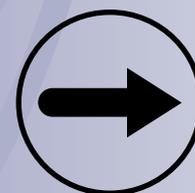


Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools Project: Phase II Primary Schools

Information Document



School Standards

DfTE Information Document No: 048-05

Date of Issue: 17 November 2005

- Title of Document:** Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools Project: Phase II Primary Schools.
- Audience:** Governing Bodies and Headteachers of Maintained Schools in Wales; Local Authorities; Teacher and other Unions; Church Diocesan Authorities; National and local bodies in Wales concerned with education.
- Overview:** This document provides information for schools, local authorities and their key partners on the factors and characteristics that have contributed to success in primary schools operating in challenging circumstances.
- Further information:** Enquiries about this document should be made to:
Mrs Lyn Summers
Tel: 029 2082 5959,
Fax: 029 2082 6109,
e-mail: SMD2@wales.gsi.gov.uk
or in writing at the address below.
- Additional copies:** Can be obtained from:
Mr Alan Chapple
Tel: 029 2082 6052,
Fax: 029 2082 6109,
e-mail: SMD2@wales.gsi.gov.uk, or from the
Assembly's website www.learning.wales.gov.uk
or in writing at the address below
- Schools Management Division
Department for Training and Education
Welsh Assembly Government
Crown Building
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ
- Related Documents:** Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools, DfTE Information Document No: 029-02, Welsh Assembly Government October 2002.

Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools Project: Phase II Primary Schools

Contents

	Page
Foreword	1
Executive Summary	2
Section 1: Introduction and Context	5
Section 2: The Primary Phase Project	9
Section 3: The Case Studies	14
Section 4: Message Emerging from the Primary Phase of the Project	24
Section 5: Recommendations	28
Appendix A: The Case Study Schools	35
Appendix B: Support Group Members	39
Appendix C: List of Publications and Materials on Initiatives in the Report	41

The research described in this report was undertaken by Chris James (Project Director), Michael Connolly and Gerald Dunning of the University of Glamorgan Educational Leadership and Management Research Unit; Tony Elliot (University of Wales, Bangor); and Ian Lewis and Jean Williams (free-lance educational consultants/researchers), on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.

Foreword

For some years now the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities in Wales have had a shared aspiration to raise standards in all our schools so that, wherever they live, children in Wales have access to high quality education which enables them to achieve their full potential.

The Narrowing the Gap joint project between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association was established to explore how the 'gap' in the performance of schools could be reduced. The report of the first phase of work published in 2002 described the persistence of the gap at secondary school level but indicated that at primary level the gap was narrowing, though it was still significant.

The report on the first phase dealt mainly with secondary schools and analysis of what worked for secondary schools which were succeeding in challenging circumstances. That report has been highly influential in shaping the thinking of schools and local authorities – in securing acceptance of the view that success is possible even in the most difficult circumstances; and that if Wales is to become a confident and vibrant learning country we cannot settle for second best for any of our communities and their young people.

In welcoming and commending this report to schools and local authorities in Wales, our expectation is that it can be just as influential in shaping thinking about primary schools operating in challenging circumstances. The signs are encouraging. The gap in the performance of primary schools across Wales is narrowing and as the report demonstrates primary schools can succeed for their pupils and their communities.

The report carries messages for all primary schools – their staff, their governing bodies, their parents and pupils, and their local community – and for local authorities. The challenge now for the Assembly Government, local authorities and schools is to share and spread the good practice identified in the report. There will be a series of events across Wales towards the end of 2005 and into 2006 to help with this. Celebrating success in our schools and sharing what has been done to achieve it is crucial.



Jane Davidson

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning



Councillor John Davies

Welsh Local Government Association

September 2005

Executive Summary

A task and finish group of the Local Government Partnership Council was set up in October 2000 to examine the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between schools, particularly those in prosperous and deprived areas; and to consider the factors which enabled some schools to succeed in challenging circumstances.

The report of the first phase of work, focusing on secondary schools, was published in 2002. This report deals with the second phase looking at primary schools. It draws conclusions from examining practice in a range of primary schools across Wales which are successful in difficult circumstances.

The main findings of the report are:

- All the schools had a central characteristic: **A productive, strong and highly inclusive culture that focused on ensuring effective and enriched teaching and learning for all pupils and improving and further enriching teaching for learning for all pupils**
- This was supported a further six characteristics:
 - **Leadership:** the headteacher's leadership, leadership throughout the school and the leadership of the governing body
 - **The mindset:** proactive, optimistic, reflective, caring: high expectations for all pupils and staff: praising achievement: having pride in the school
 - **The teaching team:** working together to fully utilise and improve their expertise
 - **The engagement and commitment of pupils and their parents**
 - **Efficient and effective organisation and management**
 - **Mutual support, validation and valuing from all those connected with the school**
- **The outcome:** high and improving levels of pupil attainment and achievement.

From this analysis the report draws the following findings and recommendations:

Finding: Primary schools can make a substantial difference to the attainment of pupils who experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

Recommendation: All primary schools in Wales would benefit from reviewing their practice in light of the characteristics of successful schools.

Finding: Schools need the support of the local authority if they are to succeed.

Recommendation: Local authority partnership with schools needs to be developed. Authorities need to focus their efforts on low performing schools.

Finding: Motivation of school staff is crucial to success.

Recommendation: More attention should be given to motivating staff by praising their efforts, inspiring them and encouraging them to do even better.

Finding: Leadership is very important in setting and sustaining a way of working that helps teachers to teach and pupils to learn. Headteachers are responsible for giving leadership and have a vital role in developing leadership in others.

Recommendation: All schools need to consider how they develop and sustain leadership throughout the organisation.

Finding: Schools need a mindset which is proactive, optimistic, reflective and caring; has high expectations for all pupils and staff; praises achievement; and has pride in the school.

Recommendation: All schools need to consider their overall attitude and approach to their work.

Finding: Effective, inclusive team working is essential for ensuring and improving pupil attainment and achievement.

Recommendation: All schools need to reflect on how staff work as a team and how they could improve their team work.

Finding: Enabling pupils to attain good results in tests and to achieve generally is as essential as providing a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. These are not mutually exclusive.

Recommendation: Schools need to consider how to ensure teaching is both effective and enriched and how to improve its effectiveness and enrich it further.

Finding: Initiatives are more likely to help schools if they are well thought through, evidence-based and implemented in partnership with schools.

Recommendation: Those involved in developing initiatives, need to ensure they develop improvement initiatives with schools.

Finding: Good governing bodies with effective Chairs are essential if schools are to be successful.

Recommendation: The status and training of school governors should be enhanced.

Finding: Parents need to be actively engaged in and committed to their children's learning.

Recommendation: Schools need to explore how they ensure parental engagement and commitment.

Finding: When schools are places where pupils are valued, stimulated and motivated generally, they want to attend.

Recommendation: Schools need to review their attendance policies and consider the extent to which valuing, stimulating and motivating pupils underpins efforts to ensure and improve attendance.

Finding: Successful schools have excellent relationships with their communities.

Recommendation: Schools should review their relationships with the communities they serve and consider how to develop them.

Section 5 of the report sets out current initiatives which will help schools and local authorities to address these recommendations.

Section 1: Introduction and Context

"Inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals must be narrowed in the interests of all."
(*The Learning Country, NAFW 2001, p10*).

1.1 The educational attainment of school pupils in Wales has improved in the last ten years as a result of the efforts of all the members of the 'education community' – the Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn, ACCAC, local authorities, school governing bodies, headteachers, teachers and, of course, pupils and their parents. Despite those efforts, there is still a gap between the level of pupil attainment in those schools where attainment overall is high and those where attainment overall is low. The Narrowing the Gap Project was started in 2000 to find ways of reducing this disparity as a joint Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Local Government Association initiative. The report of the first phase of the work from October 2000 to October 2002 focused on secondary schools. From November 2002 to June 2004, the Project concentrated on disparities in attainment in the primary phase. This report describes the outcomes of that further work.

The central issue

1.2 Pupil attainment in primary schools in Wales, as measured by the end of Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), has improved in the last ten years. Despite this general improvement, there is a gap between pupil attainment in schools where attainment overall is high and pupil attainment in schools where attainment overall is low. This 'attainment gap' has narrowed from a 32% difference between upper and lower quartiles in 1996 to 23% in 2004 but it is still significant as Figure 1 indicates.

1.3 In the report, we have used the terms attainment and achievement in specific ways. 'Attainment' indicates the measurement of a pupil's capabilities at a particular point in time in relation to national norms using tests and examinations such as end of Key Stage National Curriculum tests. 'Achievement' describes pupil progress in relation to a particular starting point for the pupil concerned.

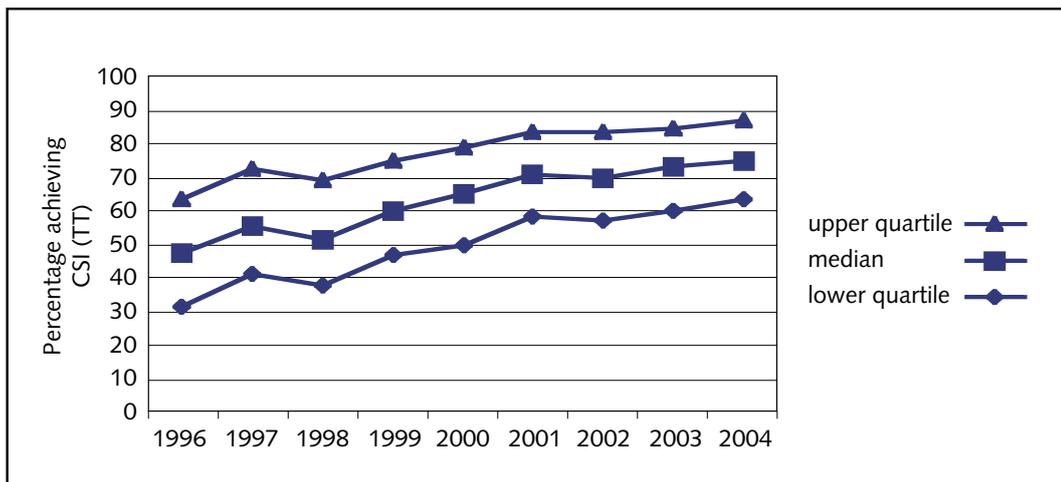


Figure 1 - Percentage of schools in Wales in which the pupils attain the Core Subject Indicator (CSI), of at least National Curriculum Level 4 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh, at the end of Key Stage 2.

1.4 Overall, the attainment of school pupils in Wales decreases as disadvantage increases. In general, the proportion of pupils in a school achieving at least Level 4 in English or Welsh, mathematics and science in the end of Key Stage 2 SATs (the core subject indicator) falls overall as the level of disadvantage in a school, as measured by the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals, increases. This relationship between attainment and disadvantage is shown in Figure 2. There is, therefore, a good case for arguing that educational attainment in primary schools is linked to the social and economic disadvantage experienced by the pupils and that the attainment gap is partially the result of disadvantage.

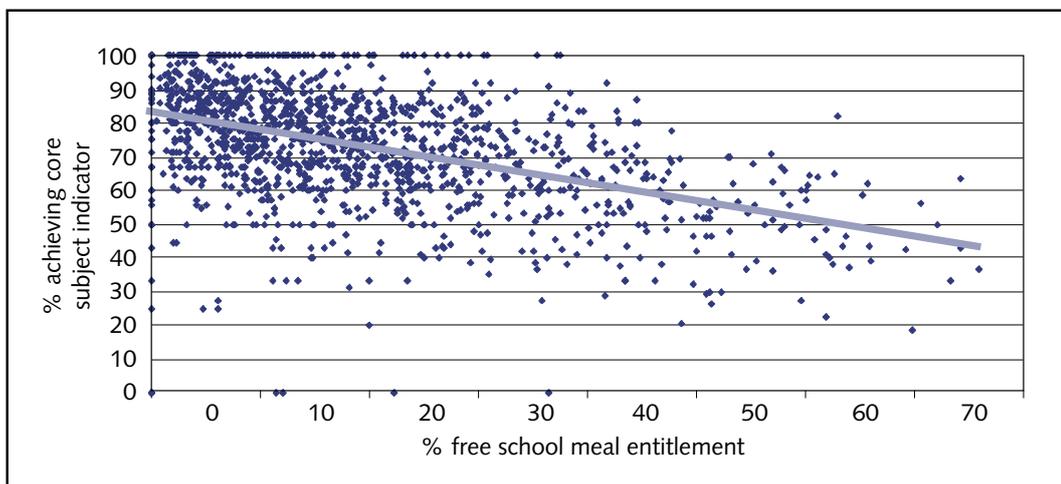


Figure 2 - The percentage of pupils in a school attaining the Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator (CSI), plotted against the percentage of pupils in the school entitled to free school meals in 2004.

1.5 Whilst high levels of disadvantage generally appear to result in lower levels of pupil attainment, this is not the case in some primary schools. In these schools, the levels of disadvantage and pupil attainment are both high. These schools appear to have overcome one of the major causes of

low achievement and an important reason for the attainment gap, that is, the disadvantage experienced by the pupils. This study looked at some of these schools to identify the factors that contributed to their success.

The Narrowing the Gap Project

1.6 In October 2000, the Local Government Partnership Council established a task group to examine the range of performance of schools with a view to making recommendations for action to narrow the gap in performance. The group drew its membership from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales, ACCAC, Estyn, the General Teaching Council for Wales, Governors Wales, the National Council for Education and Training in Wales, the teaching unions, the Welsh Primary Schools Association and the Welsh Secondary Schools Association.

1.7 The first phase of the work from October 2000 to October 2002 analysed the features of secondary schools in disadvantaged areas which had shown significant progress and sought to identify what worked for those schools and how that good practice could be spread. It also undertook a review of the literature on school improvement and analysed other matters relating to the attainment and achievement of secondary school pupils in Wales.

1.8 The report was published on 17 October 2002. The major conclusions were :

- There was a wide variation in the performance of schools. At secondary level the gap between the attainments of pupils where attainment overall was high and those where attainment overall was low was not narrowing. At primary level there were signs this attainment gap was narrowing.
- Schools differed greatly in the rate of progress made by pupils during each Key Stage relative to their previous performance.
- Developing the community focus of schools raised the profile of education and brought with it the potential for multiple benefits for learners, schools and their communities.
- There was a strong relationship in the secondary phase between levels of disadvantage and performance. This link was less strong in primary schools but still significant. However, pupils in a substantial minority of schools in disadvantaged areas, progressed at a greater rate than might have been expected demonstrating that there was no necessary link between deprivation and low attainment.
- Three key factors were necessary for school improvement:
 - having key personnel able to drive forward school improvement;

- monitoring teaching and learning and promoting effective practice; and
- making effective use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning.

1.9 The Partnership Council agreed in July 2002 to a second phase for the project to be taken forward on a similar basis to Phase I with the following aims:

- To identify the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between primary schools particularly between those in prosperous and deprived areas.
- To develop a definition of 'good performance' in primary education, which has regard to added value and overall targets for attainment in accordance with Better Wales and The Learning Country.
- To identify primary schools which demonstrate consistently good performance.
- To identify the key factors (educational, socio-economic and in terms of resource) which contribute to consistently good performance in these primary schools
- To make recommendations as to how these key factors might be applied in all schools in Wales, with specific regard to the roles and responsibilities of the Welsh Assembly Government, LEAs, headteachers/senior managers, teachers and governing bodies in primary schools.

Section 2: The Primary Phase Project

2.1 The Primary Phase Project used two main research methods.

1. *A questionnaire-based survey of 250 primary schools in Wales* identified as 'bucking the trend' in terms of their performance against like schools.
2. *The case study of 18 primary schools in Wales* whose pupils experience high levels of disadvantage and yet do well in national tests.

The questionnaire-based survey

2.2 In November 2002, all LEAs in Wales were asked to identify schools that were performing significantly better than schools of a similar nature and to provide examples of schools which they regarded as having best practice. The LEAs identified 250 schools. The selection was checked by Estyn, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Project Team principally to ensure that the schools were indeed effective or significantly improving and that they were schools where the pupils experienced high levels of disadvantage. All the local authority areas in Wales were represented in the sample.

2.3 The schools were surveyed in early 2003 by means of a questionnaire developed by David Hopkins (Caerphilly LEA/ADEW) and Maggie Turford (Estyn). The survey was administered by the Local Government Data Unit Wales (LGDUW). Of those schools surveyed, 165 responded (66%) and all local authority areas were represented. The responses were analysed in the spring term of 2004 by the LGDUW and the Project Team.

2.4 The survey asked schools :

- what recent changes or initiatives had occurred
- what developments the schools considered were most important
- the value of support from their LEA for changes or initiatives.

The findings

Recent changes/initiatives in the schools

2.5 Responses in terms of changes/initiatives used recently listed in rank order by frequency of responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - The changes/initiatives used recently by the schools at the time of the survey (early 2003) listed in rank order.

Changes/initiatives used recently	% 'Yes' responses (n = 165)
Reviewing policies and practice in literacy	95%
Using a range of data to set pupil targets	95%
Reviewing policies and practice in ICT	94%
Reviewing policies and practice in numeracy	91%
Introducing whole school initiatives for development (e.g. liP, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark, Excellence Models, etc.)	91%
Promoting management training	87%
Promoting leadership training	86%
Introducing monitoring procedures	86%
Reviewing home-school links	79%
Innovation in PSE elements	75%
Effective links between KS2/3	75%
Effective links between KS1/2	73%
Effective links between early years/reception/KS1	72%
Reviewing community links/provision	71%
Improvement of school governors in leadership and management issues/training	71%
Innovation on the curriculum to support/modify behavioural problems	69%
Appointment of new subject leader	69%
Using data to set targets for staff/departments	69%
Developing initiatives in learning styles and needs	66%
Reviewing/introducing innovative practice on attendance/punctuality	66%
Appointment of new staff to key managerial posts	65%
Good practice in relation to gender differences in performance	62%
Appointment of new headteacher	54%
Extensions to statutory curriculum	54%
Introducing other arrangements to tackle actual or partial disaffection	35%

2.6 In the period before the survey, the schools had implemented a large number of changes/initiatives. Two-thirds of the schools had implemented 20 out of the 25 changes/initiatives listed in the questionnaire.

2.7 The changes/initiatives implemented by more than 80% of the schools focused explicitly on improving school leadership, management, teaching and learning. The most common changes concentrated on teaching and learning. 'Whole school initiatives for development' was ranked highly on the list.

2.8 The 'Appointment of new headteacher', which is typically a relatively infrequent event was not ranked as highly as other initiatives. The same applies to the relatively low ranked changes 'Appointment of new subject leaders' and 'Appointment of new staff to key managerial posts'.

2.9 The introduction of arrangements to tackle actual or perceived disaffection did not feature highly in the ranking. The data from the case study schools (see section 3) confirmed this finding. It indicated that in these schools, disaffection was not a widespread problem and, generally, the pupils liked attending, wanted to attend and were not 'anti-school'.

The developments schools considered the most important

2.10 The schools were asked to select five changes/initiatives they considered to be the most important and to rank them in order of importance. The changes/initiatives the schools selected are listed in Table 2 as follows:

Change/initiative	Position
Introducing whole school initiatives for development (e.g. IiP, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark, Excellence Models, etc.)	1
Introducing monitoring and self-evaluation procedures	2
Reviewing policies and practice in literacy	3
Appointment of new staff to key managerial posts	4
Developing initiatives in learning styles and needs	5=
Reviewing policies and practice in numeracy	5=
Innovation on the curriculum to support/modify behavioural problems	7=
Using a range of data to set pupil targets	7=
Reviewing policies and practice in ICT	9
Reviewing home-school links	10
Appointment of new headteacher	11
Effective links between KS2/3	12
Promoting management training	13

Effective links between: Early years/reception/KS1	14
Innovation in PSE elements	15=
Using data to set targets for staff/departments	15=
Appointment of new subject leader	15=
Effective links between: KS1/2	18
Good practice in relation to gender differences in performance	19
Reviewing community links/provision	20
Promoting leadership training	21=
Reviewing/introducing innovative practice on attendance/punctuality	21=
Introducing other arrangements to tackle actual or partial disaffection	23
Extensions to statutory curriculum	24
Improvement of school governors in leadership and management issues/training.	25
Reviewing parental consultation arrangements	26

2.11 The schools valued whole school initiatives for a number of possible reasons:

- they provided a framework for an aspect of practice
- they covered many aspects of the school's work
- they provided a 'lever for change'
- for the recognition, motivation and status they brought.

2.12 The results indicated the value schools placed on improving leadership, management, teaching and learning. Improvement in these areas had been a priority.

2.13 'Appointment of new headteacher', 'Appointment of new subject leaders' and 'Appointment of new staff to key managerial posts' were however not highly ranked probably reflecting the relatively low incidence of such changes. In the responses of individual schools, where these changes did feature, they were given a high ranking, typically in first place of the five changes/initiatives schools were asked to list. This finding indicates the importance of having the right staff in key posts and confirms one of the main findings of the first phase of the Narrowing the Gap project.

The value of support from the local authority

2.14 The schools were asked to indicate the value of their LEA's support for the changes/initiatives they thought were the most important. The results overall showed that the schools valued the support of their local authorities. In over half of the LEAs (12 out of 22) over half the schools gave the LEA the two highest placings (out of 5) for the support they received.

Conclusions from the questionnaire-based survey

2.15 The main message to come from the survey was that the schools had focused on improving teaching and learning and improving leadership and management. This overall focus was confirmed by the second stage of the research, the detailed study of 18 successful schools (see section 3). In the improvement of leadership and management, the appointment of new staff such as the headteacher, subject leaders and other key staff to managerial posts was significant.

Section 3: Case Studies of 18 Primary Schools

3.1 The 18 case study schools were chosen on the following basis.

- They were recommended by their local authorities as 'bucking the trend'.
- The schools had all responded to the questionnaire-based survey.
- They had recently received a favourable Estyn report.
- The schools had consistently been in the upper quartile of schools in Wales for the percentage of their pupils attaining the KS1 and/or KS2 core subject indicator in the previous three years.
- They all had a high percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in the last three years.

3.2 The 18 schools were spread throughout Wales and were located in 12 local authority areas. Two were infant schools, two were junior schools and the remainder were primary schools. Five were Welsh-medium schools. The case study schools are listed in Appendix A.

3.3 During the school visits, which took place during the spring and summer terms of 2004, the research team spoke to pupils, parents, support staff, teachers, senior staff, the headteacher and the chair or another member of the governing body. The team asked three main questions.

- How does the school enable its pupils to do well?
- Why does it work?
- Can you give some examples of what the school does to help the pupils reach a high standard?

3.4 Following each visit, the data was analysed and a report written. The research team examined all the reports and looked for recurring messages that appeared to be common to all the schools.

The findings

3.5 The schools - their headteachers, teachers, support staff, their pupils, the communities they served and their settings - varied considerably. Nonetheless, common features in the ways the schools worked emerged during the study. The research team grouped these 21 features into seven characteristics. One characteristic in particular was central and the six other key characteristics contributed to and sustained that central characteristic.

3.6 The remainder of this section describes the seven characteristics. In the descriptions, the explanations or justifications for ways of working are those of staff, parents or governors of the schools.

The Central Characteristic

3.7 The central characteristic was a productive, strong and highly inclusive culture that focused on **ensuring** effective and enriched teaching for learning for all pupils and **improving** and further enriching teaching for learning for all pupils

3.8 There was a powerful emphasis on enabling the pupils to attain high scores in National Curriculum tests **and** providing the pupils with an enriched curriculum. The schools also worked to improve the ways they enabled the pupils to learn and to enrich the curriculum yet further. Thus the work of schools centred on the task of **ensuring effective and enriched teaching for learning for all pupils and improving and further enriching teaching and learning for all pupils**. This was their central concern, their **main task**.

3.9 The schools concentrated passionately on this main task. The cultures of the schools – the ways they worked - were thus productive. The pupils learned and they attained good results.

3.10 The schools' ways of working were reliable, robust and relentless. As a result, the cultures of the schools were very strong. The schools consistently and continually used 'tried and trusted' ways of enabling the pupils to learn.

3.11 The schools worked hard to include and engage everyone connected with them in their work – especially all the pupils. The schools were highly inclusive in the way they worked. As one parent put it, *"No child is pushed to one side, they **all** matter"*.

3.12 The overall culture was strengthened by one or more qualities such as the religious ethos of the school, teaching through the medium of Welsh, and/or the ideals, aspirations and drive of the headteacher and the staff.

3.13 Teaching for learning was the key priority: *"It all comes down to teaching in the classroom"* (headteacher). The arrangement of classes varied but had been carefully considered to make the pupils learn. Having a range of learning tasks for the pupils was crucial because there was often a wide range of pupil ability in any one class. Adults other than teachers helped to manage learning tasks to cater for the range of ability. The schools concentrated on literacy and numeracy. They made an effort to use a wide range of learning activities. The schools valued creativity in teaching and new technologies were used extensively. The pupils were kept busy – *"Not a minute is wasted"* (teacher). The schools set homework, which parents valued. There was a relentless determination to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties - *"We never give up"* said one teacher. It was part of the process of meeting the individual learning needs of **all** pupils.

3.14 The schools took every opportunity to enhance and enrich the pupils' learning. There were numerous examples of extra-curricular activities, educational visits by pupils and visitors to the schools all of which helped to enrich the pupils' experience.

3.15 The teachers planned their lessons thoroughly and often worked with each other on lesson planning. Continuity and progression in teaching were important. They contributed to the sense of consistency and stability for the pupils, which in turn increased pupil confidence.

3.16 Teaching and learning were monitored carefully. Pupils' learning was assessed regularly and frequently in a variety of ways. Often, assessment would be carried out across a whole year-group or the whole school. In some cases, pupils were encouraged to mark their own work using the teacher's assessment criteria. Target setting for pupils was very important and typically, pupils were involved in setting their own targets.

3.17 The schools were open to ideas to enhance learning, but were not desperate to try new initiatives. Changes in teaching were considered very carefully to ensure they would enhance the pupils' learning. Many schools were involved in international initiatives which broadened perspectives and enriched pupil learning.

The key characteristics

3.18 The following key characteristics helped to develop and sustain the productive, strong, highly inclusive and learning focused cultures of the schools.

Leadership

3.19 The strong leadership displayed by all those in the schools was a very prominent characteristic.

3.20 The headteachers played a leading role in setting, driving and reinforcing the schools' cultures. In different ways, they had an underlying drive and an inner strength. The headteachers had a substantial profile and presence.

3.21 Importantly, the headteachers were deeply committed to developing a high level of leadership capability in everyone else in the school. This encouraged high levels of involvement and promoted team working. All those the project team spoke to and observed demonstrated considerable leadership ability and influence.

3.22 Typically, the headteachers had substantial educational experience. Many had been in post and/or worked in the same school for a long time but this 'same school' experience had not narrowed their educational vision or expertise. From observations of them and from the accounts of others, the headteachers were:

- capable of responding to a wide range of situations
- excellent classroom teachers and thus able to act as models for good practice
- good communicators and excellent organisers
- able to anticipate consequences of events and act appropriately, *"She sees round corners before you do"* as one teacher described it
- adept at gathering and holding onto resources
- *"Good with the finances"* (teacher) and used financial resources wisely
- kept abreast of developments in the wider educational scene and also had a detailed knowledge of developments in their own school.

3.23 The headteachers had considerable standing and status, which came from their experience, expertise and effort, and was widely accepted. They were much admired and respected. The headteachers had very high levels of educational commitment but were modest and very ready to give others credit. They were comfortable with being unusual and may have even cultivated it. As one headteacher put it, *"You have to be prepared to stand out from the norm, to be a bit eccentric and to hold out against being sucked in to lowering your standards"*.

3.24 The governing bodies of the schools were committed, supportive and engaged. They played an important part in the schools' success. Members of governing bodies had positive, supportive and trusting relationships with the headteacher, with individual members of staff and with each other. The chairs of the governing bodies were respected and experienced.

The mindset

3.25 In all the schools, there was a clearly discernable way of thinking and working - a mindset - which had a number of aspects to it.

3.26 The schools were optimistic in their approach and they were active in tackling problems. In response to setbacks, the staff felt that individually and collectively they were capable of improving matters and that in the long term the situation would improve.

3.27 The teachers were highly reflective about their work. All the teachers the project team spoke to were able to adapt their classroom teaching to make sure it was as good as it could be. Their reflections as they worked enabled them to adjust their teaching so as to ensure the pupils learned. They also reflected on their teaching after lessons in order to find ways of improving it.

3.28 There were a variety of structures, opportunities and processes for staff to reflect in a collaborative way on way they taught and how they organised the school. The reflected on their work in order to

- to improve efficiency
- to enhance what they taught and how they taught it
- to better understand social and economic issues affecting pupils and the school.

3.29 The teachers' reflections on the social and economic context of their work appeared to motivate them and made them more able to deal with their work. "*We **cannot** let these kids down*" said one headteacher forcefully. "*We **must** keep going*", said a teacher in another school during a group discussion, a sentiment with which her colleagues enthusiastically agreed.

3.30 The schools had an 'accept and improve' approach. This way of thinking and working meant that they accepted various 'givens' in a non-judgemental way and strived to improve matters. The way the schools worked with their buildings gave a clear illustration of this approach. In some instances, the buildings were old and in need of investment. Nonetheless, inside they were organised and bright and colourful. There were numerous displays that were informative, celebrated achievement in the school and the community and promoted pupil learning. "*With the building, you work with what you've got*", said one headteacher. They accepted and worked with the building and all the other 'givens', such as the pupils, the parents and the setting. Very importantly, the 'givens' were never used as excuses for low attainment, low achievement or low expectations.

3.31 The schools also had a 'both-and' mentality - as opposed to an 'either-or' approach. So, it was considered perfectly possible to have **both** very strong leadership from the headteacher **and** very strong leadership throughout the school; for there to be **both** a desire by the staff to follow established practices **and** a collective passion to change and to improve those practices; and for the teaching team to take their work **both** very seriously **and** to have fun doing it.

3.32 The teaching staff were highly motivated by their own ideals and aspirations for the pupils. They had a collective and relentless determination to do the very best for them and a powerful desire to enhance the pupils' life-chances.

3.33 The schools expected very high standards of effort, achievement and attainment from the pupils. They expected the pupils to 'do well'. These high expectations were matched by high levels of support for pupils. All the pupils were continually motivated to reach a higher standard. Whenever they found the work difficult, extra help was given. In the words of one deputy headteacher, "*We have high expectations and high standards and we certainly don't accept the 'poor dab' syndrome, (where feelings of*

sadness at a pupil's social or economic plight might tempt the teachers to lower their expectations), *we expect our kids to do well*". There was often a sense that there was no limit to what the pupils could achieve and attain. As one headteacher put it *"There are no lids on kids here"*. A parent in another school said, *"The teachers never say 'Can't' here, the culture is 'everything is possible'"*. The teachers wanted to raise aspirations and the awareness of possibilities and potential.

3.34 The teaching staff had high expectations of themselves in helping the pupils to achieve. The notion of 'doing well' frequently spread throughout the whole school. In the words of one headteacher, *"We – the pupils, teachers, the whole school community - want to do well in everything we do"*. All the teaching staff, and in particular the headteachers, also had very high expectations of all those connected with the schools.

3.35 There was a culture of praise, which helped to raise the self-esteem of the pupils and all those connected with the schools. Many of the schools had reward schemes for pupil effort and achievement. The headteachers in particular had a strong desire to praise achievement and to give credit to others.

3.36 The schools had a powerful caring ethos. All those in the schools including the pupils clearly cared about each other, the work of the school, the school building and the school's local communities.

3.37 Those connected with the schools were proud of them. High standards of behaviour were expected both inside and outside the school. *"It is important to uphold the school's name"* stated one headteacher.

The teaching team

3.38 The teachers and other adults who had a role in the classroom - teaching assistants and nursery nurses - **all worked together** to make full use of their expertise and to improve it. This highly inclusive teamworking was well developed.

3.39 The members of the teaching teams were very capable, hardworking and committed. Teamworking was very important. The teaching staff worked responsibly and were accountable to each other. There was a high level of trust and a spirit of collaborative effort. Working collaboratively in this way enhanced their professional standing and status, both individually and as a group. *"The staff have a collaborative strength"* as one headteacher described it.

3.40 The staff were consistent in their approach over time and throughout the school. They all had the same overall way of working and there was a high level of agreement on teaching matters. This shared overall approach helped to give the pupils a sense of continuity, especially when they changed teachers, and their learning was enhanced as a result. Members of the teaching team would sometimes teach the same age group for a number of years to develop their teaching expertise.

3.41 The teaching team usually planned their work together to use all their expertise and to ensure consistency and conformity. This way of working was however *“not designed to imprison, but to allow creativity”* (headteacher). New members of staff were appointed carefully with an expectation that they would fit into the teaching team.

3.42 In many cases, the staff had had long careers in the schools but this did not appear to have narrowed their educational expertise, vision or expertise because of their commitment to continually improve. There were instances where the headteacher had been the deputy headteacher, the deputy headteacher had been a teacher and teachers had been student teachers, parent helpers, or teaching assistants in the schools. Typically, members of staff expressed no desire to leave their schools, quite the opposite, but they also wanted to continually improve and were expected to do so.

3.43 Working relationships were sound, communication was open and straightforward, and there was a high level of social mixing. Problems were ‘surfaced’ quickly, recognised and dealt with promptly. The staff talked frequently about their work. There appeared to be equal valuing and parity of esteem across the whole staff team despite individual members of staff having different responsibilities. The schools appeared keen to ensure a sensible ‘work-life balance’ for the staff. The teachers’ out of school interests were often used to motivate the pupils and to enrich their experience.

3.44 The schools organised formal professional development activities very carefully. School-based development sessions involved all of the teaching team, were regular and frequent and were typically linked directly to the school development plan. When teachers attended external courses, new expertise was readily shared on their return. Many of the schools had received grants from the General Teaching Council for Wales to support professional development activities.

3.45 Computers and interactive whiteboards had helped to improve practice. They had enhanced teaching and learning, helped to develop collaboration and facilitated the sharing of good teaching practice.

3.46 Professional development frameworks such as Investors in People were used extensively. They had helped the schools to shape their professional development processes, which confirmed one of the findings of the questionnaire-based survey (see Tables 1 and 2 paragraphs 2.5 and 2.10).

The engagement and commitment of the pupils and their parents

3.47 The schools sought to fully engage all the pupils and all the parents and to develop their commitment to the school.

3.48 The staff had a genuine affection for the pupils and their parents and wider families. Parents were seen as *“part of the team”* (teacher). The parents supported the schools and they felt the schools were *“on our side”* (parent). Communication with parents was professional, direct, sensitive and valuing. The schools valued joint learning schemes for parents and pupils.

3.49 The pupils were central to the work of the schools. They had a ‘voice’, which was listened to. The pupils liked their schools and wanted to attend. They were happy and felt they were fairly treated, which enhanced their self esteem, confidence and motivation to learn.

3.50 The schools valued **all** the pupils and responded to **all** pupils’ individual needs. They worked to develop the schools as inclusive communities with a *“family atmosphere”* (chair of a governing body). Pupils undertook responsibilities in the school. Typically, the schools had School Councils which the pupils valued. The schools worked hard to compensate for the disadvantage experienced by the pupils. They sought to enrich the pupils’ experience and sometimes provided them with material resources. Where pupil attendance was a problem, it generally resulted from families taking holidays during term for cost reasons, keeping children away from school for birthdays, or simply oversleeping. Typically, the schools were addressing such problems in a collaborative and supportive way.

Very efficient and effective organisation and management

3.51 The schools were well organised. Roles, responsibilities, systems and processes had been well planned, were well established and were always adhered to by everyone. This high level of organisation helped the teaching teams to apply themselves to their work more effectively.

3.52 Management structures varied but all worked effectively. In all cases, the relationship between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher was sound. Delegation by the headteachers gave them time for whole-school management and helped to develop staff. Additional classroom support was allocated to make the most of pupil learning. Decisions on the allocation of classroom support often involved all the staff. The effective management of pupil behaviour was a consistent priority across the whole school.

3.53 Pupil performance data was used extensively to plan better learning opportunities, to inform discussions with individual pupils about their progress and to set new targets. In some cases, pupils helped to set their own targets. Pupils in those year groups not taking National Curriculum tests and assessments typically took other standardised tests which helped with target-setting. Individual pupil progress and group progress were tracked carefully.

3.54 The schools used benchmarking data to evaluate their work. However, such comparative data was not used to excuse low attainment, far from it. *“We want to be the best in the authority, on every indicator, regardless”*, said one headteacher. Another headteacher took it further, *“When pupils leave school, no one will be interested in whether their*

school had lots of pupils who had free school meals. So we've got to make sure they get as good qualifications as everyone else if not better".

3.55 The schools varied in size but they all had an adequate pool of expertise, enough capacity and sufficient resources to undertake the various tasks. In some schools, pupil numbers were increasing, while in others they were decreasing because of local demographic effects. In one or two cases this fall in pupil numbers was substantial.

Mutual support, validation and valuing from all those connected with the school

3.56 All those connected with the schools appeared ready to **support** the schools. They recognised and acknowledged that the schools were doing good work and appreciated and valued the schools' efforts. Furthermore, this support, validation and valuing was mutual. The schools felt and acted in the same way towards those connected with them.

3.57 All the schools were in local consortia of other KS1 and/or KS2 schools and they had good relationships with local secondary (KS3 and KS4) schools which they appreciated.

3.58 The schools received considerable and wide-ranging support from their local authorities and their relationships with them were constructive and positive. They valued this support. LEA colleagues were valued for working hard, often with limited resources. Areas where school expectations were not met were generally due to the perceived lack of transparency on funding decisions; lack of expertise in subject teaching matters; lack of support for teaching through the medium of Welsh; and sensitivity over "the paperwork" required by LEAs. Some schools at times experienced a sense of being overwhelmed by LEA initiatives and very occasionally there was poor communication. Examples of support from the LEA that was particularly valued included:

- advice and guidance – *"They help us solve our problems"* (chair of a governing body)
- accessibility – the LEA was easy to contact for help and assistance
- excellent individual professional support and mentoring
- the work of advisers and advisory teachers
- supplying benchmarking data
- the provision of targeted funding.

3.59 The advice of local authority departments other than the education department was also appreciated. Many of the schools had close and helpful links with social services and other community services.

3.60 Responses to school inspection by Estyn varied. For some, inspections were an opportunity to have the high quality of their work confirmed and to learn, and were not a matter to be unduly concerned about. Others felt that inspection was disruptive and unnecessary because other existing forms of accountability were adequate. Some held both views.

3.61 The schools' relationships with their local communities were very important indeed. The communities the pupils came from were very diverse. All the schools worked with a range of other community interests, such as sport, business and arts, and with groups such as charities, the police and voluntary organisations. In all cases, the schools were ready to support and appreciate good work and success in their communities and vice versa.

3.62 The nature of the disadvantage in the communities served by the schools was varied and complex. In some schools, pupil disadvantage resulted from low parental income. In others, a high rate of male unemployment was the source of disadvantage. In some schools' communities there was a high level of dependence on social security benefits. For other schools, there was a great deal of change with families moving into the area and then moving on after a very short time. Some of the schools' communities had more than one of these features. Importantly, the schools viewed the communities they served as a feature of their work and not as an excuse for low pupil achievement or low pupil attainment. Any disadvantage in their communities was a 'given', which was accepted and worked with.

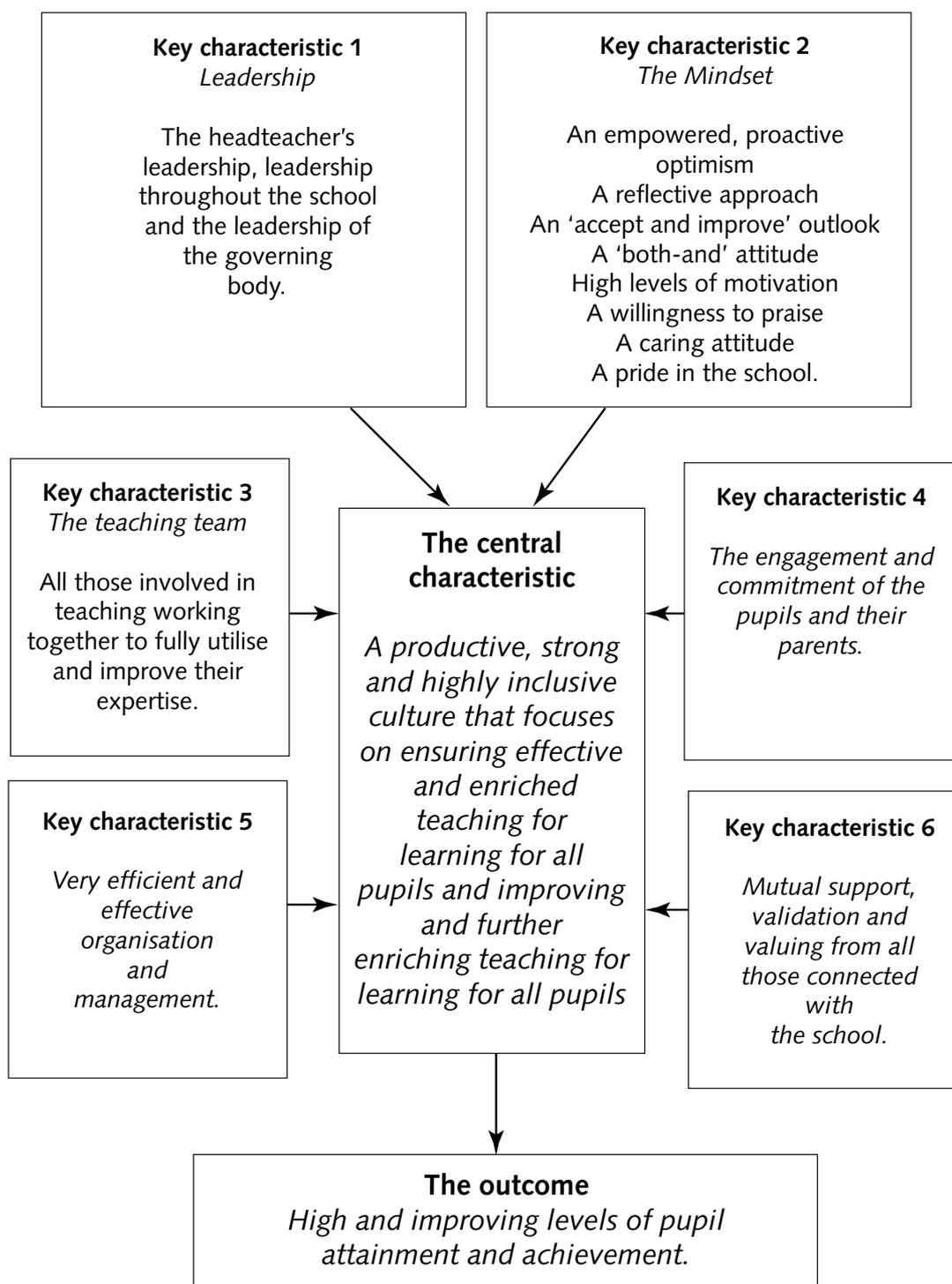
3.63 The schools were focal points in their local educational communities. Staff from the schools contributed to LEA training courses; the schools were a resource for the development of other teachers and were involved in the education and training of new teachers.

Section 4: Messages Emerging from the Primary Phase Project

The characteristics of the schools

4.1 The schools that were successful in narrowing the attainment gap had a number of characteristics as summarised in Figure 3

Table 3 - The central and key characteristics of the schools and the outcome of their work.



4.2 The findings of this second part of the Narrowing the Gap project on primary schools are consistent with the main findings of the first which focused on secondary schools. These stressed the importance of firm, purposeful and inclusive leadership, which brings about high levels of commitment from all those involved in the work of the school; efficient management and organisation; continuous improvement; a focus on learning - at all levels; and a high level of community support – from the LEA, from parents and families and the community.

The focus on the main task

4.3 The schools focused on ensuring effective learning and on improving learning. They were also keen to enrich the pupils' learning and to find creative ways to enrich it yet further; and they undertook this work for all pupils. This work is described as their main task: **ensuring effective and enriched teaching for learning for all pupils and improving and further enriching teaching for learning for all pupils.**

4.4 The aspects of this main task are:

ensuring (that is, as far as is possible, guaranteeing and securing)

teaching for learning (thus defining and focussing the purpose of teaching)

for all pupils (thereby giving a high level of inclusivity)

that is effective (in that it enables the pupils to reach a high level of achievement and attainment)

and enriched (in that it is stimulating, motivating and engaging)

and improving (changing practice to increase the level of achievement and attainment)

and further enriching teaching for learning for all pupils (changing practice to make the pupils' educational experience still more stimulating, motivating and engaging).

4.5 The main task was the schools' central concern and all their efforts focused upon it. This unwavering concentration on the main task was the key to the schools' success. Developing a culture that focused on the main task was crucial. This culture was their central characteristic. All the aspects of the schools' work - their key characteristics - helped to sustain the culture.

The very high level of commitment and engagement

4.6 The main task was highly meaningful, important and motivating to the staff. The teaching staff and all the adults who worked in the schools were committed to the main task and were fully engaged on it. They

were passionate about it. They worked to engender a similar attitude and approach in others – the pupils, the parents and all those connected with the schools.

The school and the wider community

4.7 The schools received considerable support for their work from all those connected with them. They felt they were part of a much wider community, which supported their work on the main task, and acknowledged and appreciated the schools' endeavours. This wider community included other schools, the LEAs, Estyn, the General Teaching Council for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government, ACCAC and higher and further education institutions. It also included the local community which in turn included the police, social services, voluntary organisations, charities and members of the local community. The schools also supported and appreciated the work of all these groups, so the support and valuing was mutual.

4.8 The support and appreciation from the wider community was very important. These schools benefited from it and arguably they would benefit further if they received more of it. The same could apply to all schools. If this support was made more explicit, it could give 'leadership **for** schools' to assist the leadership of schools provided by the governing body, the headteacher and the staff. LEAs are well-placed to adopt this leadership **for** schools role. They already have a central role in managing schools and the education service. Local authorities have substantial and relevant expertise and experience. They also have close links with schools' local communities. In this leadership for schools role, the local authority could remind schools and the communities they serve of the very important work schools undertake, praise them for their substantial efforts, and actively encourage them to do even better.

Why were these schools successful?

4.9 The schools were successful for two main reasons. Firstly, they had the central characteristic and the key characteristics in some form or other. They had them in large measure and they had them constantly and consistently. It is important to have as many characteristics as possible, as fully as possible and to have them all the time. Secondly, the schools were highly motivated to work on and add the characteristics. They were passionate about their work. So, these schools were successful because of what they did **and** the way they did it.

4.10 The nature of the characteristics and the way they work together are important. ***There is no single magic characteristic.*** None of the characteristics can be singled out as the vital ingredient. All the characteristics contribute to success.

4.11 ***The characteristics mutually support each other;*** they add to each other. As a result, the more characteristics a school has, the better all the characteristics will work. For example, a very cohesive teaching team focused on ensuring and improving learning will improve the status and

standing of the headteacher. Having high expectations is enhanced by having high expectations of **every** pupil. If the pupils and parents are fully engaged and committed to the school, everyone else connected with the school is more likely to support and appreciate its efforts. Having a reflective mindset means that a school has the capacity to improve established and effective management systems and processes yet further.

4.12 *The more of the characteristics mentioned above a school has, the easier it will be to gain the others.* For example, ensuring pupil and parent engagement and commitment will be easier if the staff work together as a team on the main task. Good leadership is easier if the prevailing mindset is right. If the school is well run, it is more likely to attract support from the wider community.

4.13 *Adding a missing characteristic is more likely to improve a school than enhancing the ones that are already present.* All the characteristics are important and are essential for success. Making sure all the characteristics are present is more likely to bring success than working harder at those that are already in place.

Section 5: Recommendations

Analysis of the characteristics of the schools considered in this report leads to the conclusions and recommendations set out below. For each of these relevant initiatives are identified to help schools and their LEAs address the recommendations.

Finding: Primary schools can make a substantial difference to the attainment of pupils who experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

Recommendation: As part of their on-going process of self-evaluation all primary schools in Wales would benefit from reviewing their practice in light of the characteristics of successful schools identified in this report.

Relevant Initiatives: Dissemination of this report and its conclusions.

Finding: Schools need the support of the local authority if they are to succeed.

Recommendation: The concept of local authority partnership with schools needs to be further developed. In particular authorities need to continue to focus their efforts on those schools which are not performing as well as they might.

Relevant Initiatives:

- The local authority community planning framework.
- Use of the local authority single education plan (and subsequently the children and young people's plan) to develop a monitoring/challenge/intervention framework.

Finding: Motivation of school staff is crucial to success.

Recommendation: More attention should be given to motivating all those who work in schools by praising their efforts, inspiring them and actively encouraging them to do even better.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Statutory induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers.
- The follow-up two year programme of early professional development;
- Launch of the Welsh Assembly Government debate on learning and teaching in November 2005 to facilitate the sharing of good practice between schools, LEAs and other institutions.

- GTCW-led work on a professional development framework for teachers in Wales.
- The National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload designed to allow teachers more time to focus on teaching and learning;
- Change management tools to help schools implement the Workload Agreement through a structured whole school approach to change and improvement using benchmarking data.
- The change coordinator in each LEA.
- Performance management arrangements in schools.

Finding: Leadership is very important in setting and sustaining a way of working that helps teachers to teach and pupils to learn. Schools work best when everyone (all staff and the governing body) is prepared to play their part in providing that leadership. Headteachers are responsible for giving leadership and have a vital role in developing leadership in others.

Recommendation: All schools need to consider how they develop and sustain leadership throughout the organisation.

Relevant Initiatives:

- The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) for aspiring headteachers in Wales (mandatory for first-time, substantive headteachers from 1 September 2005).
- The Professional Headship Induction Programme (PHIP) for headteachers during the first two years of appointment.
- The Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH).
- Assembly Government programme of professionally focused leadership seminars for experienced school leaders launched in May 2005;
- Investors in People accreditation.
- LEA led senior and middle management professional development.
- School Leadership Modules.
- Governing body training programmes.

Finding: To be successful schools need a mindset which is proactive, optimistic, reflective and caring; has high expectations for all pupils and staff; praises achievement; and has pride in the school.

Recommendation: All schools need to consider their overall attitude and approach to their work.

Relevant Initiatives:

- The school's statement of ethos or mission.
- Documentation provided to parents.
- Self-evaluation.
- The school development plan.
- Inspection and the follow up action plan.

Finding: Effective, inclusive team working is essential for ensuring and improving pupil attainment and achievement.

Recommendation: All schools need to reflect on how the staff work as a team to ensure and improve effective learning, and how they could improve their team work.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Use of inset days and other occasions for all-staff development opportunities including support through LEA advisory services.
- Programmes and activities run by the GTCW with Assembly Government support including:
 - development of professional networks for teachers enabling groups of teachers to work together regularly, over a period of time, to undertake an identified activity or programme;
 - individually focused CPD opportunities i.e. professional development bursaries; teacher research scholarships and teacher sabbaticals, that benefit the teacher, school and pupil and lead to sharing of outcomes;
 - a dissemination strategy to provide wider dissemination of sharing of good practice by teachers.
- Teacher entitlement from September 2005 to 10% of their timetable teaching time for planning, preparation and assessment (guidance on the Workload Agreement stresses the importance of involving support staff in lesson planning and delivery).

Finding: Enabling pupils to attain good results in tests and to achieve generally is as essential as providing a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. These are not mutually exclusive.

Recommendation: All schools need to consider how they ensure their teaching is both effective and enriched and how they improve its effectiveness and enrich it yet further.

Relevant Initiatives:

- School self-review.

- Removal of statutory testing in the primary phase, switching the emphasis to moderated and accredited teacher assessment and introducing skill tests for pupils in year 5.
- Review of the curriculum by ACCAC to secure a sharper focus on the needs of the learner and skills development.
- Encouragement to schools in addressing the release of teachers for 10% of teaching time to look for opportunities to bring in external facilitators to work with children on sport, drama etc.
- Improving transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 through the introduction of Transition Plans and guidance provided as part of the Aiming for Excellence programme.

Finding: Initiatives are more likely to help schools if they are well thought through, evidence-based and planned and implemented in partnership with schools.

Recommendation: Those involved in developing initiatives, such as the Assembly Government and local authority advisory services, need to ensure they develop improvement initiatives with schools.

Relevant Initiatives:

- The School Workload Advisory Panel offers advice to the Assembly Government, LEAs and other public bodies on ways of amending and improving initiatives to better meet policy aims and minimise any bureaucratic impact on schools.
- Assembly Government piloting of an impact assessment tool so that the consequences of new policies can be explored fully before they are agreed.
- Involvement of schools as consultees as standard for development of any Assembly Government initiatives.
- Establishment of school budget forums in each local authority to consider school funding issues.

Finding: Good governing bodies with effective chairing are essential if schools are to be successful.

Recommendation: The status and training of school governors should be enhanced.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Assembly Government and local authority funding of Governors Wales who maintain a website and a telephone helpline; can access legal advice on behalf of governing bodies; publish a governor handbook; and employ two field officers to work with governing bodies and LEAs.

- Local authority programmes of governor training with a developing emphasis on whole governor body training and delivery of training through a variety of means so as to engage with more governors.
- Assembly Government funding to local authorities for provision of governor training through the Better Schools Fund.
- Development of training materials on strategic planning, target setting and monitoring and evaluation (published June 2005) and a training programme for clerks to governing bodies (to be published early 2006) by the All Wales Centre for Governor Training and research with project funding from the Assembly Government.
- Pilot governor training accreditation schemes funded by the Assembly Government and managed by Governors Wales in Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Vale of Glamorgan, Newport, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Ynys Mon LEAs.
- Encouragement to LEAs to work on a collaborative basis to develop cohesive training programmes for governors, including whole governing body and distance learning.

Finding: Parents need to be actively engaged in and committed to their children's learning. They can help more effectively if they know what the school is trying to achieve and how they can support their children.

Recommendation: Schools need to explore how they ensure parental engagement and commitment.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Home-school agreements setting out the roles and expectations of the school, parents and pupils.
- Issue to parents of prospectuses and annual reports.
- Assembly Government annual publication of the booklets '*How is your child doing at primary school*' and '*How is your child doing at secondary school*' which explain to parents what their child is being taught and how progress is measured.
- Welsh Assembly Government guidance to schools on "Parents and Parental Responsibility".
- Parents' evenings to discuss the performance of their children.
- Family learning programmes – usually focused on numeracy, literacy and IT.
- Findings of the Home School Knowledge Exchange project carried out by Bristol University in schools in Cardiff and Bristol as part of the Economic and Social Research Council (formerly SSRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

- Recruitment of parents to support after school support activities provided by Dragon Sport.
- Regular newsletters to parents.

Finding: When schools are places where pupils are valued and stimulated and motivated generally, they want to attend.

Recommendation: Schools need to review their attendance policies and consider the extent to which the valuing, stimulation and motivation of pupils underpins efforts to ensure and improve attendance.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Reissue of Assembly Government Guidance to Schools on *Inclusion and Pupil Support* covering the promotion of a whole school approach to behaviour and attendance, including:
 - advice on the design of an effective policy;
 - checklists for creating, implementing and revisiting a policy;
 - support systems for pupils, staff and parents.
- Assembly Government funding for electronic attendance packages for schools across all parts of Wales.
- Models for a Primary Attendance Benchmarking exercise being investigated in light of the scheme introduced for secondary schools in May 2005.
- Forthcoming publication of a paper by Estyn on successful interventions by schools and LEAs to tackle attendance issues.
- Welsh Assembly Government, LEA and school level initiatives to tackle disengagement.

Finding: Successful schools have excellent relationships with their communities. Engagement with the community raises the status of learning and has a positive impact in terms of raising standards of attainment, whilst providing an important resource for communities particularly in disadvantaged areas.

Recommendation: Schools should review their relationships with the communities they serve and consider how to develop them.

Relevant Initiatives:

- Assembly Government community focused schools policy.
 - Guidance Circular 34/2003 Community Focused Schools to assist schools and their key partners develop a community focus.

- Grant funding to local authorities of £3m in 2005-06 and in each of the two following financial years to help fund schemes to help schools develop a community focus.
- Encouragement to LEAs and schools to use capital investment to develop facilities suitable for use both by the school and the community.

18 Case Study Schools

Ysgol Gynradd Tanygrisiau

Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Gwynedd

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 101

Ysgol Gynradd Talysarn

Caernarfon, Gwynedd

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Gwynedd

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 78

Blessed William Davies Catholic Primary School

Llandudno, Conwy

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Conwy

Category: Voluntary Aided Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 175

Cilgerran VC Primary School

Cardigan, Pembrokeshire

Infants and Junior School

LEA: Pembrokeshire

Category: Voluntary Controlled Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 112

Gwynfryn Pontyates Primary School

Llanelli, Carmarthenshire

Infants and Junior School

LEA: Carmarthenshire

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 98

Ysgol Y Ddwylan

Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Carmarthenshire

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 270

St Joseph's Cathedral Roman Catholic Junior School

Greenhill, Swansea

Junior School

LEA: Swansea

Category: Voluntary Aided Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 367

Melin Junior School

Melin, Neath

Junior School

LEA: Neath Port Talbot

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 142

Pen y bont Primary School

Bridgend

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Bridgend

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 316

Nantymoel Primary School

Bridgend

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Bridgend

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 216

Ferndale Infants School

Ferndale, Rhondda.

Infants and Nursery School

LEA: Rhondda Cynon Taff

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 104

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen

Treorchy, Rhondda

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Rhondda Cynon Taff

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 372

Williamstown Primary School

Tonypandy, Rhondda

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Rhondda Cynon Taff

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 258

Ynysowen Primary School

Aberfan, Merthyr Tydfil

Infants and Junior School

LEA: Merthyr Tydfil

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 278

Cwmfelinfach Primary School

Cwmfelinfach, Ynysddu

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Caerphilly

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 202

Garnfach Infants School

Brynmawr, Newport

Nursery and Infants School

LEA: Blaenau Gwent

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 143

Pentrebane Primary School

Pentrebane, Cardiff

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Cardiff

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 214

Baden Powell Primary School

Tremorfa, Cardiff

Nursery, Infants and Junior School

LEA: Cardiff

Category: Community Primary

Language Medium: Welsh is taught as a second language only

Number of pupils on roll as at January 2005: 433

Support Group Members

Jane Davidson AM - Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Cllr John Davies - Welsh Local Government Association Spokesperson on Education

Peter Black AM - Chair of the Assembly's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.

Vicky Best (from Feb 2005) - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

Anna Brychan - National Association of Head Teachers

Alan Chapple - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

Lyn Clement - Welsh Secondary Schools Association

Tim Cox - Standing Conference for Education in Wales (National Association of School Masters and Union of Women Teachers Cymru)

Kathy Haggerty - Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority of Wales (ACCAC)

David Hopkins - Association of Directors of Education in Wales, Director of Education and Leisure Services, Caerphilly Borough Council

Heledd Hayes - Standing Conference for Education in Wales (National Union of Teachers Cymru)

Selwyn Jones - Welsh Primary Schools Association

Chris Llewelyn - Head of Lifelong Learning, Leisure & Information, Welsh Local Government Association

Haydyn Llewellyn - General Teaching Council of Wales

Karl Napierella - Association of Directors of Education in Wales, Director of Education, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Ann Robertson - Governors Wales

Daisy Seabourne (from June 2005) - Welsh Local Government Association

Julie Shipp (until Sept 2004) - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly

Lyn Summers - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

Elizabeth Taylor - Head of Schools Management Division,
Welsh Assembly Government

Maggie Turford - Estyn

Seimon Williams (until June 2005) - Welsh Local Government Association

List of Publications and Materials on Initiatives Mentioned in the Report

Page 5

The Learning Country

A Comprehensive Education and Lifelong Learning Programme to 2010 in Wales

National Assembly for Wales (August 2001)

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/learningcountry/tlc-contents-e.htm>

Page 8

Better Wales

National Assembly for Wales - The Strategic Plan (May 2000)

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/themesbetterwales/content/strategicplan/toc-e.htm>

Wales a Better Country – The Strategic Agenda of the Welsh Assembly Government (September 2003)

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/themesbettercountry/index.htm>

Page 12

Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools

DfTE Information Document Number 029-02 (October 2002)

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/gap/narrowing-gap-e.htm>

Page 28

The Local Authority Community Planning Framework

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subilocalgov/content/comstrat/home-e.htm>

Page 28

Single Education Plans:2006-08 (Consultation issued October 2005)

http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details.asp?NewsID=1975

Page 28

Early Professional Development for Teachers

http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details.asp?NewsID=2182

Page 28

The National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload
<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/raising-standards-tackling-workload-e.pdf>

Page 29

The GTCW led Professional Development Framework for Teachers in Wales
<http://www.gtcw.org.uk/pdf/english/Framework%20advice%20to%20Assembly%20July%202005.pdf>

Page 29

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Circular 20/05
http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details.asp?NewsID=2027

Page 29

Investor in People Accreditation
<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk>

Page 29

Governing Body Training Programmes
Contact individual LEAs for further information.

Page 30

The General Teaching Council for Wales
<http://www.gtcw.org.uk/>

Page 31

Aiming for Excellence Programme:
Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3. Moving On...Effective Transmission from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.(January 2004)
A Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn and ACCAC publication
<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/moving-on-effective-transition-e.pdf>

Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3: Bridging the Gap. Developing and using bridging units to support effective transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.
Welsh Assembly Government / ACCAC / Estyn (November 2004).
<http://www.accac.org.uk/uploads/documents/1515.pdf>

Page 31

The School Workload Advisory Panel

http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details.asp?NewsID=1521

Page 31

School Budget Forums

Contact individual LEAs for further information

Pages 31 and 32

Governors Wales

<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/>

Page 32

Better Schools Fund

National Assembly for Wales Circular No. 06/2005

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/c0605-better-schools-e.pdf>

Page 32

All Wales Centre for Governor Training and Research

Centre Manager Steve Gullick Telephone 01792 518609

Page 32

Home School Agreements

National Assembly for Wales Circular no.27/99

http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/schoolperformance/governance/27_99_e.htm

Page 32

How Is Your Child Doing at Primary School?

Welsh Assembly Government Publication (ISBN 0 7504 3635 2)

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/parent-guide-secondary-05-e.pdf>

Page 32

Parents and Parental Responsibility Guidance for Schools

National Assembly for Wales Circular 29/01

<http://www.learningwales.gov.uk>

Page 32

Home Schools Knowledge Exchange Project - University of Bristol
The Teaching and Learning Research Programme carried out by The Economic
and Social Research Council
<http://www.tlrp.org.uk>

Page 33

Dragon Sport
Sports Council for Wales Initiative funded by the National Lottery
<http://www.dragonsport.co.uk>

Page 33

Inclusion and Pupil Support (Consultation Document Issued April 2005)
<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/doct-e.pdf>

Page 33

Community Focused Schools
National Assembly for Wales Guidance Circular No. 34/2003 (December 2003)
<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/c3403-community-focused-schools-e.pdf>

Page 34

Welsh assembly Government Community Focused Schools Grant
(Circular 31/05)
<http://www.learningwales.gov.uk>