was to examine the impact of the HPSS programme upon a range of stakeholders including pupils; members of staff in the high performing school; members of staff in partner schools, and; the wider community. The key findings of this chapter are set out below.

- Four-fifths of respondents indicated that involvement in the programme had already impacted on **raising pupils’ aspirations**. This was evidence by improved motivation and behaviour. In addition, around two-thirds of headteachers stated that the HPSS programme had contributed to **improved pupil attainment and achievement**; however, some believed that it was too early in the programme to comment;
- A small number of interviewees (mainly those schools with a **SEN HPSS option**) emphasised the importance of measuring the impact of the programme upon **achievement** as well as attainment, as this was an important measure for pupils with SEN;

- Approximately one-half of interviewees stated that **recruitment and retention** of staff had improved since taking on the high performing role, whilst one-half believed that it had stayed the same. None of the headteachers interviewed believed that recruitment and/or retention had got more difficult;
- Schools were positive about the opportunities that the programme was providing to enhance and extend **training and development opportunities** for the staff, with approximately four-fifths of headteachers indicating that training and development opportunities had improved as a direct result of involvement in the programme;
- Whilst staff **workload** appeared to have increased in around two-thirds of the schools visited (in particular the Director of Specialism(s) and class teachers), many interviewees stated that job satisfaction had simultaneously improved, and that this more than offset the increased workload. Increased workload was associated with entering the programme and embedding the specialism and it was expected that the additional workload would subside once the specialism was up and running;
- Over 90% of headteachers indicated that the **curricular choice** available to pupils had improved as a result of the HPSS option, and a similar proportion (90%) agreed that personalised learning opportunities for pupils had also improved;
- A cycle of effective **collaboration** was identified from the research. Factors for successful collaboration include:
 - Consultation in the choice of specialism;
 - Assessing the needs of partners;
 - Planning the activities of the specialism;
 - Raising the profile of the specialisms;
 - Utilising resources to meet needs; *and*
 - Monitoring the impact internally and externally.
- Schools were collaborating most effectively with partner **primary schools**, and least effectively with local businesses. Benefits of collaboration with primary schools included providing training and development opportunities for staff, improving the transition of pupils, and providing additional resources. There were examples of effective collaboration with the **wider community** in schools with a curricular specialism, schools with a SEN specialism and in training schools. These tended to focus on activities for parents. There were challenges around creating effective links with the community, and assessing their needs. Collaborative working with **secondary schools** was most progressed in schools which had training school or vocational specialism. The main challenge of collaborating with **businesses** centred upon the need to effectively market the specialism; *and*
- Over one-half of interviewees believed that HPSS programme had the potential to contribute to the achievement of **wider Government objectives**, including the 14-19 agenda, the workforce remodelling agenda, extended schools and Every Child Matters.

6 Conclusions

Introduction

6.1 This Interim Report has provided an overview of the key findings emerging from the first year of the evaluation of the HPSS Programme. It is too early, at this point of the evaluation, to provide sufficient evidence about the overall effectiveness of the programme. Therefore, the findings should be treated as preliminary, indicative and subject to further refinement in next year's Report. This remainder of this Chapter is structured as follows:

- Summary of key findings;
- Suggestions as the programme moves forward; *and*
- Next steps.

Summary of key findings

- 6.2 Entry to the HPSS programme presented few challenges to the majority of schools involved in the research, apart from non-HPSS training schools where it was indicated that obtaining and maintaining high attainment levels may pose a challenge. The advice and support provided to schools in relation to taking on their HPSS option was good for the majority of interviewees, apart from schools with a SEN HPSS option. The timescales appeared to be challenging for around one-half of all schools. Most interviewees indicated that the funding received had been delegated to the Director of Specialism specifically for the benefit of the specialism, and was sufficient to meet the school's aims for the HPSS option as set out in the School Plan Annex.
- 6.3 The degree of implementation of the programme is linked to when the school joined the programme, their objectives for the programme and whether they have been able to engage collaboratively with their partners. Schools were adopting a number of approaches to the delivery of the HPSS option including a strategic approach; a focused approach and a whole school approach. All of the schools in the sample had internal monitoring procedures in place. However, monitoring the impact of the specialism by the HPS school on partner schools was not taking place to any great extent. Three key factors were impacting on the implementation of the programme: resourcing, communication, and collaboration; these were acting as barriers or enablers, depending on how schools were managing each of these factors.
- 6.4 In terms of impact, the findings suggest that the HPSS programme is contributing to improving pupil aspirations, attainment and achievement. Recruitment and retention of staff has improved in one-half of the schools visited, since entering the programme, and has stayed the same in the remaining schools. Since entering the programme, staff workload has increased in most of the schools visited (particularly during the planning and at the early stages of delivery); however, job satisfaction has simultaneously improved.

- 6.5 Schools were positive about the opportunities that the programme had provided to enhance training and development opportunities for staff. The vast majority of headteachers indicated that curricular choice and the ability to personalise the curriculum had improved as a result of the introduction of the HPSS option. The implementation of the outreach element of the HPSS programme is most extensively developed with partner primary schools and the community, and least developed with secondary schools and businesses.

Suggestions as the programme moves forward

- 6.6 The following issues may be useful to consider as the programme moves forward:
- More appropriate information and support should be provided for schools taking on an HPSS SEN option at the application and entry stage;
 - The criteria for entry to the programme, linked to attainment targets, might provide challenges to some training schools which entered the programme before HPSS alignment;
 - HPS schools should note the good practice in implementation, which appears to be linked to effective planning *prior* to the additional funding coming on board, and planning with the needs of the wider community in mind;
 - HPS schools should continue to effectively collaborate with partner primary schools; however, more attention should be given to collaborating with businesses and secondary schools; the latter is most progressed in training schools and schools with a vocational HPSS option;
 - Effective monitoring procedures for assessing the impact of the specialism in partner schools need to be put in place by HPS schools; *and*
 - Achievement (rather than attainment) is a more appropriate measure of impact for pupils with SEN.

Next steps in the evaluation

- 6.7 Year 2 of the research will investigate schools which have been operating with HPSS status for longer than two years. The fieldwork will be conducted in 10 of the 25 schools visited as part of the Year 1 research. In addition, a census survey of HPS schools will be carried out, together with a stakeholder consultation exercise.
- 6.8 The fieldwork will build on the findings of this Interim Report and will focus in more detail on the following key areas:
- The impact of the high performing role on schools and their partners more widely- what would be possible/practical? Increased take-up, on the subject of specialism for example;
 - The impact of HPSS status on the school's initial specialism;
 - The extent to which the new role is embedded throughout the school and more widely through partner schools;
 - Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on raising schools' aspirations, relative to those schools with an initial specialism only;

- Further evidence on the impact HPSS has had on curriculum provision, relative to schools with an initial specialism only; and
- Evidence on shared good practice between schools.

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