

November 2009

Dear Colleague

## **SCHOOLS OF AMBITION RESEARCH REPORT**

Please find enclosed the Schools of Ambition Annual Research Report for 2009. Schools of Ambition (SofA) aims to promote transformational change in secondary schools. The report provides an informative insight into the progress of Schools of Ambition programme schools from the perspective of practitioners themselves.

We hope that sharing the experiences of some of the other Schools of Ambition can help you in the process of improving the educational outcomes and experiences of young people.

Although very readable the report is quite lengthy and I would like to draw your attention to the introductory Executive Summary and the attached one page summary. If you would like to discuss the report further please contact Deirdre Kelly, Schools of Ambition research co-ordinator at [Deirdre.Kelly@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Deirdre.Kelly@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone 07544 568830. If you have any questions on Schools of Ambition policy please contact John Bissett (Programme Manager) at [John.Bissett@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:John.Bissett@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone 0131 244 0790.

Yours sincerely



**CHRIS REILLY**  
Policy Adviser

## **Summary of main points arising from 3<sup>rd</sup> Schools of Ambition Annual Report (2009)**

### **Leading change**

School leaders emphasised the importance of developing strategies to foster ownership and collective responsibility. All schools now showed a close alignment between Transformation plans and Improvement plans. Schools with a strong focus on values and collective responsibility are more likely to invest in professional development and relationships, as well as engaging in distributive leadership.

### **Professional development**

Taking forward a number of significant developments catalyses the formation of adaptive cultures, with many schools forming cross curriculum working groups. All schools reported a greater focus on in-house CPD, and a number of Head-teachers reported increased interest in positions of responsibility.

### **CfE readiness**

Senior managers reported that participation in SoA accelerated their capacity to address the CfE challenges. The formation of school project teams, the provision of enhanced in-school CPD and peer learning were highlighted as key elements in developing staff confidence.

### **Sustainability**

The majority of SoA initiatives are seen as sustainable, notably those premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change. Provision of pupils' residential experiences cited as the least sustainable.

### **Building networks of support**

Networking among SoA schools is well established. Interviewees were unanimous in their support for the formal and informal networking activities of the programme and expressed strong desire for maintaining links beyond the programme.

### **Working with external partners**

Business links are still challenging, but the school-college partnership has proven particularly fruitful with many schools involved in curriculum enhancement initiatives with local colleges and employers. Parental engagement and improved primary transition requires continuing work by most schools.

### **Integration of innovation and evaluation**

Whilst a wider group of staff have become involved in research and evaluation, overall numbers are still small. Evaluators are fairly confident in using a range of research and evaluation activities, and almost all respondents claimed evidence of a positive impact on transformational objectives.

The Telling the Story portfolios submitted by T1 schools varied considerably in format and content, with a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence provided. In many cases there is a disconnect between data and commentary in the text, and whilst there is a rich provision of qualitative evidence in a number of the reports, the contribution and place of images and testimonies is not always clear.

### **Inhibitors and accelerants identified in school feedback**

- *Inhibitors*; Competing priorities, staff shortages/turnover, cynicism, protracted liaison with external contractors, local authority firewalls and bandwidths
- *Accelerants*; Additional resources, time for project co-ordination, devolved leadership opportunities, peer-led CPD, curriculum flexibility and provision of networking opportunities

### **Learning issues for support identified in school feedback**

Teacher evaluators were fairly confident in undertaking a wide range of evaluation activities they were less confident in the analysis. Compilation of the Telling the story portfolio and support for report writing were also highlighted as particular priorities for mentors and Government advisor support.

### **Summary**

The holistic experience of planning adopting and reflecting on change involving a high proportion of the school community over a period of time leaves many of the schools better placed to response to the opportunities and challenges of full implementation of CfE. A strength of the programme appears to be the development of collaborative and collegial forms of professional learning, however, consistent integration of innovation and evaluation is an area for continued development.



University  
of Glasgow



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## **RESEARCH TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS OF AMBITION**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2009**

2nd October 2009



**The Scottish  
Government**

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The research team also wishes to extend thanks to all the teachers within the Schools of Ambition who provided the data on which this report is based through mentor visits, completing questionnaires and participating in interviews.

The research team extends its thanks to Professor Vivienne Baumfield, University of Glasgow, for her work in developing a supplementary reflexive strand to this work.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

1. This report is the third annual report of *Research to Support Schools of Ambition* (2006-10)<sup>1</sup>. The research was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department in August 2006. The overall aim of the research is to:
  - explore and describe the process of change implementation and adoption
  - identify factors that enable or inhibit transformation
  - address the concept of 'distance travelled'
  - explore issues relating to sustainability of the programme
  - share the wider lessons learnt about the process and impact of school transformation with the education community, policy makers and other stakeholders.

The policy context has been dynamic and in close consultation with the Research Advisory Group and the Scottish Government Schools of Ambition support team, additional foci have been included in the third annual report. This includes a focus on *Curriculum for Excellence*. The third annual report notably draws on the perspective of members of the leadership teams in tranche two and three schools.

2. The Schools of Ambition programme sought to enable schools to stand out in their locality, and nationally, as innovators and leaders providing ambition and opportunity for young people (SEED, 2004, 2006). In 2005 schools were invited to apply through their local authority, with support from the Scottish Government, for additional resources (£100,000 per annum over a three-year period) to implement a locally negotiated plan for transformational change. Selected schools were invited to join the programme at three points: twenty-one schools joined in June 2005 (tranche one), seven schools joined in April 2006 (tranche two) and a third tranche of twenty-four schools joined the programme in March 2007, making a total of fifty-two Schools of Ambition distributed across the thirty-two local authorities of Scotland.
3. The schools receive support from a team of nine 'mentors' based at the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen. The mentors provide support in the design of evaluation strategies to help schools assess the impact of interventions developing from the transformational plan. In addition, each school has a key link person or Adviser from the Scottish Government Support Team. Regular meetings are held with the mentor and Adviser throughout the transformation period (and where possible joint meetings are held).
4. The first tranche of Schools of Ambition have now completed their supported journey over a three-year period (2005-08). Illustrative examples of the approaches undertaken and emerging outcomes can be found in the publication, *Schools of Ambition Leading Change* (Scottish Government, April 2009)<sup>2</sup>. Further

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<sup>1</sup> The 2007 and 2008 Annual Reports are available from:  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/schoolsofambitionresearch.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/30095118/0>

details are contained in accounts produced by the schools, referred to as the *Telling the Story* portfolios, available via the Learning and Teaching Scotland web-link, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition>.

5. This report addresses the process of change undertaken by tranches two and three during the period August 2008 – June 2009. The report draws on two main sources of data: a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with 35 key personnel who hold leadership responsibility in the 31 tranche two and three schools; and an online questionnaire completed by 34 school staff leading evaluation activities in these schools. It is notable that members of the leadership teams in each school returned questionnaire responses predominantly. Twenty-eight of the thirty-four respondents (82%) were in promoted posts, including headteachers, deputies, principal teachers and faculty heads (see pages 16-17). The research team collected data over a four-month period between March and June 2009.

### ***Key findings***

#### ***Leading change***

6. Accounts offered during interviews held in the summer of 2009 suggest a close alignment of the School of Ambition transformational plan with the school improvement plan at this stage in the programme. There is not a perception of the two plans as separate documents. A close alignment between the two plans was not consistently reported by schools in the Annual Report 2008.
7. School leaders emphasised the importance of balancing locally identified and externally generated development priorities. Some school leaders among tranches two and three suggested that Schools of Ambition activities should be seen to grow from locally identified needs, rather than appear 'reactive' to external influences.
8. School leaders within many of the Schools of Ambition stressed the importance of formulating strategies likely to foster a sense of collective ownership and professional responsibility for achieving the goals of the transformational plan. Whilst stating aspirations for transformational change, interviewees acknowledged that culture building was an enduring challenge that required constant attention.
9. Culture building through incremental change was regarded as important in overcoming initial reservations among the wider school staff around 'evaluation'. For some teachers, the extension of self-evaluation processes across the school - especially peer observation and pupil involvement in evaluation strategies - was initially associated with intrusive 'checking up'. Where senior managers had afforded attention to sharing ideas and promoting dialogue around the purposes of evaluation, there was a reported reduction in this perception.



10. For some schools, a strong focus on school values, and collective responsibility for their enactment in the day-day work of the organisation, informed cycles of development action. In these schools, greater recourse was made to notions of distributive leadership. Improvement action in these contexts was connected with the development of human resources and the enhancement of professional relationships as much as enhancement of the school curriculum and the school estate.
11. Whilst many school initiatives have promoted and achieved high participation rates among staff, evaluation activities aligned to these developments continue to be concentrated among a minority of senior staff in several schools.

### ***Professional development***

12. Analysis of interview transcripts suggests that taking forward a number of significant (successive and concurrent) developments across a three-year period supports the development of adaptive cultures within the Schools of Ambition. To support the process of change, several of the schools gave space and time to working groups that drew membership from across curriculum areas and positions of seniority.
13. Involvement with Schools of Ambition research and evaluation activities appears to be positively associated with informants' professional development. A majority of questionnaire respondents (82%) indicated that their evaluation role had an impact *to some extent* (53%) or *to a significant extent* (29%) on their professional development. A small number indicated that they were actively considering accreditation for the work they were undertaking as part of the School of Ambition.
14. Most interviewees in tranches two and three reported a greater focus on the development of in-house Continuing Professional Development (CPD) during the transformational period. It was commonly acknowledged that negotiating challenges during periods of significant change required enhanced levels of site-based support. In addition to within school peer development, *between* school peer development has been encouraged through effective networking initiated through the Schools of Ambition programme.
15. The openness to peer observation demonstrated by many recent entrants to the profession, apparently developed during initial teacher education and induction, was regarded as supportive of change efforts.
16. Senior managers frequently suggested that the allocation of innovation budgets through an in-house competitive bidding process encouraged a wider range of teachers to engage with the change process, assume new responsibilities, and enhance their professional skills. In some cases, it was suggested that opportunities for teacher leadership and incentives for departments helped to 're-engage' teachers.
17. A small number of headteachers reported increased levels of interest in positions of responsibility in their school over the three-year period of support. Some

schools had created promoted posts in relation to School of Ambition. It was suggested that these fixed-term posts helped teachers to attain further promotion (within the school or another school) on conclusion of School of Ambition funding.

### ***Curriculum for Excellence readiness***

18. Among tranche two and three school leaders, the School of Ambition programme was commonly regarded as a catalyst that accelerated development work around *Curriculum for Excellence* and the four capacities. Senior managers reported that participation in the Schools of Ambition programme had equipped them to approach full implementation of the revised school curriculum with a higher degree of confidence. The formation of project teams with innovation and evaluation roles, the provision of enhanced in-school CPD and peer learning through networking opportunities were regarded as likely to support full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The Schools of Ambition are distinctive in that they have been engaged in processes of supported change for an extended period and have committed resources to building capacity to sustain change. Ten Schools of Ambition have provided twelve illustrative case studies for the *Journey to Excellence* website. Several school leaders commented on the promotion of connections across the curriculum through the work of in-school curriculum development groups.

### ***Sustainability***

19. The additional resource made available through Schools of Ambition was significant in enabling particular aspects of some schools' transformation (such as changes to the built environment and access to external training provision). Schools of Ambition funding is limited to three years and some school leaders argued that ambitious plans required a longer development and evaluation cycle.
20. The sustainability of initiatives depends in part on the choices that schools made about how to deploy the additional resource made available through the Schools of Ambition programme. The majority of comments offered in questionnaire responses suggest that Schools of Ambition activities are largely sustainable, and in some cases led to unexpected further developments as the initiatives gained impetus and drew attention from other organisations.
21. Interviewees in the final year of the programme stressed the importance of connecting work originally associated with Schools of Ambition with the on-going development priorities of the school and the day-to-day work of teachers. Some headteachers described a movement from innovation to internalisation as new practices became embedded. Members of the leadership group in tranches two and three generally recognised the need for a shift in perception of Schools of Ambition from a 'programme', 'initiative' or 'scheme', to an understanding of this work as grounded in school values and committed to the furtherance of school improvement action.
22. Some individual schools and clusters of schools invested resources in the appointment of a designated Coordinator or Project Manager. Two of the tranche

three schools expressed concern about the longer-term viability of development work initiated through Schools of Ambition if future funding to secure a Coordinator post or to protect time for the lead teacher could not be identified from other sources.

23. Residential experiences provided through pupil leadership academies were identified by several schools as an area that could be difficult to sustain without significant additional resource from external sponsors. Schools were pursuing funding applications on an annual basis to a range of charities and trusts.
24. Aspects that were regarded as more sustainable were initiatives premised on attitudinal, relational, or pedagogical change such as Learn to Learn, or strategies based on changes to school policy such as parental engagement. These changes were cited as being the least resource-driven.

### ***Building networks of support***

25. Networking among Schools of Ambition and the sharing of good practice is well established, at both formal and informal levels. There are examples of effective links between Schools of Ambition and other schools, although the reported level of interest, support and involvement from local authorities varied.
26. Interviewees were unanimous in their support for the formal and informal networking activities initiated through Schools of Ambition. The community built through active participation in Schools of Ambition networking events extended peer learning within schools to peer learning between schools. Strong support was expressed for maintaining links beyond the lifecycle of the programme.

### ***Working with external partners***

27. Engaging the *business community* in sustainable initiatives has proven to be an enduring challenge for many schools, especially those located in areas with few larger industries and neighbouring schools that were seeking similar arrangements. The local business community is most commonly involved through established aspects of enterprise education, including the provision of vocational experiences.
28. *Partnership work with primary schools* has been enhanced in some schools through an extension of pupil-led leadership academies for children in local primary schools and further development of work to support transition.
29. Partnerships have also been forged with local constabularies, universities, charities, Arts organisations such as the National Theatre, professional football and rugby clubs and community sports providers, as well as training providers such as the Scottish Outward Bound Association, Columba 1400 and Brathay.
30. *School-college partnership* has proven particularly fruitful, with many schools routinely involved in curriculum enhancement initiatives with local colleges and

employers. Brechin High School (tranche two) was awarded an SQA Star Award<sup>3</sup> for Innovation in November 2008 for partnership work with Angus College and Forfar Roofing.

31. *Parental engagement* is an area cited as requiring continuing work by a number of schools. This was mentioned in annual interviews by a minority of school leaders in all three tranches.
32. *Local authorities* varied in the extent to which they actively sought to share the work and experiences of the Schools of Ambition within the authority.
33. There is little evidence to indicate that schools have developed links with external organisations or individuals for research support, beyond the university mentors.

### ***Patterns of engagement in research and evaluation***

34. There is some evidence to suggest that a wider group of staff have become actively involved in schools' research and evaluation, but the overall proportion of staff involved in evaluation activities is relatively small. The majority of respondents (18) reported that the proportion of school staff involved in evaluation activities in their school in the 2008-09 session was *less than 15%*.
35. Several schools reported that recruitment of a higher proportion of school staff and maintaining rates of active participation across a number of concurrent projects was a challenge.
36. Where groups of staff have become actively involved in school research and evaluation, the involvement of pupils and parents as active participants is less evident.

### ***Evaluation activities***

37. Responses to the questionnaire suggest that teacher evaluators are fairly confident in using a range of research and evaluation activities in schools. Questionnaire surveys are the method of choice, with all informants indicating their use (34). Focus groups (29) and individual interviews (27) were also popular methods. Among the least frequently deployed activities were surveys generated by other researchers (5), and parent consultative groups (6).

### ***School use of evaluative data***

38. Almost all informants claimed some evidence of a positive impact on their transformational objectives. Areas most frequently identified as having a significant impact included: assessing the impact of School of Ambition activities on pupils' confidence or motivation (15 respondents); and assessing the impact of School of Ambition activities on pupil achievement (13). Just over one third of

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<sup>3</sup> Further information see: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/32389.726.html>

respondents indicated that research and evaluation activities had led to some modification of the school's original transformational plan.

39. A majority of questionnaire respondents indicated that their involvement with Schools of Ambition evaluation activities had increased their capacity to integrate research approaches in everyday practice.

### ***Telling the Story***

40. The Telling the Story portfolios submitted by tranche one schools vary considerably in format and content but typically describe the range of School of Ambition activities, the challenges that were addressed and provide some comment on impact. A range of quantitative evidence is provided including attainment, destinations, attendance and exclusions, level of complaints/referrals and participation rates across initiatives. A minority of reports draw on pre- and post- programme surveys
41. The data sources included in portfolio appendices are not always interpreted well in the main body of the report. In some cases, statements indicating rising attainment levels, improved pupil destinations and community involvement cannot be verified because there is no clear data available in the report to test these claims. This is a weakness in the reporting style of several of the tranche one portfolios.
42. Some portfolios include qualitative feedback from parents, pupils and others. Sources of evaluation evidence include focus group discussions, individual interviews, formal and informal observation reports and vignettes of pupil and staff leadership experiences. Some schools made use of available published records such as HMLe reports or local newspaper reports.
43. Photographs, videos and written testimonies form a significant part of the overall evidence presented in several tranche one portfolios. Whilst these are accessible, they are in themselves insufficient without further commentary. The contribution and place of images and testimonies within a planned formative evaluation strategy is not always clear.
44. At the time of the interviews, the tranche two and three schools varied in the level of planning and preparation undertaken for submitting their Telling the Story e-portfolio in December 2009 (tranche two) and March 2010 (tranche three). In May 2009, some tranche two schools did not have advanced plans for compiling the portfolio, which aims to document their supported journey over the three-year life cycle of Schools of Ambition.
45. All of the tranche two and three schools were planning to use digital video and photography in their portfolios and had received guidance from the Research Support Team. There was a tendency within tranche one submissions to use digital imagery as standalone illustration and it is not clear that schools in subsequent tranches intend to adopt a more analytical approach.

46. Pupil contributions to the school portfolios are planned, with some schools encouraging pupil participation in the design and production process.
47. In some schools, it appears that evaluation has emerged as a focus of attention in the final year of the three-year period of support. Among some schools in all three tranches, there is an assumption that development planning and implementation proceeds separately from the formulation of an evaluation strategy.

### ***Learning issues identified in school feedback***

48. School staff reported that progress was accelerated by a combination of the following factors: availability of additional resource, dedicated time for project coordination, devolved leadership opportunities, peer-led CPD, curriculum flexibility, and the provision of networking opportunities.
49. School staff commonly reported that progress was hindered by a combination of the following factors: competing priorities; staff shortages and turnover; cynicism and lack of 'buy-in' by some staff, protracted liaison with external contractors, local authority firewalls and bandwidths limiting the range and speed of web-based applications.

### ***Learning issues for support***

50. The majority of questionnaire respondents were at least *fairly confident* in undertaking a wide range of evaluation activities including determining research priorities, designing or conducting quantitative and qualitative methods. However, teacher evaluators reported lower levels of confidence in their capacity to analyse qualitative and quantitative data. Compilation of the Telling the Story portfolio and support for report writing were highlighted as particular priorities for mentor support.

## **Summary**

51. School staff with responsibility for Schools of Ambition have reflected on the 'distance travelled' during the period of funded support according to a range of indicators. These include development and improvement action related to curriculum and pedagogy, outcomes for learners, professional development of the wider school staff, school culture and ethos, changes to the school estate, and work with external partners. The Scottish Government team of Advisors, working in collaboration with university-based mentors, has facilitated this process of reflection through regular school-based meetings and the provision of highly effective networking events. Whilst there is evidence of a developing research orientation to the implementation of change in some schools, consistent integration of innovation and evaluation is an area for continuing development. A significant future development would be an extended notion of reflective practice to include systematic professional enquiry that is cyclical, formative and collectively undertaken. A strength of the Schools of Ambition programme appears to be the development of collaborative and collegial forms of professional learning to promote and sustain positive change for learners. The experience of planning, adopting and reflecting on change involving a high

proportion of the school community over a period of time leaves many of the schools better placed to respond to the opportunities and challenges of full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The capacity of all of the Schools of Ambition to respond to these challenges would be further enhanced by the integration of innovation and enquiry that is currently evident among just some of them.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. *Background*

This report is the third annual report of *Research to Support Schools of Ambition* (2006-10)<sup>4</sup>. The research was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department in August 2006. The overall aim of the research is to:

- explore and describe the process of change implementation and adoption
- identify factors that enable or inhibit transformation
- address the concept of 'distance travelled'
- explore issues relating to sustainability of the programme
- share the wider lessons learnt about the process and impact of school transformation with the education community, policy makers and other stakeholders.

During 2004/05, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) announced the 'Schools of Ambition' (SoA) programme. The aim of the programme is that Schools of Ambition will stand out in their locality, and nationally, as innovators and leaders, providing ambition and opportunity for young people (SEED, 2004, 2006). The Schools of Ambition has supported 52 schools distributed across the 32 Local Authorities of Scotland. Each school (or cluster of schools, see below) is receiving additional funding (£100,000 per annum) over a three-year period to implement a plan for transformational change. Whilst each school is different, common themes have emerged in the transformational plans (see appendix one):

- leadership development
- enhancing choice through curriculum flexibility, especially opportunities for vocational learning
- developing pupils' confidence and motivation
- strengthening community involvement.

The policy document *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (SEED, 2004) set out a modernisation agenda for the creation of 'truly excellent' comprehensive schools in Scotland. *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (SEED, 2004:2) presents a vision of schools that are 'rich, colourful and diverse, offering choice for pupils and with ambition for themselves and for each and every one of their pupils'. The agenda for action involves:

- heightened expectations, stronger leadership and ambition
- more freedom for teachers and schools
- greater choice and opportunity for pupils
- better support for learning
- tougher, intelligent accountabilities.

The modernisation agenda gave greater freedom to teachers and schools to tailor learning to the needs of their pupils. Within a framework of national guidance, schools are encouraged to explore flexible, creative and innovative approaches to

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<sup>4</sup> The 2007 and 2008 Annual Reports are available from:  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/schoolsofambition/about/schoolsofambitionresearch.asp>



school improvement (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2003). Many of the Schools of Ambition are engaged in curriculum restructuring as a result of the flexibility afforded by these reforms. In contrast to 'outside-in' forms of evaluation, the Schools of Ambition hold responsibility for collecting and analysing evaluation information that will map 'distance travelled'. Teacher-researchers in each school have taken responsibility for discrete evaluation strands and are collecting and analysing information to map progress toward the achievement of locally-defined goals. A commitment to self-evaluation and compliance with monitoring and review procedures is a condition of the award.

The policy context has been dynamic. Transformational Plans, for example, have increasingly to relate to *Curriculum for Excellence*. The research team has been in frequent discussion with the Research Advisory Group and the Scottish Government Schools of Ambition support team. This has led to changes in foci, including a focus on *Curriculum for Excellence* in the 2009 Annual Report.

## **1.2. Involvement of the Research Support Team**

Following a competitive tendering process, SEED (now the Scottish Government Schools' Directorate) commissioned a team of researchers from the Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Strathclyde to support research and evaluation activities in the schools through a combination of face-to-face and e-mentoring (using a virtual research and collaboration environment, VRE). Integral to the support strategy is the streaming of feedback to the schools and the wider education community in a sustained dialogue throughout the life cycle of the programme (2006-2010).

The detail of the programme of support in each school is negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Rather than offer a formulaic 'one-size-fits-all' model of support, the mentors adopt a flexible model of engagement in order to meet the diverse needs of the participating schools (Menter and Hulme, 2007; University of Glasgow 2007, 2008). The following support is available to schools through the mentoring programme:

- support in refining teacher-initiated proposals
- advice on issues of manageability/scope, stages, timeline and resources
- advice on ethical practice in practitioner research
- advice on collaborative use of the Virtual Research Environment (VRE)<sup>5</sup>
- advice on accessing electronic resources (research briefings for practitioners)
- support for data collection and analysis
- support for monitoring and self-evaluation
- support for dissemination of work in progress and writing enquiry summaries
- support in compiling the 'Telling the Story' portfolio (see appendix two).

As summarised in Table 1, the Research Support Team has worked with 52 schools, in three tranches, distributed across the 32 local authorities of Scotland (see appendix three). This includes the following arrangements:

- individual secondary schools

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<sup>5</sup> The VRE is managed by Professor Donald Christie and Sanna Rimpilainen at Strathclyde University, with support from Dr Alison Devlin, University of Glasgow.

- pairs of secondary schools (St. Stephen's and Port Glasgow, St. Margaret Mary's and Castlemilk High School)
- a secondary school with partner primaries/nurseries (Doon Academy Learning Partnership, Lanark Learning Community)
- clusters of linked schools (Clackmannanshire, Orkney)

**Table 1 - Research support to the Schools of Ambition**

Tranche	No. of schools	Research Support commenced:	Telling the Story
Tranche 1	21 schools	September 2006	December 2008
Tranche 2	7 schools	March 2007	December 2009
Tranche 3	24 school	September 2007	March 2010

### **1.3. Summary of methodology**

*Research to Support Schools of Ambition* is concerned with reviewing the process of change in order to provide formative feedback to the participating schools and the wider education community in Scotland. The selection of largely qualitative approaches over an extended period reflects this concern. Mentors are providing on-going support for teacher-led investigations (methodological protocols and guidance) and conducting a review of the change process occurring in the schools. Throughout the project, the university-based team has been sensitive to the opportunity costs of teachers' involvement in the latter activity. The selected research instruments include semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire.

In the first year of the project (2006-07) a range of perspectives was sought including those of senior figures in schools (leader-managers), non-promoted classteachers (teacher-evaluators), appointed project managers and a range of external partners, such as local businesses and further education colleges (post-16 sector), which have an involvement in supporting the expansion of vocational learning. The second year of the project (2007-08) focused on the accounts of change offered by senior managers and project managers in each of the three tranches in a series of semi-structured interviews, followed by an online questionnaire to all teachers involved in Schools of Ambition (leader-managers and teacher evaluators in each of the 52 schools). In the third year of the project (2008-09) data gathering was concentrated on school leaders among the 24 schools in tranches two and three. Tranche one schools exited the programme in December 2008 with submission of the Telling the Story portfolio. During the session 2008-09, the third cycle of the interviews and online questionnaire was undertaken.

Members of the mentor team based at the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen generated the interview schedules (contained in appendix four) and the questionnaire (appendix five) collaboratively. Wherever possible the interviews were conducted during scheduled support visits to the schools. Where this was not possible telephone interviews were conducted. A plain language statement was used to help share the purposes of this aspect of the research and to offer clarification on ethical considerations.

Thirty-five individuals with responsibility for leading the development of the School of Ambition transformational plan participated in interviews of up to 45 minutes duration

between March and May 2009. Nine interviews were conducted with members of the leadership group in the 7 tranche two schools and 26 members of the leadership group in the 24 tranche three schools participated in interviews, see Table 2. Five schools elected to participate in a joint interview involving the headteacher and a Depute or Principal Teacher. Two small group interviews and eighteen individual interviews were conducted. All the interviews were audio recorded with the consent of participants to facilitate full transcription. The extracts that appear in the report refer only to the tranche and position in school of the speaker in order to preserve teacher anonymity.

**Table 2 - Interviewees**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Headteacher	18
Depute headteacher	9
Principal teacher	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

An online questionnaire was generated using Zoomerang survey tools. The questionnaire was distributed via group email, in two sweeps to increase the response rate, in March 2009, to 78 school personnel involved in leading Schools of Ambition activities in their school. Paper copies of the questionnaire were forwarded to schools that had not submitted an online response.

All 31 tranche two (7) and tranche three (24) Schools of Ambition (this includes school clusters and therefore the number of schools is higher) were invited to take part in the online questionnaire survey. The survey was designed to provide an overview of progress and focused on a number of areas including: involvement in research activities; professional development; and, impact of participation in the programme.

Thirty-four responses were received (a response rate of 43%) from 25<sup>6</sup> schools across 19 different local authorities. Nine schools returned questionnaires from two individuals.

Looking at responses by tranche, we find that all 7 tranche two schools submitted a response (3 schools returned two questionnaires) and 17 tranche three schools also completed returns (6 schools returned two questionnaires). Importantly, several of the tranche 3 schools share common Transformational Plans and if we account for this when looking at returns then we actually have responses for 16 out of the 17 Transformational Plans.

Some initial analysis was directed towards identifying differences between tranche two and tranche three responses. However, there was little in the responses to suggest any major differences, unsurprising given the small numbers involved, especially in respect of tranche two. Moreover, having 5 responses from three (tranche three) schools sharing a common Transformational Plan meant a disproportionate contribution to the findings from this cluster. Therefore, given no

<sup>6</sup> One individual did not indicate a school

discernible differences in the responses from tranche two and tranche three and a desire to reduce the impact on the findings of 5 submissions from one Transformational Plan we have chosen to aggregate responses in the analysis and findings presented here.

Online and paper submissions were imported into an excel database for analysis according to the following headings:

- professional development
- building networks of support
- working with external partners
- integration of innovation and evaluation
- patterns of engagement.

Questionnaires were most frequently completed by headteachers and deputy headteachers, see Table 3.

**Table 3 – Survey respondents**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Headteacher	10
Deputy headteacher	8
Principal teacher	7
Faculty head	3
Project manager	3
Seconded headteacher	1
Class teacher	1
Other	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

Regular meetings of the mentor and project management teams assisted the process of critical reflection. Video and tele-conference facilities and the virtual research environment supported collaboration across the various partners. To promote reflexivity further as an integral aspect of fieldwork within this project, an experienced researcher within the lead university, but outside the project team, has supported the development of an explicit 'reflexive strand' to this work (Baumfield et al, 2008).

#### **1.4. Structure of the report**

Section two is organised according to six key learning themes identified in consultation with the Research Advisory Group. Drawing on interview data and questionnaire responses from across the schools, the following issues are addressed: (1) leading change; (2) professional development; (3) *Curriculum for Excellence* readiness; (4) sustainability; (5) networks of support; and (6) working with external partners.

Section three considers progress made in integrating innovation and evaluation in the Schools of Ambition and focuses on: (1) the patterns of engagement that have emerged across tranches two and three; (2) the range of evaluation activities undertaken; (3) school use of evaluation data; and (4) approaches adopted to their 'Telling the Story' of school change.

The fourth section of the report presents a summary of the key learning issues identified in school feedback and the learning issues for other parties involved in supporting the Schools of Ambition. The report concludes by presenting the main conclusions to be drawn from this evaluation of the experiences of the Schools of Ambition, September 2008 to August 2009.

The 2009 annual report will be followed by a final report in October 2010, which will present findings from analysis of the progress of all three tranches across the life cycle of the Schools of Ambition programme (2006-2010).

## 2. KEY LEARNING THEMES ACROSS THE SCHOOLS

This section of the report draws on: (1) analysis of 26 interview transcripts involving 35 teachers with responsibility for leading School of Ambition activity in their school; and, (2) 34 individual questionnaire responses from teachers engaged in evaluation activities to assess the impact of interventions associated with the School of Ambition transformational plan in their school/cluster of schools.

### 2.1. *Leading change*

The 2008 Annual Report (University of Glasgow, 2008: 22) recorded that a separation of the transformational plan and the school improvement plan had proven to be an inhibitor to development among a minority of tranche one schools. Accounts offered during interviews held in the summer of 2009 indicate that there is not a perception of the two plans as separate documents at this stage in the programme. A minority of tranche one and tranche two schools experienced a difficult process in authoring and revising the transformational plan to be accepted onto the programme. In comparison, accounts offered by school leaders in tranche three schools were generally more positive, especially in relation to how the plan was used in school as a 'live' document.

*Normal school improvement plans, you write them, you review them, but the [School of Ambition] transformational plan is real, living, every day, and everything we do is based round about it.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

Six of the seven tranche two schools indicated that the school improvement plan and the Schools of Ambition transformational plan were 'inseparable'. A tranche three headteacher reported that she had learned from accounts shared by tranche one headteachers that attempting to manage two distinct plans was not advisable. One tranche three school described the school improvement plan as a 'subset of the School of Ambition Transformational Plan'. However, this should not be equated with an integration of innovation with routine evaluation practices.

*We now have one plan instead of a number of separate plans that are all pointing in the same direction as we have in the past. We have managed to merge them into one.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

*They are one and the same thing (Schools of Ambition Transformational Plan and the School Improvement Plan). At first, they were two things moving in parallel. I had a steering group for the School of Ambition that met after school on a separate day and then, about a year ago, I said, 'No, they are both the same now'. We try to dovetail them because it is too complicated to have two and it became too much part of the central focus.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

One Deputy headteacher of a tranche two school described the two plans as formally separate but 'interlinked', 'side by side'. Another tranche two Deputy reported that integration had not been the starting point but the culmination of a sometimes difficult

period of development and learning. This entailed moving from a view of School of Ambition as an additional 'bolt on' commitment for staff, to a focus on *processes* of change fitted to shorter- and longer-term objectives.

*The School of Ambition programme is so embedded into our development as a school, into our funding and how we operate as a management team and as a school, that it is an integral part of the school. Staff have been questioned about it [by HMle]. If we go back three years to when we started, School of Ambition was seen as a 'white elephant'. It was a 'monkey on our back'. That is not the way it is seen now. It has become popular. It has become embedded. It is something that we are proud of as a school.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

Interviewees stressed that coherence in forward planning was needed in order to adequately address *locally* defined school priorities, as well as those identified by a range of external influences, for example HMle reports, Local Authority guidance or Schools of Ambition targets negotiated with the national advisory team. Headteachers gave an account of the desirability of 'weaving' together influences, rather than being vulnerable to buffeting by a series of externally generated demands. Some school leaders among tranches two and three suggested that Schools of Ambition activities should not be seen as 'reactive' but growing from locally identified needs. Sharing the rationale for change and returning to key messages throughout the life cycle of the programme gave coherence and direction to the programme, and helped to build a sense of ownership among the wider school community. Headteachers valued the degree of autonomy and professional discretion afforded by the flexibility of the Schools of Ambition programme, albeit within limits. In some cases, changes to strategies outlined in the transformational plans were required by changes to national guidance, for example around early presentation.

*Our focus will be constant and there is a sense of confidence gained by knowing that your focus is not changing direction all the time. Not that a narrowing of focus means that there is a lack of diversity in the development, it's just that everybody is very clear about where they are going.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

Leadership is a core concern in any programme of planned change. Schools entered the programme from different starting points and in some cases this influenced the degree to which culture building was regarded as central to the on-going process of school transformation. For some schools, a strong focus on school values, and collective responsibility for their enactment in the day-to-day work of the organisation, informed cycles of development action. In these schools, greater recourse was made to notions of distributive leadership. Improvement action in these contexts was connected with the development of professionals and the enhancement of professional relationships as well as enhancement of the school curriculum and the school estate.

*It was quite clear that whatever we were going to do here had to involve the development of people and increasing the capacity of everyone within the organisation because there was a clear divide. There was a 'them-and-us'*

*culture between staff and pupils. There was a very strong blame culture on both sides and that had to be addressed. So our Transformational Plan was based on improving relationships with people, getting people to accept leadership responsibility, and there was a clear focus on developing everything that would improve relationships and the way that people work together... clarity about responsibility, the responsibility that each person had to contributing to change became much, much clearer.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

The challenge of building school cultures with a welcoming attitude to change was a common theme repeated in annual interviews across the three tranches. This is not surprising and is consistent with an established body of literature on the challenges of school improvement. School leaders within many of the Schools of Ambition suggested that clarity of purpose and a sense of shared purpose could not be formed without considering strategies likely to foster a sense of collective ownership and professional responsibility. Whilst stating aspirations for transformational change, interviewees acknowledged that culture building was an enduring challenge that required constant attention. A tranche three school adopted the strategy of forming departmental transformational groups and departmental transformational plans to connect all teachers with the overall school plan.

*We have a school transformational plan, departmental transformational plans and we have transformational groups. They are voluntary but probably more than 60 or 70% of the staff volunteer for these groups. It keeps the momentum going and it means it is a whole school initiative rather than the idea that one department is benefitting and the rest are not. I am not saying everybody is equally as interested, I am not saying that at all.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

School leaders were particularly cognisant of issues of sustainability as the period of funding ended. Throughout the programme, headteachers took care to stress that Schools of Ambition had accelerated progress. As the programme ends, they were equally keen to stress continuity, rather a break in the journey. Interviewees stressed that it was important to connect work originally associated with Schools of Ambition with the on-going development priorities of the school and the day-to-day work of teachers. Some headteachers described a movement from innovation to internalisation as new practices became embedded. Whilst identification as a School of Ambition (resource and status) is time limited, it was frequently stressed that the priorities and processes of change initiated through the programme were open-ended.

*As we move out of the Schools of Ambition phase, we will not talk about Schools of Ambition in the future - we will talk about what we did as a School of Ambition - but we will talk about where we are as a school now and increasingly that is what is happening. I do not have a problem with that, some people worry about that, but for me that is about us continuing to develop, change, and transform.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)



*A lot of it is about teaching staff internalising and adopting this as part of their regular practice so that it is no longer an initiative. It is something they do.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school).

The sustainability of initiatives depends on the choices schools made about deployment of the additional resource made available through the Schools of Ambition programme. Some individual schools and clusters of schools invested resources in the appointment of a designated Coordinator or Project Manager. These individuals were commonly regarded as central to the coordination of activity, especially in the early stages of participation in the programme. In two tranche three schools, concern was expressed about the longer-term viability of development work initiated through Schools of Ambition if future funding to secure a Coordinator post or protect time for the lead teacher was not identified from other sources. This was most acute in circumstances where schools share resources and/or created new posts outwith school staffing. Schools of Ambition funding is limited to three years and some school leaders argued that ambitious plans required a longer development and evaluation cycle. Two Deputes (in tranche two and three) commented that as acting deputy positions supported by Schools of Ambition funding were replaced with substantive Deputy roles, responsibilities for Schools of Ambition – including compiling the Telling the Story portfolio – remained with the same colleague, significantly increasing their workload. A tranche three headteacher noted that although the School of Ambition funding ceased at the end of March 2009, school staffing arrangements continued until the end of June. Reflecting on the future, she concluded, ‘losing the staffing flexibility will hit us hard’.

*We always said it would take about five years before we could work out how successful it's going to be...We need another six to eight months, ideally another session, to begin to develop a sustainable model. At the moment it's too much in its infancy, it still needs too much constant attention.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

*I will still have responsibility for Schools of Ambition but I am now going to have to take back other aspects of my remit because of the funding, which stops as of today. It will be interesting to see how the next year goes when my workload increases. That could be an inhibitor, although I still have that within my remit I will have less time to focus on it. I will need to rely more on staff for taking things forward.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

In summary, members of the leadership group in tranches two and three generally recognised the need for a shift in perception of Schools of Ambition from a ‘programme’, ‘initiative’ or ‘scheme’, to an understanding of this work as grounded in school values and committed to the furtherance of school improvement action. They were not blind to the scale of this challenge or the potential restrictions of a three-year funded period. In addressing these challenges, many school leaders explicitly sought to position School of Ambition publicly with ethos and culture rather than budgetary allocations with close associations with particular departments or curricular areas.

## **2.2. Professional development**

The accounts by school leaders appear to suggest that taking forward a number of significant developments across the three-year transformation period supports the development of adaptive cultures within the Schools of Ambition. To support the process of change, in several of the schools space and time was given to working groups that drew membership from across curriculum areas and positions of seniority. One school reported an incremental expansion of the Learning and Teaching group across the three-year period: *'We have twenty or more staff turning up on a regular basis to every session'* (tranche two Headteacher). In this school, a strong focus on teaching and learning and the time for dialogue among groups of staff drawn from across the school community had prompted the development of peer observation processes between departments that was accepted as 'non-judgmental' and 'non-threatening'. A further four schools reported an increase in peer-observation with new practices permeating the school. In one case, this was supported by input from the local authority Learning Team. These incremental approaches to culture building were important in overcoming initial reservations among the wider school staff around evaluation. For some teachers, the extension of self-evaluation processes across the school - especially peer observation and pupil involvement in evaluation strategies - was associated with intrusive 'checking up'.

*There is this fear with some staff that you are asking kids to check up on them and that's not the case. Our next step is taking departments who are very good at doing self-evaluation and showing what we do and making it quite clear.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

*Until quite recently there has been a wee bit of doubt about why we need to do it. It's just looking over people's shoulders, a bit of suspicion. I have to say that within the school there is much less of that now. In fact, I think that everybody realises the potential value of self-evaluation but creating the climate is really important and the more people you have who are committed to that as a principle, the easier it is to create that climate. In that sense, Schools of Ambition has been very helpful.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

Most interviewees in tranches two and three reported that there was a greater focus on the development of in-house CPD during the transformational period. Negotiating challenges during periods of significant change required enhanced levels of site-based support. It was hoped that the openness of recent entrants to the profession to peer observation would contribute to sustainability. Some headteachers were optimistic about the 'new professionalism' embedded in initial teacher education and induction and suggested that the experiences and dispositions of recent entrants to the profession were supportive of change efforts.

*New staff are coming in and to them it seems a natural way to work. They are observed as probationers, so they understand that there is an expectation that they will observe and be observed, and that is built into the way in which they see things.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

One tranche two school reported that training staff in coaching and mentoring techniques had built capacity and contributed to a sense of the school as a 'learning community' supportive of continuous teacher learning. These approaches enhanced the likelihood of sustained innovation beyond the many time-limited or resource dependent 'projects' initiated during the transformation period. A tranche three Depute reported that the school had made a conscious decision to focus on 'upskilling' so that staff '*could be more adaptable and ready for technological change, rather than concentrating on buying in hardware*'. Another tranche three school had invested in training SpeakersBank<sup>7</sup> trainers among the school staff who could in turn train other members of staff.

In the first Annual Report (University of Glasgow, 2007), tranche one school leaders expressed concern about sustainability of externally provided training and hoped that partnership work with local authority cultural coordinators and arts education development officers to organise artists, dancers and writers in residence would upskill school staff. These aspirations are shared by subsequent tranches.

*It is important that we have a tangible legacy in terms of resources and skill development. If you look at the Expressive Arts staff, they have been working with professional artists and picked up a whole new skill set they can pass on to the pupils. That's given them an injection of enthusiasm as well.*

(Principal teacher, tranche three school)

A tranche two school has provided input on mentoring and coaching to another School of Ambition (following a poor experience with an external training provider) and to other schools and the Local Authority. A strength of school-led input cited by a partner school was the 'credibility' of professional development opportunities led by peers.

*There is nothing more powerful than your peer group doing in-service than someone from outside coming in and saying this is how you should be doing it.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

*Every part of our self-evaluation and quality assurance programme converges in support. The PRD system converges in support with classroom observations and departmental reviews. The support systems are based on coaching and mentoring in whatever area support is needed, whether it's solution-oriented practice, behaviour management, Assessment for Learning, critical skills or emotional literacy. We have teams of people trained to provide support creating a high level of expertise across the whole school. When we do staff training everybody is trained to a particular level but others have gone onto additional training to become facilitators and trainers. The coaches are a perfect example. The Authority is using our coaches to train their own staff.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

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<sup>7</sup> SpeakersBank is a national network of professional trainers, speakers and facilitators. It is the training arm of the Speakers Trust: a registered charity that promotes the development of speaking skills. See <http://www.speakersbank.co.uk/>

School-led, in-house professional development was cited as a strength by some tranche two schools that shaped development opportunities in response to whole school consultation. In one school, it was reported that leadership development courses were extended to all members of the school community and not just teaching staff. In contrast with episodic attendance at externally provided courses, some schools had considered the benefits of providing in situ CPD, supported by further opportunities for sustained engagement and dialogue.

*If you do not follow instructional in-service days with opportunities for teachers to meet, discuss, digest, reject, embellish, customise, then you lose it. When you have a guru who comes along and delivers something, the impact is not felt in schools at all. People revert to their ordinary practice because that is what they are comfortable with. You have to allow time because changes are not going to happen overnight. As you do with children, you need to reinforce the learning. You need to expand it. You need to have quality thinking time and discussion. That only happens when the teachers get together and they sit and talk about things.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

In the first annual report (University of Glasgow, 2007: 57), a tranche one headteacher noted distinctive ways of thinking and speaking among job applicants from Schools of Ambition. The impact of participation on the programme on motivation and professional enhancement may be evidenced in the level of mobility among lead teachers. One tranche two headteacher, reflecting on records of internal applications, suggested increased levels of interest in positions of responsibility in their school over the three-year period of support. Some schools had created promoted posts in relation to School of Ambition and these had served as a platform helping teachers who took these fixed-term posts to attain further promotion (within the school or another school) on conclusion of School of Ambition.

*For some time it was quite rare to find someone from this school being promoted. We now have quite a number of people promoted to Principal Teacher posts and Depute posts in other schools. Whenever we advertise an acting post, in the past it's been difficult to fill and there's been little interest from staff to take on additional leadership roles. A year ago, we needed to appoint an acting Depute and six Principal Teachers put their names forward for consideration. Three years ago, I had to go and ask somebody if they would undertake the duties. In terms of staff leadership opportunities, there are more staff seeking promotion, being successful and showing an interest in developing their skills.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

*You are going to lose the best people. You are not going to hang on to them. If you are genuinely successful, other people will want to promote them into their schools and that is an inevitable consequence of success. You can see it as a negative thing or you can say "Well, that's great work" and well done to them, or that gives us an opportunity for somebody else.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

Interviewees reported that the allocation of innovation budgets through in-house competitive bidding processes encouraged a wider range of teachers to engage with the programme, assume new responsibilities, and enhance their professional skills. Senior managers and project coordinators reported that care was taken to decline bids regarded as 'one-off, short term projects'. In some schools it appears that the Schools of Ambition programme provided opportunities for enterprising teachers to demonstrate their commitment and capabilities. In some cases, it was suggested that opportunities for teacher leadership and incentives for departments helped to 're-engage' teachers.

*School of Ambition was the thing she had been waiting for her whole career. There were so many pent-up things she wanted to do and it provided the vehicle to help. Others have been more reluctant and any long-lasting, any sustainable change, actually takes a bit longer. There have been some spectacular successes down to the individuals who say, "This is it. I am going to get time. I'm going to get resources, I know what I want to do, so just let me at it" and there are others who you still have to nurse along.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

*There was a very disaffected member of staff who was always very cynical and he has thrown himself into this. I think it was something he was waiting for to come along and I have seen him leading staff development sessions. I have been very pleased with that.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

In addition to individual professional development and advancement, some interviewees suggested that the teaching staff as a body were energised by the flow of opportunities available through Schools of Ambition. In some cases, this was regarded as either an unexpected outcome not directly aligned with the initial Transformational Plan or a longer-term aspiration.

*We have seen a real growth, thanks to School of Ambition, in promoted and non-promoted staff taking the lead in in-house delivery of a variety of CPD areas. We have had blogging sessions. We have had animation. We have had making short films. We have had interactive whiteboard training and they have all been run through the media studies working group by staff for staff. That's been a really positive feature which we'd hoped to be moving towards by the end of School of Ambition, but it is already firmly embedded.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

*A lot of teachers right across the school are taking a lead now in a whole lot of different things and it really has just evolved. Some of the things that have happened are not even in the plan, and I think that has been the experience of many Schools of Ambition. People are a bit fired up just by the general activity around the school and they come up with ideas and ask can we run with them as well, and a lot of them are tailor-made for Curriculum for Excellence.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

It was acknowledged by one school that whilst Schools of Ambition extended opportunities for professional development, the longer-term benefits of involvement in

training did not always stay with the school but contributed to the wider development of early career stage teachers. This was related to the mobility of new teachers following induction. Whilst not unique to Schools of Ambition, the availability of enhanced CPD in some schools heightened their awareness of movement of staff from the school.

*We have a very high number of NQTs. Last year our NQTs were all very involved in Schools of Ambition. As staff development co-ordinator I know that a number of our NQTs have taken advantage of a lot of the CPD that is on offer, for example using film. The fact that we have to face is that their enhanced skills will be deployed somewhere else because they won't be coming back to us after the summer.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

In summary, a significant outcome of participation in the Schools of Ambition programme appears to be higher levels of peer-led CPD and increased opportunities for teacher leadership.

### **2.3. Curriculum for Excellence readiness**

Among tranche two and three school leaders, the School of Ambition programme was commonly regarded as a catalyst that accelerated development work around *Curriculum for Excellence* and the four capacities. This was especially marked among tranche three. The improvement action embedded in the each school's Transformational Plan was seen to articulate well with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Senior managers felt that participation in the Schools of Ambition programme had equipped them to approach full implementation of the revised school curriculum with a higher degree of confidence. The Schools of Ambition are distinctive in that they have been engaged in processes of supported change for an extended period and have committed resources to building capacity to sustain change.

*Leadership capacity and learning capacity are integral to the shape of Curriculum for Excellence in the future, so we feel that we are on the right road already. Schools of Ambition has helped accelerate that by the additionality it has brought to the school improvement plan.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

*The curricular aspect of Schools of Ambition has become a way of enabling us to deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. You could not put a credit card between the two things now.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

*All my colleagues [other headteachers], those who have been less fortunate than I have to be involved in this type of programme [Schools of Ambition], are still banging on about, "We need to look at curriculum architecture". No, we don't, because in fact what will really drive performance and excellence will be the cultural change in the school, and that's where we are just now.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

*There is a lot of apprehension about Curriculum for Excellence but there is a lot of excitement too. I came away buzzing from a course about Curriculum for Excellence yesterday because of the work that has been done through Schools of Ambition. If I had not been involved, I would have been thinking, "Oh, this is going to be a big change". Because we have done the Schools of Ambition for two years now, it is going to make the change a lot easier and the transition a lot simpler.*

(Principal teacher, tranche three school)

Several school leaders commented on the promotion of connections across the curriculum through the work of curriculum development groups. A tranche two Headteacher reflected on the 'energising' impact of cross-subject working: *'Curriculum for Excellence has given us a way of giving permission for people to be themselves and to offer more than they offer through subjects'*. One school had adopted a different period structure that freed a single period to explore 'trans-disciplinary experiences'. Several of the schools had a focus on the promotion of rich tasks, metacognition, and Learn to Learn strategies.

*Everything we are doing fits in with Curriculum for Excellence. It is as simple as that really. We have a learning wall, a lot of initiative work, Assessment for learning work, staff development, a lot of interdisciplinary work beginning to take place. There are pockets of funding coming from Schools of Ambition for that. We have done a lot more than most schools, certainly within the authority.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

*Through the learning lunches initiative, teachers have become comfortable talking to and listening to colleagues, collaborating with each other, doing peer observation. The staff are open to the approach that they're going to have to embrace. We have done work on interdisciplinary learning. It is a small step, a beginning, linking interdisciplinary learning and embracing the key features of Curriculum for Excellence. The work that we have done through Schools of Ambition will help to move that forward in a sustainable way.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

*We have moved beyond teaching content of subjects for examinations. We have many ways within our programme of trying to deliver the four capacities.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

Several of the schools have been involved in the production of case study material. St Machar has provided a case study on the Learning and Teaching Scotland website for Health and Wellbeing<sup>8</sup> and ten Schools of Ambition have provided twelve illustrative case studies for the *Journey to Excellence* Website. The following Schools of Ambition (2006-2009) contributed illustrative movies to the *Journey to Excellence* website<sup>9</sup>:

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<sup>8</sup> Available from: <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/sharingpractice/secondary.asp> (Accessed 13/07/09)

<sup>9</sup> Available from: <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/journeytoexcellence/ambition/movies/illustrative.asp> (Accessed 13/07/09).

Dimension One: engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

- St Ninian's High School - East Dunbartonshire

Dimension Four: fosters high quality leadership at all levels

- Doon Academy - East Ayrshire

Dimension Seven: reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

- St Modan's High School - Stirling

Dimension Eight: values and empowers its staff and young people

- St Modan's High School - Stirling

Dimension Ten: develops a culture of ambition and achievement:

- Charleston Academy - Highland
- Cardinal Newman High School - North Lanarkshire
- Queensferry Community High School - Edinburgh City
- Burnhouse School - West Lothian
- Kirkland High School and Community College - Fife
- Wallace Hall Academy - Dumfries and Galloway
- Hawick High School - Scottish Borders
- St Modan's High School - Stirling

In summary, interviewees in the tranche two and three schools reported that they were well placed to take forward *Curriculum for Excellence*. School staff had benefited from participation in regular networking opportunities to exchange ideas and had shared good practice through a variety of formal and informal dissemination channels. A commitment to sustained innovation over a three-year period promoted ways of working adapted to change.

## **2.4. Sustainability**

Questionnaire responses indicate that sustainability of initiatives has been a key consideration for the Schools of Ambition. Although one or two respondents noted concerns over securing future funding to allow some element of their School of Ambition work to continue, the majority of comments suggest that School of Ambition activities are largely, and in a few cases wholly, sustainable. For some, aspects of the transformational plan had been modified to promote sustainability.

*Sustainability was a big consideration from the beginning; we changed parts of the original plan as a result.*

(Depute, tranche two)

Others pointed out that some activities required little initial or recurring capital input.

*Overall, very [sustainable] as the transformational plan focuses on capacity building of people and leadership skills and not on objects that require up keep (i.e. buildings, ICT).*

(Principal teacher, tranche two)



Other questionnaire respondents highlighted the importance of embedding School of Ambition activities into school life as a way of ensuring sustainability. For example,

*Highly [sustainable] - if staff accept that the methods used can form a natural part of their reflections on teaching and learning.*

(Faculty head, tranche three)

*Over 90% of the activities we have undertaken are delivered in a manner that [is] designed to embed them into school practice.*

(Headteacher, tranche three)

*Teaching and learning strategies that have increased pupil interaction are becoming embedded and these I believe are sustainable.*

(Depute, tranche three)

In many of the interview transcripts, school leaders commented that sustaining developments and promoting future innovation required a form of succession planning to accommodate removal of the School of Ambition leadership allocation (project manager or fixed-term promoted posts). In one school, three non-promoted teachers were in place in the final year to lead each of the three strands of development initiated through Schools of Ambition into the future. Several schools reported that working groups are established to carry forward development action and noted that care has been taken to try to recruit new members each session. A Principal Teacher for School of Ambition in a tranche two school commented that it was important not to revert to a 'reactive' way of working.

The additional resource made available through Schools of Ambition was significant in enabling particular aspects of some schools' transformation (such as changes to the built environment and access to external training provision). In the round of interviews, a minority of school leaders suggested that there are some areas that cannot be sustained without additional resource. Residential experiences provided through pupil leadership academies were identified by several schools as potential areas that could be difficult to sustain without significant additional resource from external sponsors. Fraserburgh Academy has negotiated an on-going partnership with Gordonstoun School to share the costs of sustaining joint work on a leadership academy initiated through Schools of Ambition. Other schools were pursuing funding applications on an annual basis to a range of charities and trusts.

Aspects that were regarded as more sustainable were initiatives premised on attitudinal, relational or pedagogical change such as Learn to Learn, or strategies based on changes to school policy such as parental engagement. These were cited as least resource-driven.

*The initial thing you perceive is that it's the money that can do it. Actually, we sit in a position where we have not spent all of our money yet. In fact, a lot of the projects have been taken forward through other partners coming in and helping to support the money side of things. What it does do is give you the opportunity to think differently. As soon as you start to open up people's*

*thinking, actually what happens quite often is that you can sustain things because money or support comes from somewhere else.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

*Whole change in culture and ethos does not require any funding or resources to sustain that. That is a mindset and that change has been made and is established.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

Several school leaders commented on unexpected further developments that had arisen from projects initiated through Schools of Ambition. In one school, the establishment of a sports leadership group for pupils led to a new partnership that had enhanced capacity and sustainability for the school. In this case, innovation attracted interest and additional support.

*In the last few months, Active Schools have come in to say, 'We like your project. We see what it is doing. Can we facilitate coaching courses?' They are now facilitating coaching courses at minimal cost to the school. That brings an element of sustainability, but it would never have happened had the project not kicked off through Schools of Ambition.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

In summary, sustainability is a key concern for the schools at this stage in the life cycle of the programme and school leaders had given careful consideration to those aspects of innovation that were sustainable and those aspects of the programme where additional resource might be needed. Where leadership opportunities were devolved, strategies for succession planning or loss of Coordinator/Project Manager posts were more firmly established.

## **2.5. Building networks of support**

Many Schools of Ambition are actively engaged in networking and the sharing of good practice. Links between Schools of Ambition and other schools are relatively commonplace. As the programme has developed many of the Schools of Ambition have been increasingly 'outward looking' (Headteacher T2 school) and have participated in regional, national and international events and networks. In several of the schools, it was now common practice for pupils and teachers to participate in regular networking events convened through the Schools of Ambition programme (such as the Schools of Ambition Pupil Conferences and the annual Evaluation Conferences) but also to contribute to regional and national events beyond the programme (such as the annual Scottish Learning Festival).

*Before [Schools of Ambition] staff were not so comfortable presenting to peers, but now that is very much within our ethos in the school.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

Questionnaire respondents indicated a number of ways, outwith formal networking events, in which they had exchanged good practice with *other Schools of Ambition*. Fourteen indicated having established telephone links, visiting, or being visited by

other schools as a method of sharing good practice. Although few of these responses gave an indication of the content or format of these links two were more detailed, one noted consulting another School of Ambition about action research, while the other reported sharing transformational plan details. Six questionnaire respondents indicated taking part in more formally organised school meetings usually arranged by their local authority.

Aside from links with other Schools of Ambition, questionnaire respondents also commented on sharing good practice with *other schools and organisations*. Six mentioned establishing contacts with other schools in their local authority or beyond. A few of these provided detail, one mentioned receiving visits from schools seeking information on their Learn to Learn programme, another mentioned using Columba 1400 and SQH links to network with teachers across Scotland, and a third indicated having other schools visit to find out about their vocational programme. Four respondents made reference to using links established at regional meetings or events, while one reported accessing examples and case studies via Learning and Teaching Scotland's website.

Dissemination and networking activities reported by tranche two schools include the following:

- Lossiemouth High School has supported the Orkney cluster of Schools of Ambition in relation to leadership development and has hosted visits from educators from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Botswana. A return visit of teachers and pupil leaders to Botswana is planned for October 2009. A lead teacher evaluator from Lossiemouth High School offered a poster presentation at the British Educational Research Association annual conference in September 2008 and will present a paper at the Scottish Educational Research Association annual conference in November 2009.
- St Machar High School has received visits from Charleston Academy.
- Doon Academy has promoted their pupil leadership academy model, which has been adapted and partially replicated across several tranche two and three schools.
- Fraserburgh High School has shared its approach to pupil leadership development with local schools outside the Schools of Ambition programme.
- Brechin High School has shared its approach to mixed-group form classes with other Angus schools.
- Teachers from Springburn Academy have participated in in-service days at Hillhead High School and contributed to national conferences.
- Castle Douglas and Dalry have offered advice, especially in relation to enhanced vocational learning, to Wallace Hall Academy (T1), Carrick Academy (T3) and Kirkcudbright Academy (outwith Schools of Ambition).
- Auchenhavrie High School has offered presentations at the local authority headteachers conference and has liaised with Doon Academy (T1), Carrick Academy (T3) and with St Paul's, Glasgow (T1).
- Nicolson Institute pupils and staff have made a presentation to the local authority education committee.

Among the tranche three schools:

- Taylor High School has hosted visits from other schools from North Lanarkshire, Aberdeen, and East Lothian.
- Gracemount High School has hosted a number of visits from European educators.
- Nicolson Institute has liaised with Anderson High School (tranche one) to share ideas for developing and sustaining a pupil leadership course; and has exchanged ideas with Our Lady and St Patrick's (tranche one) and Port Glasgow (tranche three).
- Port Glasgow High School has participated in the UK Learn to Learn network as the 'Scottish journey school'.
- Queensferry Community High School offered a presentation to all the Quality Improvement Officers in City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Department.
- Kirkcaldy High School pupil leaders have worked with pupils at Port Glasgow High School.
- Carrick Academy liaised with St Ninian's High School around international developments and hosted visits from local schools outside the Schools of Ambition programme.
- Charleston Academy visited Gracemount High School (T3) and developed links with Newbattle (T1) to share information about dance academies.
- The Orkney schools have strong international connections with other schools.

Interviewees were unanimous in their support for the formal and informal networking activities initiated through Schools of Ambition. Headteachers commented on the benefit of membership of a 52-school network. Telephone, email and face-to-face contact at school visits, regional and national networking events were highly valued. One tranche two deputy headteacher recommended the coordination of school visits/mini-conferences to enable six or seven visitors to a host school identified as possessing a particular strength. Strong support was expressed for maintaining links beyond the life cycle of the programme. Tranche three schools valued the opportunity to draw on the experiences of previous cohorts. The community built through active participation in Schools of Ambition networking events extended peer learning *within* schools to peer learning *between* schools.

*People would find out at the meetings what you were doing, what was working, and they would ask if they could come down and that has been hugely successful. It is almost like a family where people feel free to phone and ask if they can come and visit, come and see what you are doing. People get a real buzz from visiting another school and people in the school get a buzz from people having visitors as well. There is a feel-good factor there.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

*We are in a fortunate position. We have the benefit of other schools that have gone before us and that is a real bonus. People have been very helpful, nobody turns you away if you phone or email for anything that they have, they have been good... It's useful to find out what other schools are doing or have done; that's why the Schools of Ambition and the evaluation conference are*

*very good. That is where you get all your contacts. I find that very useful and it helps with the fear factor.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

*If you go to headteachers' meetings, you meet people briefly and you socialise, but this is actually engagement at quite a deep level. It seems to be a very good way of exchanging ideas between schools and different parts of the country, so between Aberdeen and Midlothian and Edinburgh City. Apart from all the Highland schools that we would normally link with, we are getting perspectives and ideas and a transfer of thinking that I think is actually quite powerful and quite profound. The School of Ambition has been the vehicle that has led that and caused that to happen.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

In addition to learning from each other, Schools of Ambition were pursuing new learning from elsewhere. Schools leaders from both a tranche two and a tranche three school spoke with enthusiasm about visits to Cramlington Community High School, Northumbria<sup>10</sup>. They noted the relative level of autonomy afforded to headteachers of specialist schools in England and the role of Leading Edge schools and Advanced Skills Teachers in promoting good practice. The 'outward looking' stance adopted by school leaders contributed to the success of networking events, which were valued. Building productive and sustainable links beyond the community of school professionals has proven more challenging.

## **2.6. Working with external partners**

Engaging the *business community* in sustainable initiatives has proven to be an enduring challenge for many schools, especially those located in areas with few larger industries and neighbouring schools making similar requests. The local business community is commonly involved through routine and established aspects of enterprise education, including work experience, but greater involvement is difficult. In the central belt, Scottish Business in the Community has worked with Glasgow City Schools to enhance careers input for young people and the City of Edinburgh Partnership has promoted opportunities for developing vocational programmes. Some schools were making effective use of existing external partners as brokers of new business links. For example, Carrick Academy worked with Careers Scotland to organise a business lunch and involved Energy Agency Ayrshire in establishing links with Scottish Power.

*Partnership work with primary schools* has been enhanced in some schools through an extension of pupil-led leadership academies for Primary Seven children in local schools. Partnerships have also been forged with local constabularies, universities, charities, Arts organisations such as the National Theatre, professional football and rugby clubs and community sports providers, as well as training providers such as the Scottish Outward Bound Association, Columba 1400 and Brathay.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.cchsonline.co.uk/>

*School-college partnership* has proven particularly fruitful, with many schools routinely involved in curriculum enhancement initiatives with local colleges and employers. Brechin High School (tranche two) was awarded an SQA Star Award<sup>11</sup> for Innovation in November 2008 for partnership work with Angus College and Forfar Roofing.

*Parental engagement* was an area cited as requiring continuing work by a number of schools. This was mentioned in annual interviews by a minority of school leaders in all three tranches.

*Perhaps the greatest hurdle for my school is parental engagement. The Parental Involvement Act has made little or no difference in terms of promoting engagement. We are making some progress, but in terms of really getting the parents excited about their youngsters' education, that is not happening. We are not making anything like the progress with parents as we are with the wider community.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

One school noted particular challenges of working towards *international partnerships*, for example in negotiating arrangements for overseas teaching staff within project plans. Effective liaison with the British Council and Learning and Teaching Scotland were seen as important in overcoming 'bureaucratic' challenges.

The extent of *local authority* support, interest and involvement in Schools of Ambition projects varied across the cohort. Two tranche two schools reported regular meetings with local education officials such as Quality Improvement Officers. For one of these schools, regular meetings were convened in the context of addressing attainment issues across a cluster of secondary schools at the instigation of the Director of Education. One tranche three headteacher reported that the local authority was keen for the school to share developments with other headteachers in the region and created opportunities for that to happen.

Support appears strongest where the Transformational Plan involves more than one school and especially clusters of schools. An example of positive involvement includes the Vocational Arts Training Centre project managed by Lanark Learning Community (tranche three). The project involves the establishment of a new vocational training centre for early school leavers, working in partnership with local high schools. Work undertaken by the Schools of Ambition's cross-sectoral focus team identified a need for further development of secondary schools' careers education and opportunities in vocational/arts skills for pupils. Dissemination activities and the potential for wider impact is enhanced where there is authority level support, in this case through the South Lanarkshire Leader programme. The Lanark Learning Community project has produced a learning tool in the form of an animated movie available to all schools across the authority (online and as a DVD).

Several interviewees based in tranche two and three schools noted that their local authority had not asked for information to be shared within the authority about

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<sup>11</sup> Further information see: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/32389.726.html>

initiatives undertaken through Schools of Ambition during the two years of engagement, despite significant interest from HMle and Learning and Teaching Scotland. A tranche three interviewee reported a perception that Schools of Ambition status may have disadvantaged the school when applying for authority funding. Another tranche three school reported that local authority involvement '*has not always been positive*' and the Senior Management Team felt '*criticised at times when they are working very hard*'. In this school, managers experienced local authority involvement as 'scrutiny', rather than interest.

*There is just a wee feeling, 'Well you're a School of Ambition. You have a hundred thousand pounds. Why are you on at us?' But we are not taking this to plug gaps from any other source, that would defeat the whole purpose. I do think in some subtle ways you might move down the queue.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

Other schools responded positively to a degree of autonomy from the local authority. A tranche two school commented on the value of 'freedom from the authority' combined with input and some matched funding for some elements of the transformational plan.

*Total freedom from authority, but support in particular from the Principal Arts Officer who looked at some joint funding of projects and enabled us to do just a wee bit more. The voice artist residence came fully from them. There is just a closer working together. I am now on the authority-wide arts group and we are looking to expand that idea out to all of the other schools.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

Questionnaire responses suggested that the Schools of Ambition were keen to share good practice with the wider education community. Eighteen respondents suggested sharing good practice via local authority networks and contact with education officials.

In response to questions related to dissemination practices, respondents indicated a number of useful methods for sharing their approaches to research and evaluation. Among those described as *very useful* were *face-to-face regional networking events* (15), *visits to other schools* (13), and *face-to-face national networking events* (12). Less useful were *Local Authority promoted links* (10) and *direct approaches to schools* (7).

### 3. INTEGRATION OF INNOVATION AND EVALUATION

An important aspect of the Schools of Ambition programme is the integration of innovation and evaluation. A research orientation to self-evaluation helps to extend conventional 'audit' approaches focused on the delivery of outcomes to include approaches that offer rich descriptions of processes of change. By building evaluation into the strands of the transformational plan, schools aspire to evidence-informed change.

#### 3.1. *Patterns of engagement*

By the third year of the programme, there is some evidence to suggest that a wider group of staff have also become actively involved in school's research and evaluation, but the overall proportion of staff involved in evaluation activities is relatively small. Questionnaire responses indicate that sixteen schools had formed an enquiry group to lead the research and evaluation activities in the school. Most frequently, these groups were made up of *three to five persons* (9 responses) and comprised *a balance of promoted and non-promoted posts* (9 responses). Enquiry groups were most commonly formed through *an open invitation to all staff* (5 responses) or *by targeted recruitment by senior management* (4 responses).

A number of additional open responses gave an indication of the rationale underpinning the adoption of enquiry groups, group size and the recruitment methods used.

*Equality – all members of staff had the opportunity to be involved with the Schools of Ambition.*

(Principal teacher, tranche three)

*Staff involvement equates to ownership.*

(Depute, tranche three)

*The available staff time and a group size which is manageable.*

(Depute, tranche two)

*Attempt to provide all those with an interest in the project an opportunity to participate. Students who are closely involved in delivering a particular aspect of the project were invited to join in order that the student perspective is taken into account.*

(Project manager, tranche three)

Involvement with Schools of Ambition research and evaluation activities appears to be positively associated with participants' professional development. A majority of questionnaire respondents (28) indicated that their evaluation role had impacted *to some extent* (18) or *to a significant extent* (10) on their professional development.

A small number also indicated that they were actively considering accreditation for the work they were undertaking as part of the Schools of Ambition. Three teachers were completing the Scottish Qualification for Headship. One teacher was working



towards Chartered Teacher status and a further eight teachers were considering applying for GTCS Certificates of Professional Recognition.

Recruitment and involvement of a higher proportion of school staff continues to be challenge in some contexts. While a number of schools have adopted enquiry groups in order to increase staff (and in some instances pupil) involvement in collecting, analysing and sharing evidence from research and evaluation activities the overall proportion of staff involved in evaluation activities in schools was generally relatively small. Eighteen respondents indicated that fewer than 15% of school staff were involved in evaluation activities. In common with some tranche one schools, a minority of schools in tranche two and three exhibited a concentration of research responsibilities within the hands of a small number of staff and sometimes with just one lead evaluator.

*Generally I would say that the School of Ambition group in the school is small, finds it hard to meet regularly due to other commitments, and involving staff in strategic planning and taking forward action research plans is quite challenging. However, I have to say that despite [one principal teacher] really co-ordinating and implementing almost 100% of our action research work, we are in a very strong position.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

Consistent with tranche one experiences, one tranche two deputy summarised the principal inhibitors to progress as *'The naysayers, the poor attitude, the poor relationships between management and staff'* and commented on the need to move from a plan authored by an individual 'in isolation' to processes and practices taken up by the wider school community. Senior managers identified the role of recent entrants to the profession and probationers as catalysts of change.

*The plan was really written in isolation. The vision wasn't clear. The biggest challenge the management team faced was bringing people on-board. It just seemed an up-hill struggle all the time. It was a nightmare, frankly. Approximately two years into the three-year process we reached a critical mass. It was very difficult and very challenging for the first two years and then we reached that critical mass and we were there.*

(Deputy Headteacher, tranche two school)

Two years into the programme, another tranche two school commented on the issue of encouraging more broadly based 'buy-in' to the wide range of initiatives being undertaken. Senior managers also saw maintaining rates of participation across a number of concurrent project teams as a challenge.

*There is still an issue with staff, with all staff buying into it. I am aware that I am reliant heavily on thirty staff who are the main players, if you like, and another twenty who dip in and out. There is still a number of staff who don't really get hugely involved. That is a very difficult thing to do.*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

One tranche three school also cited 'staff cynicism' as a potential inhibiting factor.

*There has been less enthusiastic uptake in certain quarters of the school; some staff have been rather cynical about the development.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

Schools working in pairs or clusters and across sectors faced particular challenges. These include the three Clackmannanshire secondary schools, the pairing of St Stephen's and Post Glasgow High School, the Orkney schools and Lanark Learning Community. Partnership work involved balancing the needs of individual schools with the goals of the shared Schools of Ambition transformational plan, ensuring open communication and effective collaboration across the three-year period. In a small minority of cases, this was affected by turnover among senior staff and by local educational politics, for example issues of possible school closure, relocation, or merger. A stated legacy of the Schools of Ambition programme would be continued links and joint work between partnered schools (Headteacher tranche three cluster).

Half of the questionnaire respondents (17) indicated that *pupils* had been involved as data gatherers and/or researchers during the session 2008/2009. However, open responses also noted that much of this pupil participation actually involved them in the role of research subject, completing questionnaires or taking part in focus groups conducted by staff. Nevertheless, there was a small number of responses indicating more active pupil participation, for example:

*There are a number of pupil forums at school including one looking at learning and teaching which self selected themselves with no prior involvement from staff. It is planned that a sub group comprising of pupils from these and other groups will look into the types of evidence that could be collected, and will then plan for, collect, and analyse this data. This is in addition to the data collected through more conventional means by staff members.*

(Faculty head, tranche three)

*Thirty-six pupils trained as peer mediators collect data from the pupils they 'mediate' on the mediation experience.*

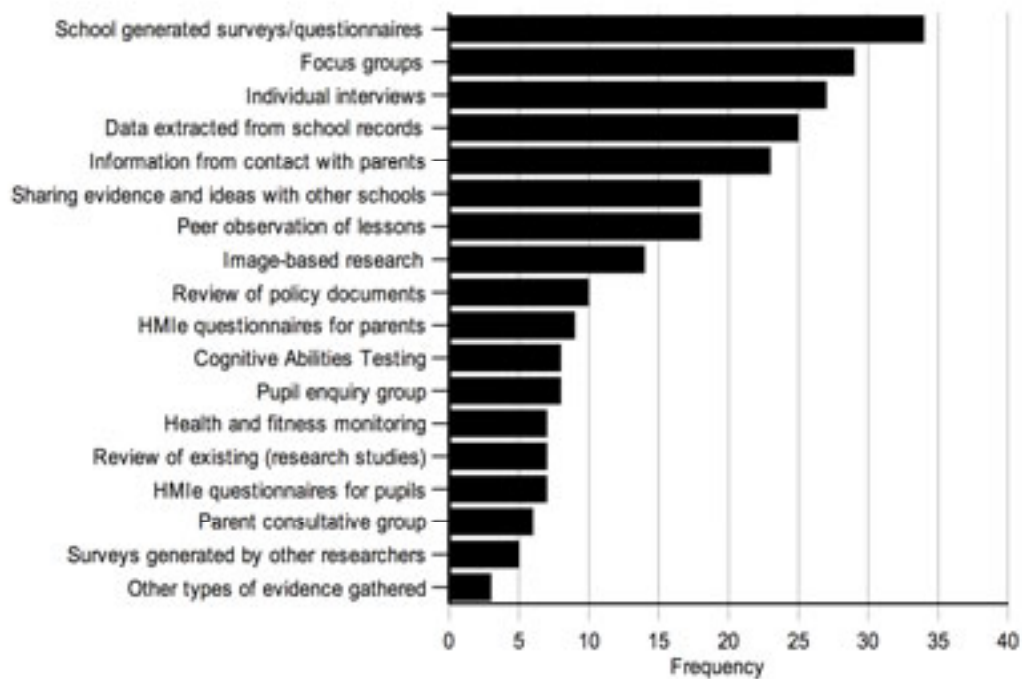
(Principal teacher, tranche three)

Parents were even less likely than pupils to be involved as data gatherers and or researchers, only nine informants reported parents engaged in such activities. As with pupils, open comments again confirmed that parents were more likely to be involved in evaluation as subjects rather than active participants.

### **3.2. Evaluation activities**

Questionnaire respondents had used a range of research instruments and methods to assess the impact of their School of Ambition work. The most popular methods were questionnaire surveys (34), focus groups (29) and individual interviews (27). Among the least frequently deployed activities were *surveys generated by other researchers* (5), and *parent consultative groups* (6). Figure 1 provides overleaf details.

**Figure 1– Main research and evaluation activities**



Questionnaire surveys were used to gather information from staff, pupils and parents, Interview and focus group approaches were less frequently used with parents. Gathering information from *other stakeholders*, irrespective of the method employed, appears to be an infrequent occurrence. See Table 4. Pupil involvement in consultation processes regarding curriculum changes appears relatively high.

**Table 4 – Evaluation methods used with different groups**

Research with....	Survey/questionnaire	Interviews	Focus groups
Staff	26	18	15
Pupils	31	25	25
Parents	21	6	6
Other stakeholders	2	3	2

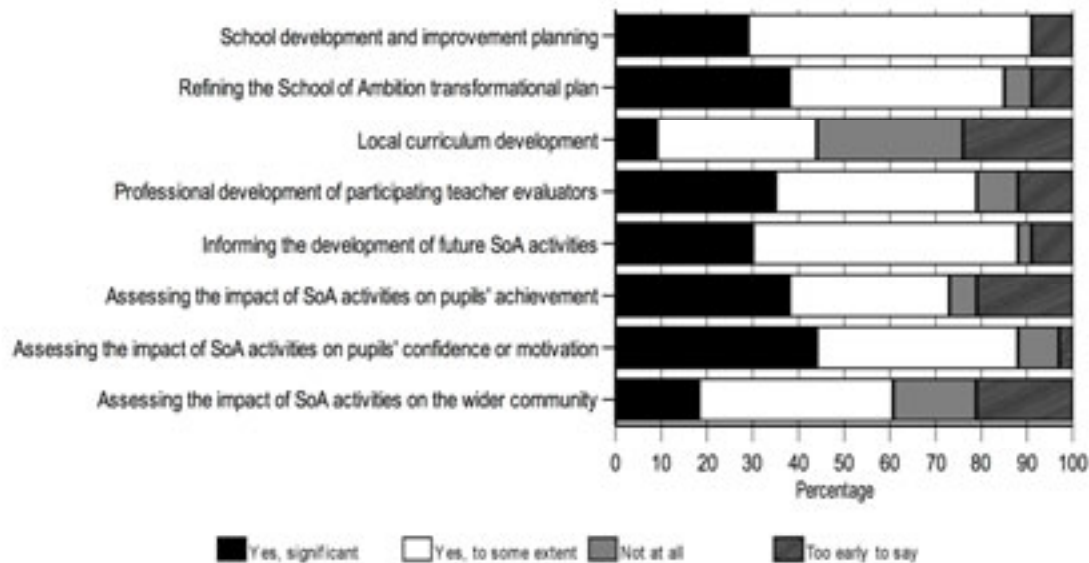
Alternative methods of data gathering included the use of teacher learning journals. For example, teachers in one tranche three school formed a writing group and used learning journals to reflect on changes to their practice over the spring term 2009. At the end of this period, the lead teacher researcher conducted a survey to evaluate the usefulness of this tool in helping teachers enhance levels of critical reflection and improve their practice. Whilst few details are reported, the outcome appears encouraging, *'We're using the findings to decide whether to go ahead with the same*

*approach next year and it looks as though people do feel that that kind of learning, from each other is something that they're very keen to continue'*  
(Depute, tranche three school).

### 3.3. School use of evaluation data

Questionnaire respondents indicated that research activities had made a positive contribution in a number of areas, particularly *assessing the impact of School of Ambition activities on pupils' confidence or motivation* (15 respondents), *refining the schools transformational plan* (13), and *assessing the impact of School of Ambition activities on pupils' achievement* (13). Research activities were seen to have had a less significant impact on *local curriculum development* (3) and, *assessing the impact of School of Ambition activities on the wider community* (6). See Figure 2. Whilst school leaders asserted that participation in the Schools of Ambition programme meant the school was well placed to respond to the opportunities presented by *Curriculum for Excellence*, few informants made a link between enquiries currently taking place in school and local curriculum development.

**Figure 2 – Contribution of School of Ambition evaluation activities\***



\* Presented as percentages to allow comparison of elements (N varied between 33 and 34)

When specifically asked about the impact of school-led research and evaluation activities on their original transformational plan, 12 informants indicated that the plan had been modified at least *to some extent* as a result of these activities.

In the round of interviews, school leaders in tranches two and three cited a range of 'hard' data sources as potential measures of impact. These included:

- pupil attendance
- pupil achievement
- pupil attainment (at different points and different courses)

- exclusions, detentions, referrals and demerits
- pupil participation in targeted activities (sport and recreation, extra-curricular)
- participation and attainment rates in extended vocational learning programmes
- positive destinations (employment, training, or education)
- retention rates for pupils progressing to higher education (beyond the first term)
- staff participation in working/development groups
- staff retention rates
- placing requests
- attendance at parent consultation sessions
- parental attendance at school functions.

Within questionnaire responses, comments made to substantiate assertions of impact often referred to specific research activities and findings. In a few cases, evidence that is more anecdotal was cited and in some instances, a combination of both was used. The following were typical:

*Pupil participation has improved, behaviour has improved, and attendance is beginning to increase attainment for the NEET group.*

(Headteacher, tranche three)

*Questionnaires, focus groups' comments have shown that the transformational plan has impacted positively on the culture of the school.*

(Principal teacher, tranche two)

A majority of questionnaire respondents indicated that their involvement with Schools of Ambition evaluation activities had increased their capacity to integrate research approaches in their everyday practice (11 indicated *a lot*, 14 indicated *a little*). A number of these informants also provided examples of how research approaches had been integrated into their everyday practice. For example,

*It has allowed me to embed strategies within the department to continually evaluate what we do with pupils, staff, and parents so development work is done for the right reasons.*

(Principal teacher, tranche two)

*As we implement aspects of CfE we will build in research and evaluation methods from the outset and use a greater variety of sources of evidence.*

(Headteacher, tranche three)

One tranche two school had adopted a rigorous approach to self-evaluation from the inception of the programme. From an early stage, transformational goals were mapped against the draft sets of experiences and outcomes for *Curriculum for Excellence*. Action planning was cross-referenced to the Quality Indicators of *Journey to Excellence*. An action research model was adopted throughout the three-year period and lead teachers used the language of educational research within self-evaluation practices. The rationale for this strategy was the importance of demonstrating that change was evidence-informed and purposeful. In this case,

practices from school self-evaluation and educational action research were used productively within professional enquiries. Key factors associating with promoting an enquiry-orientation included communication, openness and devolved responsibilities, including ideas generation. Interim reports and all documents are available through the school intranet with open access to school staff. Such systematic approaches to the use of evidence to inform planning and improvement action – and confidence in developing a research-informed approach to evaluation - were not common.

There is some evidence of schools using emerging evaluation evidence as the basis of formative review and using evaluation data to make changes to developing programmes. Instances reported in interviews included amendments to a P7 transition project, a lower school pedometer project, pupil leadership academy experiences, and change of provider for mentoring and coaching training when evaluation data indicated that current provision was not meeting staff development needs. One school uses a database of pupil participation to monitor progress towards achievement of goals and to signal when further interventions are necessary. A tranche three headteacher described how a process of professional enquiry initiated through school self-evaluation led to deeper engagement with reading and research.

*As a school, we have been reflective. We are committed to asking people what they think. We are not afraid to ask questions and use the responses to influence what we are doing and now we are seeing an improvement.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

*Self-evaluation is not about some sort of bolt-on extra that you do. It has to be part of the natural processes in the school. Self-evaluation has to consistently inform the way that we want to take things forward. If you do that, people buy into that approach. They see the point of that. You then start to see, because we started to do it, you then start to engage with trying to find answers in the research community.*

(Headteacher tranche three school)

One tranche two Depute headteacher commented on the need to make time for teacher evaluators to engage in research and the necessity of planning this from the outset rather than as a retrospective 'bolt-on'. This involved a preparedness to adjust timetables and classes to accommodate systematic evaluation by a teacher researcher.

There was some evidence of growing research awareness. One tranche two school, supported by an external facilitator, commented on the desirability of a control group to improve the rigour of a quasi-experimental design in one aspect of their evaluation strategy. Two tranche two schools and a tranche three school have developed skills in using online questionnaires using software from Survey Monkey<sup>12</sup> and Zoomerang<sup>13</sup>. Several schools have adopted the School Evaluation of Learning System (SELS). Other schools had used HMle survey data in their analysis and conducted their own 'ethos and leadership audits'. A tranche three school had made

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.zoomerang.co.uk/online-surveys/home.html>

innovative use of the electronic interactive voting system, TurningPoint, to gather feedback data from pupils across three year groups.

*There is a degree of rigour in the way that we approach new things. We do not necessarily take things at face value. There are so many snake oil salesmen around in education these days that you do have to have the capacity as a school to ask rigorous questions and to say, 'Well, where is the evidence? Where is the research that backs up your claims?'*

(Headteacher, tranche two school)

There was a developing awareness in some schools of the need to coordinate data collection approaches to avoid overload and to avoid over-reliance on one method of data gathering. The first extract below illustrates a growing appreciation of demands generated by the distribution of multiple questionnaires and consideration of alternative thematic approaches. The second extract indicates a developing awareness of the range of sources of data that might be included in school evaluation designs.

*We can do it without being too paper onerous and death by questionnaire. At the beginning I thought that was how you got facts and figures. We have to make sure that every time the kids finish a unit they are not having to fill something out. We could do idea groups at the end of term. We could do a morning with a year group focusing on different subjects, the curriculum as a whole, instead of every teacher giving their class a questionnaire.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

*Sometimes people struggle with the idea of producing evidence. When someone is given a particular HGIOS indicator and asked to place the school on a one to six, I've seen a lot of staff struggle. They will say, "Well, I think we're a five. I think we're pretty good at that but what can I say as evidence for that?" A lot of staff are still thinking in quantitative terms and are not aware of the more qualitative or other indicators they could use there as evidence.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

In summary, informants across all schools reported that school staff were engaged in collecting a range of evidence on which to base assessments of impact. In a minority of cases, attention was afforded at an early stage to how this evidence might be used to inform future action.

### **3.4. Telling the Story**

Tranche one schools submitted their Telling the Story Portfolios from December 2008. Typically, portfolios were compiled by the Project Coordinator with support from members of the Senior Management Team, often including the headteacher. Several portfolios include contextual information and a rationale that briefly documents the processes involved in the planning and evolution of the transformational strands and how this shaped the programme. The Telling the Story portfolios vary considerably in format and content but typically describe how the range of School of Ambition activities was implemented, the challenges that were addressed and some comment on impact.

Some portfolios contain appendices or hyperlinks to supporting evidence. These can include longitudinal data on attainment, destinations, attendance and exclusions (a comparison of the school figures with the average for schools across the Authority), level of complaints/referrals and participation rates across initiatives. Whilst a range of quantitative evidence is provided, this is not always interpreted well in the main body of the report.

In addition to monitoring and audit data, some portfolios include qualitative feedback from parents, pupils and others. These are provided in summaries derived from focus group discussions, individual interviews, formal and informal observation reports and examples/vignettes of pupil and staff leadership experiences. A minority of reports draw on pre- and post- programme surveys. Some schools made use of available published records such as HMLe reports or local newspaper reports.

Photographs, videos and written testimonies form a significant part of the overall evidence presented in several portfolios. Whilst these are accessible and affirming, they are in themselves insufficient without further commentary. The contribution and place of images and testimonies within a planned formative evaluation strategy is not always clear. In some cases, statements indicating rising attainment levels, improved pupil destinations and community involvement cannot be verified because there is no clear data available in the report to test these claims. This is a weakness in the reporting style of several of the tranche one portfolios.

The seven tranche two schools will submit their Telling the Story e-portfolio in December 2009. The schools varied in their state of preparedness. In May 2009, some schools did not have advanced plans for compiling the portfolio, which documents their supported journey over the three-year life cycle of Schools of Ambition.

*We've got a huge amount of evidence sitting in different places and we will start looking into that at some point. I think the answer is that we're not onto it yet.*

(Depute headteacher, tranche two school)

Pupil contributions to the school portfolio are planned. Pupils attending a tranche two school are building their own School of Ambition e-portfolio in partnership with the local newspaper. This activity is integrated within enterprise education and will 'tell



the story' from the pupil perspective. Pupils in a tranche three school are using media facilities in the school to produce a 'pupil-led' film as one source of evidence.

At the time of the interviews, all of the schools were planning to use digital video and photography in their portfolios and had received guidance from the Research Support Team through a briefing sheet and a support session at the 2009 Schools of Ambition Self-Evaluation Conference. A Learning Community in tranche three has produced a DVD to introduce the key areas of the Schools of Ambition programme. From initial concept to final production, the school team has visualised the different topics, using 2D and 3D graphics to create characters and settings that embodied the central ideas.

There was a tendency within tranche one submissions to use digital imagery as illustrations – that digital images 'speak for themselves' - and it is not clear that all schools in subsequent tranches intend to adopt a more analytical approach. The concepts of ambition, confidence and self-esteem feature strongly in many schools plans and present particular challenges to novice evaluators.

It should not be assumed that access to the experiences and resources generated by previous cohorts enables the third tranche of Schools of Ambition to adopt a systematic approach to evaluation. Several of the schools present similar issues to those encountered by tranche one schools and recorded in the annual reports for 2007 and 2008. A particular issue was developing a shared understanding of appropriate approaches to 'impact assessment' and the use of formative evaluation to inform future cycles of planning, action and reflection.

Few tranche three school leaders were able to articulate their plans for Telling the Story clearly. In some schools, although there was expectation that evaluation was required as a condition of participation in the programme, the evaluation strategy was still developing and was described by several schools as at an 'early stage'. In these cases, the first cycle of activity would be evaluated at the end-point. In some schools, it appeared that the evaluation emerged as a focus of attention in the final year of the three year period of support. Among some schools in all three tranches there is an assumption that development proceeds and is separate from evaluation. An action research model to self-evaluation is not the dominant mode of working in these cases. It was more common to talk of an 'audit trail' as the basis of evaluative feedback.

*Obviously, any evaluation that we have is in a box, anything that I have kept, and some of it when it gets to that stage might not be any good, so I'm keeping stuff as we go along.*

(Depute, tranche three school)

*We just have to give them some guidelines of how we are going to evaluate it, through numbers - participation rates or dropout rates or even in hours worked in your class and the engagement of class helps. It is just putting down exactly, and a lot of them have done it already but a lot of them are thinking, "How do you want us to do it?" There is just a little bit of guidance needed.*

(Principal teacher, tranche three school)

In summary, although progress in developing evaluation capacity that draws on research remains patchy across tranches two and three, there are signs of a developing awareness of a need to engage in systematic enquiry and its potential in supporting school improvement.

*Being involved in Schools of Ambition has helped us realise that sometimes you do initiatives and you do not evaluate that. Sometimes you do questionnaires for the sake of it. We need to make time to take a step back, use the evaluation evidence that we have to consider how far we have come along the journey, and to inform what the next steps of the journey are. I find myself talking about journeys quite a lot recently, but there is a realisation that what you said you wanted to achieve will not be the destination.*

(Headteacher, tranche three school)

This section of the report summarised the response of the schools to the challenge of systematically evaluating innovations initiated through Schools of Ambition. The following section presents the key learning issues identified by schools and issues for those supporting the schools at the programme close.

## 4. LEARNING ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SCHOOL FEEDBACK

### 4.1. *Reported factors that promote or inhibit progress*

School staff in tranches two and three (2008-09) reported that progress was *hindered* by the following factors:

- Making the time and space for staff to consider longer-term targets whilst immersed in the challenges of day-to-day school work.
- Senior staff juggling multiple projects/goals concurrently.
- Staffing shortages in particular subjects such as Home Economics.
- Staff turnover generally, loss of senior staff in particular.
- Lack of identification among staff with the transformational plan.
- Initial negative perceptions of evaluation as 'checking up' among some staff.
- The development of strained relations between external partners was also cited by schools as a potential inhibitor to effective partnership work, for example between college educators and practitioners in industry or between the Council and a local management committee over community access to school facilities. Schools of Ambition project managers were aware of the inter-personal skills required in fostering and sustaining collaboration.
- The capacity of educators trained for the post-compulsory sector to manage behavioural issues that might be presented by school students.
- Protracted liaison with council housing and property services departments in order to make changes to the school estate.
- Processes involved in purchasing equipment or site licences, which can delay progress and affect projected timelines.
- Local authority ICT firewalls inhibit the use of some web-based educational applications.
- Local authority servers in some cases struggle with the web applications that demand a particularly high bandwidth.

Progress was *accelerated* by the following factors:

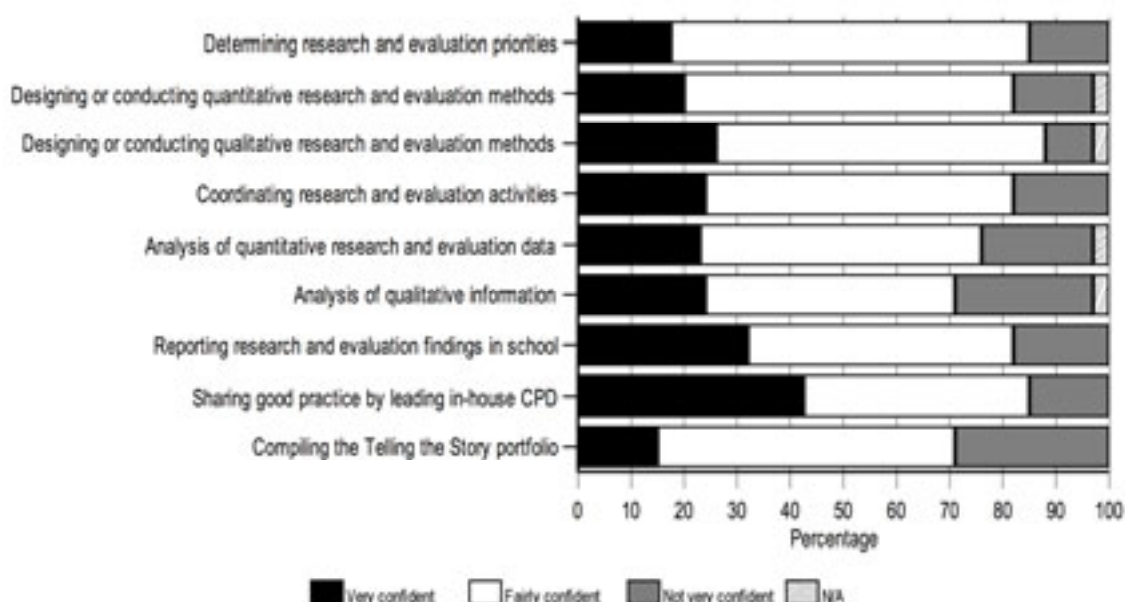
- Additional material resources.
- Dedicated time for project leadership and coordination.
- Devolved opportunities for leadership among teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Maintaining a high public profile for School of Ambition work.
- Grounding changes in evidence (provided by formative feedback from cycles of on-going and planned evaluation activity).
- Openness to peer observation among recent entrants to the profession.
- Provision of in-house training by training lead facilitators e.g. in Feuerstein training or enhanced training in coaching and mentoring.
- Availability of enhanced and start-up funding.
- Flexibility to make changes to the curriculum in light of formative feedback from evaluation.
- Incentive of flexibility in allocating innovation budgets to/across departments through a transparent competitive bidding process.
- Networking activities to share ideas

- Tri-level coordinated and complementary support – school level, local authority and government

#### 4.2. Issues for the support team

The numbers of questionnaire respondents reporting confidence in using a range of research and evaluation activities in their school was encouraging, see Figure 3. A clear majority of informants were at least *fairly confident* in undertaking all of the listed research tasks. This may suggest growing confidence in schools to conduct research with little external support. Confidence was lowest in relation to *analysis of qualitative information* and *compiling the Telling the Story portfolio*.

**Figure 3 – Respondent confidence in conducting a range of evaluation activities\***



\* Presented as percentages to allow comparison of elements (N varied between 33 and 34)

Twenty-six questionnaire respondents made suggestions for the most useful support that research mentors could provide over the next few months. Ten made general statements about the importance of communication and discussion while others were more detailed in their requests, see Table 5 overleaf. It was evident from a number of comments that informants were clearly thinking about the production of their 'Telling the Story' when they responded to this question with a number highlighting the need to look at the nature and content of this report.

**Table 5 – Respondent requests for research support**

<b>Support with...</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Analysis	8
Report writing	6
Instrument construction	5
Data gathering	4
Quality checking	3
Background research	1

The *Virtual Research Environment (VRE)* had been used by a minority of informants during the previous 6 months. Seven had accessed it, 15 had not and 12 suggested an intention to use it in future.

In the feedback reported above, informants identified a range of material, technical, organisational and strategic issues that they felt inhibited or accelerated progress. Feedback suggests that further collaboration with the Research Support Team is advisable to raise levels of confidence in analysis among those charged with evaluating and reporting the rate of progress and the impact of innovation on pupil learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of interview transcripts and questionnaire responses from key personnel involved in the coordination, implementation and evaluation of change in the tranche two and three schools (2008-09), this report has summarised a wide range of accelerators and inhibitors of transformational change.

As the period of funded support draws to a close, school staff with responsibility for Schools of Ambition reflected on the 'distance travelled' according to a range of indicators. These included curriculum and pedagogy, outcomes for learners, professional development of the wider school staff, school culture and ethos, changes to the school estate, and work with external partners.

By the third annual cycle of School of Ambition activity, school leaders gave an account of close alignment between the Transformational Plan and the school improvement plan. Tranche two school leaders described the plans as 'inseparable' and suggested that transformational goals were embedded in forward planning practices.

School leaders valued the degree of autonomy and flexibility afforded by the programme, which supported the development of innovative responses to locally defined needs. A recurrent theme in the interview data was the need to maintain high levels of local innovation. Accounts suggest that teacher professionalism is enhanced where there is scope and support for professional discretion and dialogue at a local level over a period of time.

Sustainability is a key consideration as this stage in the life cycle of the programme. School priorities were reflected in discussions of what is to be sustained in the future, which in turn reflected the deployment of resources across the transformational period. Some schools invested in changes to the school estate to extend and enhance curricular provision and the range of learning experiences available to young people. Some schools grounded on-going development on broadly based consultations on 'school values'. Some of the most powerful changes to teachers' practice, and hence learners' experiences, were identified as least resource-driven. These included changes to pedagogical strategies and the promotion of positive relationships.

The issue of sustainability was frequently attached to an awareness of the need for culture building and the role of school leaders in inviting and supporting teacher learning and development. The Schools of Ambition reported higher levels of in-house CPD provision during the transformational period, with a strong focus on the promotion of peer learning or 'upskilling'. Drawing on mentoring and coaching models, several schools sought to provide authentic and sustained CPD opportunities. These often involved a wide range of teaching and non-teaching staff. Participation in Schools of Ambition was associated with opportunities for teacher leadership, with a reported increase in the number of teachers – in promoted and non-promoted posts – electing to lead CPD provision. School leaders who had used modest devolved innovation budgets, through a process of competitive bidding, suggested that this had incentivised staff.

The range of networking opportunities provided through Schools of Ambition was highly valued by participants. School leaders and teacher evaluators appreciated regular opportunities to exchange ideas, experiences, contacts and lessons learned. The schools have sought to share good practice with other schools and organisations in their local authority and beyond. The Schools of Ambition network supports collaboration between schools and there is a strong desire to maintain the knowledge sharing community built through participation in the Schools of Ambition programme into the future.

Many of the Schools of Ambition have been actively engaged in developing partnership work. This includes strengthening existing links with local primary schools, further education colleges and universities; and forging new links with a range of organisations including charities, Arts organisations, and professional and community sports providers. With support from the Advisory team, several schools are working with a wide range of training providers, especially around pupil leadership development but also in the areas of cooperative learning, restorative practice and coaching and mentoring. Strengthening links with the business community, beyond the provision of vocational experiences, has proven difficult for many schools, especially those located in areas with few larger industries and neighbouring schools making similar requests.

The integration of innovation and evaluation is an area for continuing development. Linkage between innovation and enquiry is developing but has yet to become established across all the Schools of Ambition. Reported high levels of development and improvement action, based on locally generated transformational plans, are not consistently matched by a corresponding high level of embedded evaluation. School leaders in tranches two and three commonly described enhanced levels of *reflection* resulting from participating in Schools of Ambition. A significant future development would be a concomitant commitment – as a professional norm - to reflective practice and *systematic professional enquiry that is cyclical, formative and collectively undertaken*.

The majority of teachers involved in evaluation activities report a positive impact on their professional development. Teacher evaluators reported greater confidence in collecting and using a range of sources of evaluation evidence. This most frequently included a combination of primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data drawn from school records, performance data, questionnaires, individual interviews and focus group interviews. Several schools are using software packages to support questionnaire design and analysis. There appear to be reasonably high levels of involvement of teachers and pupils as providers of evaluation information, with further work needed to enhance the involvement of parents and wider community stakeholders.

In addition to 'hard' data, initial plans for 'Telling the Story' articulated by informants commonly emphasised rich descriptive information. Such material was felt to hold greater relevance and authenticity for an intended audience of school professionals and the school's own community. Questionnaire responses from teacher evaluators identified a need for support in data analysis and report writing. Across the data sources there appears to be a tension between perceptions of (technicist) evaluation as a step removed from practice and a need to share rich stories of innovation with

the wider education community. Whilst valuing 'soft' indicators of impact, teacher evaluators felt least confident including and using such material in a formal evaluation framework.

The experiences of the Schools of Ambition (2008-09) suggest the transformative potential of sustained deliberation on locally defined development priorities. School leaders valued curriculum and budgetary flexibility to be innovative in responding to local needs. Many teachers responded positively to increased opportunities for teacher leadership, especially with regard to the provision of peer-led CPD. Working with external partners, many of the schools have promoted pupil leadership through leadership academies and peer-mentoring. The value of forms of collegial professional learning, enhanced through collaboration and networking within the wider Schools of Ambition community, places the schools in a strong position to respond to the opportunities and challenges of full implementation of a *Curriculum for Excellence*. The capacity of all of the Schools of Ambition to respond to these challenges would be further enhanced by the integration of innovation and enquiry that is currently evident among just some of them.



## Appendix 1: Key themes within Transformational Plans

Tranche One	
Anderson High School	Building partnerships with other schools globally through themed curriculum development projects. Use of ICT to develop global learning through six interlinked projects with the theme of <i>'Living Locally, Learning Globally'</i> .
Arbroath Academy	leadership development; pupil and community confidence; enterprising teaching and learning.
Barrhead High School	confidence and resilience; attainment and achievement; citizenship; inclusion;
Blairgowrie High School	vocational education; learning and teaching/ICT; leadership development
Braes High School	Building a strong and positive school ethos; development of new technologies for learning; enterprise and citizenship
Braeview Academy	developing opportunities to engage with the Arts; developing a learning community; developing leadership; increasing confidence, aspiration and ambition.
Burnhouse School	school ethos/culture; coaching and peer mentoring; behaviour management; restorative justice
Cardinal Newman High School	Cardinal Newman High School focuses on two strands: enhancing enterprise (in its widest definition) and expanding its vocational curriculum as part of the middle school programme.
Castlemilk High and St Margaret Mary's	teaching for effective learning; curricular flexibility; enhancing employability; improving attendance.
Doon Academy Learning Partnership	numeracy; Arts across the curriculum; vocational learning (curricular flexibility); curriculum enrichment (PE/dance/drama); ICT emotional health.
Hawick High School	Hawick High School has four objectives: 1) raising girls' aspiration and motivation through the Girls of Ambition project; 2) using formative

	assessment to promote effective learning and, pupil attainment and achievement; 3) using ICT to enhance teaching and learning; 4) utilising the 'Heart of Hawick Regeneration' project to develop young people's self-esteem, motivation, sense of aspiration and a 'can do' culture.
Inverness High School	social enterprise; vocational learning; ICT.
Islay High School	development of new curriculum structures; learning and teaching/ICT; vocational education; leadership, ethos/culture.
Kirkland High School	use of drama/performing arts to enhance learning and teaching to promote pupil confidence and opportunities; promoting leadership for pupils and staff; enhancing the image of the school in the community.
Newbattle Community High School	improved leadership skills and opportunities among pupils and staff; strengthening the provision of Arts across the curriculum; consolidating pupil support mechanisms Cross-curricular sharing of good practice
Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	OLSP High School investigates the development of creative thinking through and across the curriculum to transform the attitudes (motivation, confidence, self-esteem) and qualities (citizenship, enterprise) of all pupils.
St Modan's RC High School	Curricular developments revolve around the Arts, culture and health
St Ninian's High School	St Ninian's High School has four strands: pupil motivation, confidence and self-esteem; formative assessment; modern languages development; and the use of ICT in school. It is seeking to change behaviour and attitudes, broaden ambitions of pupils and enhance pupil engagement. Good practice and innovation in Modern Languages are being used as a catalyst to support whole school developments.
St Paul's High School	effective pupil tracking; learning beyond the classroom.
Wallace Hall Academy	restructuring the curriculum; learning and teaching; raising attainment and achievement; ICT and e-learning

<b>Tranche Two</b>	
Brechin High School	development of leadership capacity; development of ICT and innovative approaches in the curriculum; provision of vocational courses across the curriculum for S3–S6 pupils.
Castle Douglas	Castle Douglas has three main objectives: to expand vocational learning appropriate to the needs of individual learners; to enhance the range of ICT courses to equip pupils with skills appropriate to work and study skills for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century; and to develop ambition, self confidence and self esteem and entrepreneurial skills through enhanced art, music, drama and personal fitness provision.
Dunbar Grammar	The school intends to use participation in performing arts to develop pupil confidence, aspirations and give staff and pupils a shared sense of purpose and improve pupil engagement.
Fraserburgh Academy	There are three strands to the Fraserburgh Transformational Plan: promoting leadership and enterprise; challenge and support (self confidence, high expectations and personal responsibility); and the expansion of vocational opportunities.
Lossiemouth High	Lossiemouth is committed to: developing leadership capacity and opportunities for pupils and staff; the promotion of pupil-focused teaching and learning; and building a positive ethos and relationships in school.
Springburn Academy	The Transformational Plan at Springburn Academy is based on the following four strands: learning and teaching; raising the aspirations, ambitions and positive destinations of vulnerable young people; leadership development of staff and young people; and increasing parental involvement.
St Machar	The St. Machar Transformational Plan has the following objectives: to improve health and fitness activity levels of all pupils and staff with the aim of improving attainment and engagement with all aspects of school life; the development of pupil confidence, self-esteem and motivation through work on teaching and learning to raise attainment; and to develop further the school's ability to work with parents and the wider school community in Aberdeen City.

<b>Tranche Three</b>	
Alford Academy	successful leadership; effective learning experiences; high quality professional development; 21st-century curriculum.
Alloa Academy, Alva Academy and Lornhill Academy	The transformational for three secondary schools – Alva, Alloa and Lornhill – focuses on the adoption and implementation of restorative practice in association with nationally-recognised training organisations and schools with previous experience in the use of such practice.
Auchenharvie	raising pupil ambitions; enhancing the curriculum; improving the health of pupils; celebrating success (pupil reward system)
Carrick Academy	leadership, learning and community
Charleston Academy	improving health and well-being; increasing community use of Charleston campus; developing school ethos and promoting achievement; promoting effective learning and teaching; developing curriculum for excellence.
Gracemount High School	The Gracemount Transformational Plan has four strands: ethos for achievement (promoting confident individuals, ambition, high achievement and the determination to succeed); leadership and capacity development; promoting the effective use of ICT to enhance the learning experience, supporting learner independence and promoting successful learners; and pathway development to provide enhanced choice (a wider range of learning opportunities).
Kilsyth Academy	The Kilsyth Transformational Plan has three underpinning aims: the use of expressive arts and creativity to motivate the whole school community; the promotion of creative and active teaching and learning; and leadership development of both pupils and staff.
Kirkcaldy High School	Kirkcaldy aims to develop the leadership skills and abilities and attitudes in staff, pupils and parents through: the development of leadership programmes; facilitation of leadership opportunities at every level in the school; the development of pupils as Ambassadors for the school; and the development of a coaching and mentoring programme for staff and pupils.

	There are four core themes to the plan: effective leadership, motivational environments, aspirational learning and enhanced collaboration.
Lanark Grammar School	staff and pupil development; ICT; communication and sharing good practice; rich tasks; pupil progression and decision making; and baseline performance and progress
Orkney: Kirkwall Grammar School, North Walls Community School, Pierowall Junior High School, Sanday Junior High School, Stromness Academy and Stronsay Junior High School	Enhancing Skills - maximise the impact of learning and leadership opportunities; Transforming the curriculum- parity of curricular opportunity for all pupils in Orkney, enhanced e-learning opportunities; Celebrating Success - e-recording of achievement. Connecting with others - active participants in the global educational community.
Queensferry	The Transformational Plan addresses culture and ethos, learning and teaching, community engagement and leadership.
Renfrew High School	Renfrew High School's Transformational Plan has four strands: to develop Renfrew High School as a learning community; to enhance the use of ICT in the learning process; to develop the leadership of pupils and staff; and to develop the creative abilities of the pupils.
Rothsay Academy, Bute	improving attainment; recognising wider achievement; improving pupil support and engagement in learning; pursuing excellence;
St Stephen's and Port Glasgow	strengthening leadership skills across the schools' communities; maximising pupils' learning by raising confidence and self esteem; improved well-being through health education and participation in sport, music, art and drama.
Taylor High School	The school will use technology in all aspects of learning and teaching using co-operative learning approaches for the benefit of all pupils.
The Nicolson Institute	Pupil confidence and self-esteem, school ethos, leadership and vocational education.

## **Appendix 2: Guidance on Telling the Story**

### **Schools of Ambition - Telling the School's Transformation Story**

#### **Background**

There are 52 Schools of Ambition now in place across Scotland, all of which are undertaking a range of different activities and interventions, and are at different stages in their journey. As you are aware all of the SoA have been undertaking evaluative Action Research on the impact of interventions within schools, and a number of schools, (especially in the first tranche) have been asking for some guidance on how they might present not only these outcomes, but the key learning points for the school, staff and pupils. This document presents a suggested format for the presentation of your school's transformation story that outlines the key elements to be considered for inclusion, but is hopefully flexible enough to allow each school to adopt their own individual ways of sharing experiences. The length of your account will depend on the format you choose to adopt, but it is suggested that you ensure that what is produced will make sense to the wider educational community who may not have been directly involved in the SoA initiative.

#### **Objective**

The purpose of the feedback on the SoA outcomes is twofold. It will be a celebration of achievement, contextualising the transformational plans and the activities, and it will also document the progress and impact over the three years. However, it is recognised that this part of the story can only ever be a snapshot of the impact of the changes introduced and that there may well be additional outcomes in the years to come. For this reason we would like the evaluative research to be presented as part of a reflective document which highlights the key learning points for the school, and which will provide a marker or foundation stone for continued school development.

#### **Suggested Structure**

##### **Introduction**

- Narrative, giving an outline of the vision and Transformational Plan, contextualised in terms of the school's challenges.
- Activities undertaken by the school, including commentary on the challenges, processes, difficulties etc.

##### **Reflection on interventions**

- How far have you come in achieving your vision?
- What worked well and why?
- What didn't work?
- What changes were made from the original plan?
- What still needs to be done?
- What would you change if you were starting again, and what advice would you give to other schools?
- What changes do you expect to see in the future?
- What were the key learning points for the school?
- Reflection on the teacher researchers' 'journeys'

### **Evidence of impacts and outcomes**

- What research questions were addressed and how do they relate to the goals in the transformational plan?
- What methods were employed and why?
- How was the research undertaken?
- What evidence was gathered and analysed?
- Were there aspects of the research that were not completed or were not successful?
- What were the impacts on teachers, pupils and wider community? - presentation of evidence.

Routine monitoring and evaluation data may be attached in appendices to this account of the research and enquiry activity in school. This section is primarily concerned with the rationale for the investigations undertaken, the choice of methods of enquiry and the claims that can be made on the basis of evidence gathered.

### **Sustaining the change**

- What are you doing to sustain the changes?
- What will influence the sustainability of the changes?
- What will you continue to do differently?
- How will you know if the vision has been achieved?
- Has the process promoted teachers'/others' capacity to evaluate?
- How has what you have done prepared the school for *Curriculum for Excellence*?

### **External support**

- Input from the Local Authority
- Input from the university research team
- Input from the Senior Advisers
- Input from other sources (including partner organisations)

We would like the Local Authority also to outline what they feel are the key learning points, and how they are going to disseminate the lessons emerging from the school's involvement in the Schools of Ambition programme.

### **Format of the feedback**

This is really up to the schools, but ideally we would like the presentation to reflect the innovative nature of the programme, with use of multi-media, photographs, recordings etc., anything in fact that the school can include that demonstrates the impact of the Schools of Ambition initiative in their school. Schools might also consider for instance, including accounts or outputs from Pupil Conferences.

To ensure that the lessons and good practice of the schools can be shared as widely as possible, all schools are asked to produce their portfolios in an electronic format, with the aim of hosting the stories on the school's own website<sup>14</sup>. The website will then be signposted from the LTScotland Schools of Ambition website.

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<sup>14</sup> Where schools do not yet have a website, alternative arrangements will be made.

**Audience**

As outlined earlier, the target audience for the portfolio should be both other Schools of Ambition, and those who have not been part of the initiative. Many of the emerging lessons from the Schools of Ambition are very transferable to other schools. For this reason, all schools are asked to include as part of their portfolio, a final personal statement from participating individuals in the school, indicating which activities, methodologies or changes of practice that they would definitely take with them to other schools if they moved on.

**Preparation of Telling the Story**

You may wish to seek advice from your university research mentor and the SoA Senior Advisors in preparing your submission. You may also make use of the VRE to compare notes with colleagues in other Schools of Ambition.

It is anticipated that the work may be undertaken and submitted as soon as it is completed but no later than the end of March 2010 for Tranche 3 schools.

This document was prepared by Deirdre Kelly, SoA Research Co-ordinator, in collaboration with the Research Support Team. Updated March 2009 to incorporate 'Further Guidance'



### Appendix 3: The Schools of Ambition 2005/09 by tranche

Tranche One	
1. Anderson High School	Shetland
2. Arbroath Academy	Angus
3. Barrhead High School	East Renfrewshire
4. Blairgowrie High School	Perth and Kinross
5. Braes High School	Falkirk
6. Braeview Academy	Dundee City
7. Burnhouse School	West Lothian
8. Cardinal Newman High School	North Lanarkshire
9. Castlemilk High	Glasgow City
10. Doon Academy Learning Partnership	East Ayrshire
11. Hawick High School	Scottish Borders
12. Inverness High School	Highland
13. Islay High School	Argyll and Bute
14. Kirkland High School	Fife
15. Newbattle Community High School	Midlothian
16. Our Lady & St Patrick's High School	West Dunbartonshire
17. St Margaret Mary's	Glasgow City
18. St Modan's RC High School	Stirling
19. St Ninian's High School	East Dunbartonshire
20. St Paul's High School	Glasgow City
21. Wallace Hall Academy	Dumfries and Galloway
Tranche Two	
1. Brechin High School	Angus
2. Castle Douglas	Dumfries and Galloway
3. Dunbar Grammar	East Lothian
4. Fraserburgh Academy	Aberdeenshire
5. Lossiemouth High	Moray
6. Springburn Academy	Glasgow
7. St Machar	Aberdeen City
Tranche Three	
1. Alford Academy	Aberdeenshire
2. Alloa Academy,	Clackmannanshire
3. Alva Academy	Clackmannanshire
4. Auchenhavie	North Ayrshire
5. Carrick Academy	South Ayrshire
6. Charleston Academy, Inverness	Highland
7. Kilsyth Academy	North Lanarkshire
8. Kirkcaldy High School	Fife
9. Kirkwall Grammar School	Orkney
10. Lanark Grammar School/Learning Community	South Lanarkshire
11. Lornhill Academy	Clackmannanshire
12. North Walls Community School	Orkney
13. Port Glasgow	Inverclyde

14. St Stephens	Inverclyde
15. Taylor High School	North Lanarkshire
16. Pierowall Junior High School	Orkney
17. Sanday Junior High School	Orkney
18. Stromness Academy	Orkney
19. Stronsay Junior High School	Orkney
20. Renfrew High School	East Renfrewshire
21. Rothesay Academy, Bute	Argyll and Bute
22. The Nicolson Institute, Stornoway	Western Isles
23. Gracemount High School	Edinburgh
24. South Queensferry	Edinburgh

## **Appendix 4: Interview guide for school leaders**

Interview topics for members of the leadership group with overall responsibility for project management in all T2 and T3 Schools of Ambition (March - May, 2009)

### **Views on the main programme goals**

- The transformational plan provides details of the aims of your initiative but could you please briefly summarise what you think the initiative is trying to achieve.

#### Probes:

Have there been any changes to the original aims?

Can you tell us why/explain the reasons for this.

- What were the main reasons for implementing the initiative in your school?
- How does the School of Ambition plan link with the school development plan?
- Have you made explicit links between developments supported through the School of Ambition and:
  - Curriculum for Excellence?
  - Journey to Excellence?

### **Implementing the initiative**

- What challenges have you encountered during implementation of the initiative?

#### Probes:

How have you dealt with these challenges?

Did you make any contingencies for the implementation/anticipate any difficulties at the outset?

### **Progress and outcomes to date**

- What indicators have you used to monitor progress (to assess 'distance travelled')?
- How have you evaluated progress so far?
- To date, what evidence is there that the initiative has had an impact concerning the intended aims?

Probe: Evidence from various stakeholder groups e.g. pupils, teachers, parents, others. Also nature of evidence (qualitative etc).

What do you now do differently?

- Have there been any unexpected outcomes, either positive or negative? What has gone well or has not developed as expected?
- How has on-going evaluation informed year-on-year planning?

### **Factors that enable or inhibit transformation**

- At this stage, what factors do you think have *facilitated* progress towards your goals?

Probe: In what ways have they helped?

- At this stage, what factors do you think have *inhibited* progress towards your goals?

Probes:

What has or can be done to address these inhibiting factors?

How have you tried to deal with this/what measures have you put in place?

### **Partnership working**

- Have business and other community partners been involved in supporting the initiative?

Probes:

If yes, what partners are involved? What role have they played in supporting the School of Ambition?

How useful/helpful have they been?

### **Sustainability of the initiative**

- At this stage, what consideration have you given to sustainability of the initiative?
- How sustainable do you think the initiative is for your school?

Probes:

What conditions (pressures/factors) would affect sustainability?

In the long term, are some aspects of the plan more sustainable than others? Can you tell us which ones and why?

- Do you think other schools could pursue a similar initiative, given similar circumstances and resources?

Probes:

What particular elements are more or less transferable?

- In your opinion, has participation in the SoA initiative promoted the school's ability to self-evaluate?

Probes:

If yes, in what ways?

If no, what further support do you need?

### **Disseminating good practice and networking**

- Has your school been involved in disseminating and sharing ideas concerning the Schools of Ambition initiative?

Probes:

What form did this take (formal networking events, informal contacts/school visits, LA)?

Who was involved (e.g. which other schools, wider education community, other stakeholders)?

Have you found it useful? What have you learned? Has networking with other schools caused you to change/alter/enhance what you are doing in any way?

- All schools are encouraged to compile a portfolio of evidence that tells the story of their School of Ambition. What plans do you have for 'Telling the Story'?

Probe

At what stage in development is the Telling the Story portfolio?

What support do you need in compiling this portfolio?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## **Appendix 5: Questionnaire responses**

An annotated copy of the electronic questionnaire survey distributed to all teachers involved in Schools of Ambition evaluation activities in their schools appears overleaf (pp. 66-79).

# schools of ambition

## Questionnaire

### Terms Used

Where we make reference to school-led evaluation or (action) research we are using a quite broad definition which includes: systematic enquiry conducted by any teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and other stakeholders to help understand the outcomes and processes of *Schools of Ambition* activities.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire please contact: Kevin Lowden  
University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH. Tel: 0141 330 3493.  
Email: [kevin.lowden@scree.ac.uk](mailto:kevin.lowden@scree.ac.uk)



## Section 1: General Information

1	Position in school:	Headteacher	10	Project Manager	3
		DHT	8	Seconded HT	1
		Principal Teacher	7	Class Teacher	1
		Faculty Head	3	Other	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>		
2	School Name:				

**24 schools**

3	Local Authority:
---	------------------

**19 local authorities**



## Section 2: Involvement in researching and evaluating your school's SoA work

4 What role do you have in researching and evaluating your school's SoA work? *Please tick all that apply*

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <input type="radio"/> Responsible for determining research and evaluation priorities  | <b>19</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Responsible for at least one strand of research and evaluation activity associated with the Transformational plan | <b>12</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Designing aspects of the research or evaluation   | <b>18</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Co-ordinating research and evaluation activities  | <b>23</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Collecting research and evaluation data/evidence/information  | <b>19</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Analysis of research and evaluation data/evidence/information   | <b>21</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify   |           |

**3 responses**

5 Have you formed a research and evaluation (or enquiry) group to lead the research and evaluation of SoA activities in your school?

<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>

***If you answered 'yes' to Q5, please answer Q6–Q9. Otherwise, please go to Q10.***

6 If yes, what is the size of this group?

- |                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1–2 persons | <b>1</b>  |
| <input type="radio"/> 3–5 persons | <b>9</b>  |
| <input type="radio"/> 6–8 persons | <b>5</b>  |
| <input type="radio"/> 9 plus      | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>16</b> |

7 Who is a member of this group?

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <input type="radio"/> Senior management only                       | <b>-</b>  |
| <input type="radio"/> Largely senior management                    | <b>3</b>  |
| <input type="radio"/> A balance of promoted and non-promoted posts | <b>10</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Largely non-promoted posts                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>16</b> |

8 How was this group formed?

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| <input type="radio"/> Open invitation to all staff  | <b>5</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Delegation as part of existing roles and responsibilities in school | <b>1</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Targeted recruitment by senior management                           | <b>4</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify   | <b>5</b> |

**5 responses**



- 9 Please explain your understanding of the reasons for this approach in the space below:

14 responses



- 10 Approximately what proportion of staff are directly involved in research and evaluation activities at your school? (collecting, analysing and sharing evidence from research and evaluation)

<input type="radio"/> Less than 15%	18
<input type="radio"/> 15-30%	10
<input type="radio"/> 31-45%	2
<input type="radio"/> 46-60%	-
<input type="radio"/> 61-75%	2
<input type="radio"/> Over 75%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>



- 11 Has your research and evaluation strategy involved *pupils* as data gatherers/researchers during this session (2008/09)?

**Yes 17**

☐ YES ☒ NO

**No 17**

If yes, please provide further details, including the approximate number of pupils involved

16 responses



- 12 Has your research and evaluation strategy involved *parents* as data gatherers/researchers during this session (2008/09)?

**Yes 9**

☐ YES ☒ NO

**No 25**

If yes, please provide further details, including the approximate number of parents involved

7 responses



- 13** Are other organisations or individuals involved in gathering data to support your research and evaluation of SoA? (e.g. LA personnel, external consultants etc.)

YES

NO

**Yes 10**

**No 24**

***If you answered 'no' above, please go to Q20.***

***If yes***, please give the contact details (name, organisation and telephone/email address) of those partners who have worked closely with you in delivering aspects of the transformational plan e.g. school-college link personnel, local employers, consultants, LA personnel etc. ***Please use Q14–Q19 to provide details of up to six partners.***

The Research Support Team will contact external partners to request summary feedback on their involvement in support of the school's plan (via a short questionnaire or telephone interview that will take not more than fifteen minutes to complete).

**Q14 to Q19 - 12 responses in total**

**14 Partner 1**

Name

Organisation

Tel./Email

**15 Partner 2**

Name

Organisation

Tel./Email

**16 Partner 3**

Name

Organisation

Tel./Email

**17 Partner 4**

Name

Organisation

Tel./Email

**18 Partner 5**

Name

Organisation

Tel./Email

**19 Partner 6**

Name	<input type="text"/>
Organisation	<input type="text"/>
Tel./Email	<input type="text"/>



- 20** Prior to your involvement in research and evaluation through SoA, did you have any previous experience of conducting systematic evaluation or research?

<input type="button" value="YES"/>	<input type="button" value="NO"/>
------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

**Yes 19**

**No 15**

If yes, please give details

**18 responses**

## Section 3: Support for SoA research and evaluation

- 21 How confident do you feel concerning your ability to conduct the following research and evaluation activities within your school?

	1 Very confident	2 Fairly confident	3 Not very confident	4 Not at all confident
Determining research and evaluation priorities	1 6	2 23	3 5	4 -
Designing or conducting quantitative research and evaluation methods (e.g. surveys, statistical evidence etc)	1 7	2 21	3 5	4 -
Designing or conducting qualitative research and evaluation methods (e.g. interviews, focus groups, observations, questionnaires, document evidence)	1 9	2 21	3 3	4 1
Coordinating research and evaluation activities	1 8	2 19	3 6	4 -
Analysis of quantitative research and evaluation data (numerical, statistical)	1 8	2 18	3 7	4 1
Analysis of qualitative information (e.g. interview and/or questionnaire and document evidence)	1 8	2 16	3 9	4 1
Reporting research and evaluation findings in school	1 11	2 17	3 6	4 -
Sharing good practice by leading in-house CPD	1 14	2 14	3 5	4 -
Compiling the Telling the Story portfolio	1 5	2 19	3 10	4 -



- 22 Has your involvement with research and evaluation through the Schools of Ambition increased your capacity to integrate research approaches in your everyday practice?

	Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	Not at all
	1 11	2 14	3 9

- 23 If yes, please provide an example

23 responses

- 24 Other than support from the SoA Research Mentors, have you received any training or other support concerning doing research and evaluation?

Yes	No	Don't know
<b>1</b> 10	<b>2</b> 24	<b>3</b> -

- 25 If yes, please give details

**10 responses**

- 26 What types of support would you most welcome from your research mentor in the next few months?

**26 responses**

- 27 In the last six months, have you used the Virtual Research Environment (VRE) to find out about research and evaluation activities in other Schools of Ambition?

Yes	No	No, but I intend to
<b>1</b> 7	<b>2</b> 15	<b>3</b> 12

- 28 How useful are the following ways of sharing approaches to research and evaluation?

1 Very useful	2 Fairly useful	3 Not very useful	4 Not at all useful	N/A
Face to face regional networking events				
<b>1</b> 15	<b>2</b> 15	<b>3</b> 2	<b>4</b> -	<b>5</b> 1
Face to face national networking events				
<b>1</b> 12	<b>2</b> 16	<b>3</b> 3	<b>4</b> -	<b>5</b> 2
Direct approaches to schools (telephone/email)				
<b>1</b> 8	<b>2</b> 16	<b>3</b> 6	<b>4</b> 1	<b>5</b> 2
Visits to other schools				
<b>1</b> 13	<b>2</b> 14	<b>3</b> 2	<b>4</b> -	<b>5</b> 4
Schools of Ambition webpages e.g. case studies				
<b>1</b> 10	<b>2</b> 16	<b>3</b> 5	<b>4</b> -	<b>5</b> 1
Local Authority promoted links				
<b>1</b> 1	<b>2</b> 12	<b>3</b> 7	<b>4</b> 3	<b>5</b> 9
Scottish Government Advisor promoted links				
<b>1</b> 5	<b>2</b> 16	<b>3</b> 4	<b>4</b> 1	<b>5</b> 6

## 29 Comments

3 responses



## Section 4: Main research and evaluation activities conducted to date

### 30 What are the main research and evaluation activities in your school that will help you assess the impact of the School of Ambition? *Please tick all that apply*

- ☐ School generated surveys/questionnaires (paper-based and online ) 34
- ☐ Surveys generated by other researchers 5
- ☐ Individual interviews 27
- ☐ Focus groups (small group discussions) 29
- ☐ Data extracted from school records (attainment, attendance, behaviour, destination of school leavers etc) 25
- ☐ Review of existing research studies 7
- ☐ Review of policy documents 10
- ☐ Information from contact with parents (e.g. transition to secondary school, options queries, school events, parents' consultation evenings) 23
- ☐ Health and fitness monitoring 7
- ☐ Cognitive Abilities Testing 8
- ☐ HMle questionnaires for pupils 7
- ☐ HMle questionnaires for parents 9
- ☐ Sharing evidence and ideas with other schools 18
- ☐ Pupil enquiry group 8
- ☐ Parent consultative group 6
- ☐ Peer observation of lessons 18
- ☐ Image-based research (digital photography/film) 14
- ☐ Other types of evidence gathering, please specify 3

3 responses

If you have used the following research and evaluation activities, can you please tell us whether they have been used to gather information from staff, pupils, parents or other groups? *For Q31–Q33, please tick all that apply*

**31 Survey/Questionnaire**

<input type="radio"/> Staff	<b>26</b>
<input type="radio"/> Pupils	<b>31</b>
<input type="radio"/> Parents	<b>21</b>
<input type="radio"/> Other stakeholder groups (eg local agencies, employers, etc.)	<b>2</b>

**32 Interviews**

<input type="radio"/> Staff	<b>18</b>
<input type="radio"/> Pupils	<b>25</b>
<input type="radio"/> Parents	<b>6</b>
<input type="radio"/> Other stakeholder groups (eg local agencies, employers, etc.)	<b>3</b>

**33 Focus groups**

<input type="radio"/> Staff	<b>15</b>
<input type="radio"/> Pupils	<b>25</b>
<input type="radio"/> Parents	<b>6</b>
<input type="radio"/> Other stakeholder groups (eg local agencies, employers, etc.)	<b>2</b>

- 34 In your opinion have research and evaluation activities in your school contributed to the following:

	1 Yes, significantly	2 Yes, to some extent	3 Not at all	4 Too early to say
School development and improvement planning	1 10	2 21	3 -	4 3
Refining the Schools of Ambition transformational plan	1 13	2 16	3 2	4 3
Local curriculum development	1 3	2 12	3 11	4 8
Professional development of participating teacher evaluators	1 12	2 15	3 3	4 4
Informing the development of future Schools of Ambition activities (second cycle of activities)	1 10	2 19	3 1	4 3
Assessing the impact of Schools of Ambition activities on pupils' achievement	1 13	2 12	3 2	4 7
Assessing the impact of Schools of Ambition activities on pupils' confidence or motivation	1 15	2 15	3 3	4 1
Assessing the impact of Schools of Ambition activities on the wider community (including parents, community groups etc)	1 6	2 14	3 6	4 7
Other	1 -	2 -	3 -	4 -

- 35 If you answered yes to 'Other' above, please specify

-

- 36 Has the original transformational plan for your school been modified as a result of findings from school-led research and evaluation?

Yes, significantly	Yes, to some extent	No	Unsure
1 1	2 11	3 16	4 6

- 37 Please provide further comments for your response to Q36. We would be very interested in any examples you have of where the transformational plan has been modified in the light of research and evaluation findings

11 responses



## Section 5: Professional development

- 38 Has your research and evaluation role for Schools of Ambition had any impact on your own professional development?

Yes, significantly	Yes, to some extent	No	Unsure
<b>1</b> 10	<b>2</b> 18	<b>3</b> 5	<b>4</b> 1



- 39 Are you *actively* considering accreditation for the work you are undertaking as part of Schools of Ambition?

	1 Yes	2 Not yet, possibly in the future	3 Definitely not	4 Doesn't apply/I'm not a teacher
SQH	<b>1</b> 3	<b>2</b> 10	<b>3</b> 15	<b>4</b> 1
Chartered Teacher	<b>1</b> 1	<b>2</b> 1	<b>3</b> 16	<b>4</b> 5
Other Masters programmes in Education	<b>1</b> -	<b>2</b> 6	<b>3</b> 15	<b>4</b> 1
GTCS Certificate of Professional Recognition	<b>1</b> -	<b>2</b> 8	<b>3</b> 12	<b>4</b> 1
Other	<b>1</b> 3	<b>2</b> -	<b>3</b> 12	<b>4</b> 1

- 40 If you answered yes to 'Other' above, please specify

**3 responses**

## Section 6: The impact of SoA activities

- 41 At this stage in implementing your school's transformational plan do you think there is any evidence of positive impact in terms of the transformational objectives?

Yes	To some extent	No	Unsure
<b>1</b> 19	<b>2</b> 13	<b>3</b> -	<b>4</b> 2

- 42 Please provide some additional comments on the reasons for your answer to Q41

31 responses

- 43 How *sustainable* are the activities you are researching and evaluating?

33 responses



- 44 Please identify and describe any Schools of Ambition activities in your school that you regard as examples of good practice that are *transferable* to other schools

29 responses



- 45 What contact have you had with *other Schools of Ambition* to share good practice (excluding formal networking events)?

30 responses

- 46 What contact have you had with schools *outside the Schools of Ambition network* to share good practice?

28 responses



- 47 What contact have you had with the *Local Authority* to share good practice?

29 responses



- 48 What other dissemination activities, if any, have you been involved with?

18 responses



## Section 7: Factors influencing the SoA Initiative in your school

- 49 Please summarise what you think are the main factors that *facilitate* the successful operation of SoA activities in your school?

32 responses



- 50 Please summarise what are the main factors that *inhibit* the successful operation of SoA activities in your school?

31 responses

- 51** Finally, please use the space below to add any further comments you might wish to make

**9 responses**

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

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