



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

Changing Schools

An evaluation of the effectiveness
of transfer arrangements at age 11



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Introduction

1. This report evaluates the effectiveness of transfer arrangements for pupils changing schools at age 11.
2. The importance of secondary schools building effectively and quickly on the achievement of pupils as they move into Key Stage 3 has long been emphasised. Attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen significantly in recent years, but, as reports from OFSTED have shown, too many pupils do not make enough progress from Year 6 to the end of Key Stage 3. Nationally, full inspections show that the quality of teaching now declines between Year 6 – a high point in primary schools – and Year 9.¹
3. The government's Key Stage 3 Strategy aims to improve the quality of teaching, to enable pupils who are falling behind to catch up, and to raise standards generally. A key objective is to improve progression across the key stages. The pilot of the strategy began in September 2000 and the national programme in September 2001.² The parts of the strategy with particular implications for transfer are:
 - frameworks for teaching English and mathematics at Key Stage 3
 - a substantial programme of training for Key Stage 3 teachers
 - conferences in all LEAs on transition from Year 6 to Year 7
 - catch up programmes in English (Literacy Progress Units) and mathematics (Springboard 7) in Year 7
 - summer schools
 - transition units for English and mathematics for Years 6 and 7
 - funding to support all secondary schools in their efforts to improve transfer.
4. The introduction of the common transfer form by the DfEE in May 2000 provided schools with the means to ensure that a minimum set of information is transferred when pupils change school or key stage. The form contains basic information and a range of assessment data on individual pupils. It

includes a facility to attach additional information about pupils' achievement. By June 2002, all schools, provided they have the capability, will be expected to send and receive pupil data electronically using the common transfer file, removing the need for the paper form.

The inspection

5. During the summer term 2001, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 32 primary schools, two for each of 16 partner secondary schools, in eight local education authorities (LEAs). They visited the 16 secondary schools in the autumn term 2001. The small sample, broadly representative of schools nationally, included schools of varying size, with a full range of attainment profiles and in different local circumstances. Some of the secondary schools had as many as 40 partner primary schools; others were linked to no more than 10.
6. Four of the LEAs were involved in the pilot of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Secondary schools in the other LEAs visited were just beginning to work on the strategy as it was extended nationally. In view of the timing of the inspection, the findings of this report offer a benchmark against which to judge the impact of the strategy on progression from primary to secondary schools in the future.
7. The inspection focused on:
 - the management of the transfer programme and pupils' induction into Year 7
 - the transfer of assessment data
 - the effectiveness of projects to promote curriculum continuity
 - the quality of teaching in Year 6 and Year 7
 - the support provided to pupils for their learning in Year 7.
8. In the course of the visits, HMI:
 - conducted interviews with senior staff who manage transfer
 - discussed transfer with Year 6 primary school teachers and heads of English and mathematics departments in secondary schools

¹ *Standards and Quality in Education 2000/01: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools* (OFSTED,2002). A comparison of the trends of results in National Curriculum tests is given in the annex to this report. The annex also analyses the quality of teaching in Years 5-8 seen in full inspections in 2001/02.

² For an account of the aims and early work of the strategy, see *The Key Stage 3 Strategy: evaluation of the first year of the pilot* (OFSTED,2002).

- held meetings with special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinators in secondary schools
- observed teaching in Years 6 and 7 in either mathematics or English
- talked to small groups of pupils in Year 6 and again when they had moved to Year 7.

Main findings

9. Continuity in the curriculum and progression in learning as pupils move from primary to secondary schools are longstanding weaknesses of the education system. All the schools involved in this survey recognised the need to improve continuity and progression, but few of them were giving sufficient priority to a task that can be difficult and time-consuming, especially where the schools have a large number of partners.

10. Arrangements between schools on the practical and pastoral aspects of transfer helped to make the move to secondary school a positive experience for pupils. Induction programmes employed a range of effective ways of encouraging pupils to feel comfortable and confident in the new setting.

11. The secondary schools were not building well enough on what their Year 7 pupils had achieved in English and mathematics in Year 6. They generally did not know, in sufficient detail, what their new pupils could do, and they had not set targets for improving attainment during Year 7.

12. Use of the common transfer form for Key Stage 2 was making the transfer of basic assessment data rather more consistent than before, but there was still too much variation in the use of the form and in the extent, quality and use of additional information.

13. Partner primary and secondary schools generally had little knowledge of their respective practices in assessing and recording progress and in setting targets. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have improved the monitoring of pupils' progress towards targets set at Key Stage 2. Little of this valuable information was finding its way to secondary school English and mathematics departments, however, and too much time was spent by secondary schools filling gaps by testing pupils at the beginning of Year 7.

14. The early stages of the Key Stage 3 Strategy were prompting better liaison between primary and secondary schools about aspects of teaching,

particularly in the pilot schools. The use of a common lesson structure for English and mathematics in Years 6 and 7 was helping to improve continuity in these subjects.

15. There was insufficient discussion between teachers in Key Stages 2 and 3 about the standards of work expected of pupils and about approaches to teaching. Only a few of the primary and secondary schools had programmes that helped to prepare pupils for the changes they would encounter in Key Stage 3.

16. A few of the LEAs in the survey were providing support for transfer arrangements, but it was rarely used consistently across all the schools and there was little evaluation of effectiveness.

Points for action

17. There is a need for partner schools to:

- agree a common approach on the additional information to accompany the national common transfer file, particularly in relation to key targets for improvements in pupils' attainment in English and mathematics
- rationalise the amount of testing that takes place at the beginning of Year 7
- improve the continuity of the curriculum and teaching between Year 6 and Year 7, making good use of the frameworks for English and mathematics to focus on what pupils are expected to cover and achieve
- do more to help prepare pupils for any significant changes in teaching approaches between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3
- evaluate more systematically the impact of transfer arrangements on the progress and attitudes of pupils
- organise feedback to primary schools about the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 3.

18. LEAs can assist these improvements by:

- promoting the consistent and efficient use of the common transfer file for passing on data electronically
- supporting schools in assessing the quality and impact of transfer arrangements and disseminating examples of effective practice.

Management of transfer

19. In most of the primary schools in the survey the management of Key Stage 2/3 transfer was usually the responsibility of either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In larger schools, it was sometimes delegated to a Year 6 teacher or to the school assessment co-ordinator. Some schools made good use of administrative staff to organise the collation of transfer information. Very few of the primary schools allocated specific non-contact time to staff to manage transfer and this restricted the range and depth of what they were able to do.

20. The management of the transfer programme in the secondary schools was shared, appropriately, between one or two key members of staff, such as the head of Year 7 or the lower school, with a member of the senior management team having overall responsibility. Some larger secondary schools shared the responsibility between two or three teachers, often separating the co-ordination of assessment data from the running of Year 6/7 induction programmes. Some schools had created new posts, such as co-ordinator of Key Stage 3, to introduce a more systematic approach.

21. In most of the secondary schools, special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinators or heads of learning support departments had significant involvement with the transfer of pupils. SEN staff were often involved in a helpful way in the Year 6 induction days and the introductory information evenings for prospective Year 7 parents. A few learning support departments organised additional familiarisation days for individuals or groups of pupils with SEN who were likely to find the change of school difficult. A small number of secondary school SEN co-ordinators visited the primary school before other members of staff to attend review meetings with pupils, teachers and parents. Little attention was given to identifying and meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

22. All of the primary schools recognised that good arrangements for the transfer of pupils is important; however, it was low on their list of priorities. Improving Key Stage 2/3 transfer did not feature specifically in any of the school improvement plans. The position was similar in the secondary schools. Apart from the Key Stage 3 Strategy in general, very few of the secondary schools had identified transfer explicitly as an issue for the school to tackle and had specific, costed initiatives in their action plan to improve provision. Only one school included transfer issues in subject departments' action plans.

Transfer of assessment data and other records

23. The secondary schools reported too much variation in the range and quality of information they receive and its timing to enable tutor groups and subject classes to be formed on the basis of the information received. There was inconsistency in the quality of the information provided on individual pupils across the LEAs and from school to school within an LEA. It was this variation in quality that led almost all of the secondary schools to carry out tests of their own in the autumn term, usually cognitive assessment tests, a reading test and standardised tests in English and mathematics. While the reasons for this additional testing in Year 7 are understandable, it represents considerable duplication of effort when Year 6 pupils have already been assessed in most aspects of the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2.

24. A majority of the schools used the common transfer form to record teacher assessments and pupils' personal details. The statutory test data are not available until July, but secondary schools require information on the pupils well before the end of the summer term. Consequently, some of the primary schools met the requests of their partner secondary schools for earlier information by providing it on a combination of national, LEA and school transfer forms, with inevitable duplication of information.

25. Very few of the primary schools provided more detailed information about pupils' performance, other than the National Curriculum levels and test scores, and it was rarely requested by the secondary schools. Non-core subject records, curricular targets and illustrative work samples to go with them usually remained with the primary school. The amount of documentation sent from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 in some of the LEAs had reduced significantly, usually at the request of secondary teachers who did not have enough time to use it. The absence of this more detailed assessment information restricts the ability of secondary schools to ensure that pupils in Year 7 make the early progress of which they are capable.

26. Curricular target-setting in English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 and, in particular, the setting of individual and group targets for pupils' writing, were widespread in the primary schools. They have also developed expertise in analysing pupil attainment data and monitoring pupils' progress across Key Stages 1

and 2, including the use of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) optional tests to track year-on-year progress and help to set targets. In almost every case, curricular targets were neither requested by nor transferred to the partner secondary schools.

27. The requirement for secondary schools to set numerical targets for Key Stage 3 tests was being introduced at the time of this survey. Most of the secondary schools in the survey were already setting targets for pupils' performance in the Key Stage 3 tests, but few set interim targets for pupils in Years 7 and 8 or had systems to track pupils' progress in the core subjects. Only one school had analysed Key Stage 2 test results and used them to help set targets for Year 7 pupils. Overall, there were wide variations in schools' expectations of pupils' progress during Key Stage 3. One headteacher had challenged heads of department to raise pupils' attainment in the core subjects by one and a half National Curriculum levels; another considered an improvement of one level sufficiently challenging.

28. Very few of the primary schools understood how their partner secondary schools used the information they provided or how targets were set at Key Stage 3. Little discussion took place between primary and secondary headteachers about the usefulness of the testing that was done, the value of the records that were passed on or about other information that could be used to improve progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. A comment from one primary headteacher was that Key Stage 3 is 'a bit of a mystery' and that, in general, secondary schools tell them what they require and the primary schools send it to them. Few of the primary and secondary schools had up-to-date knowledge of each other's methods of assessment and target-setting, or discussed the usefulness of the processes they used.

29. Information was not usually being transferred electronically, although the schools in two LEAs had begun to use e-mail or CD-ROMs to transfer data. In one secondary school, this approach enabled teachers, form tutors and heads of department to have better access to relevant information electronically in their classrooms. However, in the LEAs where good practice in the electronic transfer of assessment data was being developed, difficulties occurred where not all schools subscribed to the arrangements. Problems of software compatibility and the preference of some schools to introduce their own local transfer

documentation had prevented other LEAs from establishing similar systems.

Induction programmes

30. Most of the secondary schools provided a satisfactory induction programme, organised in the autumn and summer terms prior to transfer, for Year 6 pupils and their parents.

31. The induction programme enabled prospective pupils and their parents to visit the secondary school to find out about the Key Stage 3 curriculum and other facilities. In some areas, parents and pupils visited a number of secondary schools before making an application to the preferred school.

32. After the autumn term of Year 6, the secondary schools had little contact until pupils learned which secondary school they would be attending. A small number of primary schools reported some difficulty for parents in LEAs where admission to the preferred school was not guaranteed and appeals were lodged. This caused uncertainty for the pupils, who could be disappointed after the positive experience of visiting a preferred secondary school, and some disruption to the compiling of accurate lists of pupils transferring to secondary schools.

33. Nearly all the secondary schools released a member of staff responsible for primary/secondary transfer to visit partner primary schools during the summer term and before the induction days. The visits were used, appropriately, to make contact with Year 6 teachers and pupils, to collect assessment and other information, to explain procedures for the induction day and to answer questions. The amount of time devoted to this contact, and its quality, varied from school to school. Where secondary teachers spent considerable time with both pupils and teachers to ensure that the quality of information given and received was good, primary schools were positive about the visits and pupils felt much more confident about transfer. At the same time, pastoral staff and subject teachers in Year 7 were better informed.

34. Primary schools with several partner secondary schools often found practice varied from school to school, with small groups or single pupils not visited by a representative of the school to which they would be transferring. Secondary schools with large numbers of partner primary schools faced a more difficult task in enabling staff to visit all their

prospective pupils for a worthwhile amount of time. Nevertheless, there were two examples of secondary schools in these circumstances that felt transfer sufficiently important to ensure that all their Year 6 pupils were seen.

35. Most of the Year 6 pupils attended a single induction day for prospective Year 7 pupils, usually in July preceding the term of entry. Some secondary schools invited new pupils to take part in a longer programme over two days, although sometimes using the second day for testing. The introductory visit helped pupils gain familiarity with some of the school buildings and routines and to meet form tutors. In schools where older pupils would act as mentors to Year 7 pupils, they met them on the induction day.

36. Pupils' attendance at induction days was complicated when Year 6 pupils were visiting different secondary schools on different days. The problem was overcome in one LEA by arranging the Year 7 introductory day on the same date. Some schools invited parents of Year 6 pupils to attend another information evening on or around the same day in order to explain procedures, meet Year 7 form tutors and answer questions.

37. Some primary schools were also visited by the secondary school SEN co-ordinator or head of learning support, either on or close to the day on which the head of Year 7 visited, to gather information and meet pupils with special educational needs. These visits were considered particularly valuable by primary schools and were used to ease transfer for these pupils. There was often an extended personal interview with pupils and parents or additional visits to the secondary school.

38. Continuing contact between the primary and secondary schools enhanced good induction and transfer arrangements, although few of the primary schools had any say in the planning and organisation of Year 6 pupils' introduction to secondary school. Examples of good practice in social and pastoral induction that improved the knowledge of Year 6 pupils and teachers about what happens in Year 7 included:

- the sending of newsletters from the secondary school to inform Year 6 pupils and their teachers of the events and activities organised in Key Stage 3
- a 'moving on' booklet, initiated by the LEA, in which pupils write about themselves and complete activities related to changing schools

- correspondence between Year 6 and Year 7 pupils to enable new entrants to ask questions about experience in Year 7
- follow-up receptions for Year 6 teachers to meet Year 7 pupils to discuss the experience of changing schools.

39. To help pupils to settle more quickly into Year 7, one school allocated a suite of adjoining classrooms as Year 7 form rooms; the corridor connecting the classrooms contained displays of pupils' work from Year 6 and Year 7. The same school organised a three-day residential visit for Year 7 pupils early in the autumn term to give them and their tutors an opportunity to build relationships and a year-group identity. Another school allocated the first day of the autumn term for the introduction of Year 7 pupils, with the rest of the school starting a day later.

40. A small number of the secondary schools arranged meetings for parents and form tutors early in the autumn to review the first few weeks of term. One school used a pupil journal as a focus for discussions. Another used a questionnaire to measure pupils' levels of anxiety before and after transfer on issues such as homework and bullying. Most secondary schools, however, gave little feedback to primary schools on pupils' progress after the first term in Year 7. Few organised follow-up discussions with primary schools once pupils had transferred.

41. The primary schools believed parents and pupils to be generally positive about the transfer arrangements and induction programmes. However, neither primary nor secondary schools evaluated parents' and pupils' views in any formal way. One secondary school asked pupils to complete an evaluation form which enabled it to judge the quality of its programme from the pupils' perspective.

Helping pupils to cope with change

42. When moving to secondary school, pupils encounter a number of changes: equipment, school uniform, a variety of classrooms, seating arrangements, a wider range of teaching styles and different expectations about homework, ways of learning and independent study. Few schools have thought carefully enough about these changes. There was generally little, if any, discussion taking

place between Year 6 and Year 7 teachers about preparing pupils for the changes, although one school was embarking on a pilot project exploring pupils' preferred learning styles.

43. The primary schools knew little about what the secondary schools were doing to help pupils adapt to the changes at Key Stage 3. Most primary schools saw the transfer of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7 as the end of their influence and interest, although a small minority retained contact in the autumn term to follow up pupils' progress and welfare.

44. In most secondary schools, tutor groups played a key part in helping pupils to manage the introduction to Year 7. These daily meetings were sometimes supplemented by a longer weekly session which was often part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Tutor group meetings provided an opportunity for form tutors to discuss issues such as managing homework and establishing friendships. Some secondary schools introduced topics related to transfer in PSHE programmes which helped to tackle some of the issues pupils might encounter in their first term. One school's autumn term programme had units on:

- the first week at school
- changes, making a new start
- study skills, organisation and homework
- bullying
- using the student planner
- looking back over the first term.

45. Almost all Year 7 pupils took part in an introduction to the library at the beginning of the autumn term, but few schools built on this to promote independent study skills through the use of their libraries. Secondary school librarians had limited involvement in the transfer process.

46. All the secondary schools provided Year 7 pupils with a homework planner or journal which they saw as an important way of helping pupils to organise themselves and their work in Key Stage 3. Some schools provided pupils with an opportunity to complete homework in school, often in the library, offering librarian or teaching assistant support during these sessions. Some Year 7 pupils, however, were unaware of the homework club or other library and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities which were available to them. Most of the primary schools set homework regularly up to the national tests in May, including

expecting pupils to record assignments in a homework diary. In too many schools, however, homework became irregular after the tests were over and pupils lost the good work habits that were established at the beginning of Year 6.

47. A few of the secondary schools used older pupils as mentors or 'buddies' to support Year 7 pupils, either during the school day or in PSHE and tutor group sessions. One school offered additional reading support to Year 7 pupils by organising a group of Year 12 reading mentors. Another school established a friendship support group for a small number of pupils who needed help with building relationships; this was managed well by the SEN co-ordinator. All of these arrangements were helping Year 7 pupils to settle in more quickly.

48. Year 7 pupils may have the opportunity to exercise some responsibility in their first year in Key Stage 3, particularly if the school has a student council with representatives of all year groups or sports captains for inter-form competitions. Although responsibilities for the Year 7 pupils did not match those they had had in Year 6, pupils realised they had a greater responsibility for managing themselves and this provided most of them with sufficient challenge in Year 7.

Curricular continuity

49. Teachers in all of the schools recognised the importance of continuity in pupils' learning. Good continuity in learning means that pupils should not repeat what they have already learned or have to attempt things that are beyond them. In the survey schools, however, teachers from Key Stage 2 and 3 rarely came together to discuss their respective teaching programmes or the standards they expected pupils to achieve. The primary schools had only limited knowledge of the Key Stage 3 curriculum or the Key Stage 3 Strategy frameworks. Where there had been contacts of this kind in the survey schools in the past, and where they had been reduced, the primary headteachers attributed this to the demands of implementing national initiatives.

50. The Key Stage 3 Strategy frameworks for English and mathematics provide detailed guidance on how to achieve continuity in learning. Most of the secondary schools, particularly those in the Key Stage 3 pilot LEAs, had reviewed their teaching programmes in English and mathematics to take account of the Frameworks for teaching these subjects in Year 7. Few primary or secondary

schools were using bridging units to link the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 programmes. Where they were used, they usually were the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) mathematics units (mostly algebra), with teaching in place in Year 6 and planned for follow-on in Year 7. This involved useful discussion of the cross-phase teaching programme between secondary school mathematics departments and Year 6 teachers.

51. In the schools visited, there was no successful use of bridging units to promote continuity in English. Although one school had developed its own English unit, it had encountered difficulties with its organisation and the choice of appropriate texts and other materials to match pupils' needs. Primary and secondary schools with multiple partners face particular difficulties with the use of transition units unless they can be confident that all the partners are using them. Although the transition units produced by the Key Stage 3 Strategy are designed to 'stand alone', there could be an issue for secondary schools when they begin to use them in 2002 if some of their pupils have done the Year 6 units and some have not.

52. In those secondary schools that admit pupils from a large number of primary schools, co-ordinating a project in which all, or most, of their partner primary schools are involved is complicated. As a result, some secondary schools tend to work more closely with larger primary schools or organise events to which local Year 6 pupils are invited. For example, a few schools in the survey introduced Saturday master classes in mathematics, science or design and technology, which were open to Year 6 pupils before their transfer to Year 7.

53. Professional development involving teachers from both key stages can also help continuity, but, although the survey schools recognised this, few were putting it into practice. Some schools had arranged joint training in the past, but more recently the focus had been almost exclusively on specific key stage training. In a very few examples where joint professional development days had taken place, they had been successful in promoting a better understanding of the curriculum and teaching approaches. One school organised a very successful 'arts in the community' day at which secondary school teachers led workshops in the creative arts. Teachers from Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 attended these and all local partner primary schools were represented. The day provided a useful forum for discussion of curriculum issues

and teaching strategies. Such days tend not to be organised, however, as part of an overall strategic approach to improving curricular continuity.

54. Many secondary departments had organised visits for English and mathematics teachers to observe the teaching of literacy and mathematics in Year 6. Some schools arranged for all members of a department to observe a literacy hour or daily mathematics lesson; others sent only one teacher. In many cases, the secondary teachers had benefited from the observations. They had been impressed with the standards shown by Year 6 pupils and this had raised their expectations of what these pupils could achieve in Year 7. Too often, however, these visits ended without sufficient discussion of teaching approaches or lesson outcomes.

55. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of English in one secondary school had made a visit to a primary school with objectives for the visit clearly identified. These were framed as questions:

- How is literacy taught in Key Stage 2 and, in particular, in Year 6?
- What strategies does the teacher use to engage pupils in interactive learning?
- What structural and organisational features make up the literacy hour?
- How are learning resources used by the teacher and pupils?

56. The secondary school team intended to use their experiences to promote debate on the teaching of literacy in Key Stage 2 amongst secondary school staff, prior to the introduction of the Framework for English at Key Stage 3.

57. The Year 6 teachers had not been given an opportunity to observe and discuss teaching in Year 7 in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of teaching at Key Stage 3 or of the work the pupils would be doing. The absence of such opportunities limits the ability of primary school teachers to contribute to discussion about improving continuity and progression between Key Stages 2 and 3.

58. In a few of the survey schools, a range of useful contacts had been made which were helping to build understanding between teachers and to bridge the gap between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Often, however, these did not involve all the

partner primary schools and, consequently, benefited only a proportion of the Year 6 pupils transferring. One primary headteacher felt such initiatives demonstrated that secondary schools were making 'an investment in their future students'. There were several examples of this in the survey schools:

In one primary school, teachers had identified a need to address the low number of pupils gaining level 5 in science. A request was made to the secondary school science department to help to provide a structured teaching programme to raise attainment. Cross-phase meetings were also organised to discuss teaching in English and mathematics in Year 6 and Year 7.

One secondary school had a member of the physical education department deployed for 50% of the time in community outreach work. This included working with local primary schools in providing in-service training for teachers and in teaching primary pupils. The secondary school swimming pool and gymnasium were used well to support this initiative.

A specialist school had organised a number of projects in mathematics, science, and design and technology where secondary teachers worked with small numbers of Year 6 pupils and their teachers on subject-specific projects.

In another school, a number of curriculum links had been established across a range of subject departments, including:

- *an analysis of Year 6 National Curriculum science test papers by the secondary school science department*
- *the display of primary pupils' art work in secondary school exhibitions*
- *the attendance by secondary music teachers at primary school concerts and musical evenings*
- *the sharing of equipment and support for primary school sports days*
- *the provision of sports coaching at weekends for Year 6 pupils' extra-curricular activities*
- *ICT training and technical support, as well as the donation of funds specifically to improve the primary school's ICT equipment.*

Pupils' perceptions

59. All the Year 6 pupils interviewed spoke positively about their experiences in primary school. In almost all cases, they talked enthusiastically about the aspects of school life that most appealed to them, what lessons and other activities they preferred and those that proved difficult and challenging. Year 6 teachers came in for special praise, as did a number of headteachers. Most Year 6 pupils appreciated the challenge and support given to them by the teachers and teaching assistants. They rarely expressed concerns or worries; pupils who had experienced difficulties talked positively about the way the schools had resolved

their problems. Year 6 pupils in their final term at primary school were generally confident and positive.

60. Almost all pupils interviewed made positive comments about their daily mathematics lesson and the literacy hour. They described which parts they preferred and what they found difficult and challenging. Most pupils enjoyed the fast pace of learning and the interactive nature of the teaching, particularly work on shared texts in the literacy hour and oral and mental work in the mathematics lessons. In schools where curricular target-setting was established, pupils were able to talk about their own targets and to explain what they needed to do to improve.

61. In all the primary schools visited, Year 6 pupils said that they were given homework to complete. The amount, type and regularity of homework varied from school to school and responses from pupils in the same school were not always consistent. Most homework they received was in English and mathematics and took up to 30 minutes each night; some pupils reported having as little as 30 minutes a week. Pupils felt that there was less emphasis on homework after the National Curriculum tests had been completed.

62. Many Year 6 pupils interviewed held responsibilities in their school, helping with its day-to-day running. Responsibilities included a range of monitoring tasks in classrooms and the playground, helping with the supervision of younger pupils, organising equipment and collecting and delivering resources, membership of a school council, representing the school in sports and other events, preparing resources for school assemblies and escorting visitors around the school.

63. Most pupils in Year 6 looked forward to moving to secondary school, albeit with some apprehension. Concerns about bullying were the single most mentioned issue. Many pupils talked positively about the greater range of experiences and challenges they hoped would be available to them at secondary school. Pupils transferring as a group to a particular secondary school felt secure in the knowledge that they would be 'in it together'. Some were looking forward to making new friends and appreciated that now was the time to move on.

64. Although pupils had not attended the Year 7 induction days before they were interviewed in the survey, many schools had had visits from the heads of Year 7 which, in most cases, had given pupils the opportunity to ask questions. This had helped to reduce anxiety, particularly through reassurance about secondary school policies on bullying.

65. Only a minority of pupils felt that the secondary schools would know something about them and the work they had been doing in Year 6. A small number were aware that written reports would be sent to the secondary school, giving details of their National Curriculum test results and attitudes to learning. The majority, however, were unaware of what information was transferred.

66. When the pupils were interviewed again in Year 7, almost all were positive about the start they had made in Key Stage 3: they had retained their high expectations and were keen to do well. In the main, they were confident and enjoying school. Many had found the Year 6 induction days helpful and appreciated the support they had received. Pupils who had experienced additional induction activities were particularly positive about the experience and understood the rationale behind promoting good relationships across the year group. However, little formal evaluation had been completed to consider pupils' views on the start that they had made in Key Stage 3.

67. Most pupils were enjoying their lessons in Year 7, particularly those of a practical nature and those which were different from their primary school experience, such as science, design and technology and physical education. For the majority, lessons in English and mathematics were similar to those experienced in Year 6, although a few pupils commented they were repeating work they had encountered before or that lessons were too easy. Few pupils had received any useful feedback on their work or on how well they were doing in Year 7. In contrast, most pupils when they had been in Year 6 knew at which National Curriculum level they were working and had been used to having their own curricular targets. The practice of setting such targets in core subjects at Key Stage 3 was rare.

68. Several pupils thought there was too much homework in Year 7. Homework varied from school to school and from subject to subject within a school. Pupils reported amounts from two or three hours to as much as ten hours a week, although, as one pupil expressed it, 'Homework takes as long as it takes'. All pupils understood the sanctions for failing to complete homework, although they felt that teachers were inconsistent in applying them. All pupils had homework diaries or journals in which to record assignments and other information to enable them to manage their learning. Pupils generally showed these to parents who were asked to countersign them.

69. Although most pupils had had their anxieties about secondary school reduced, they made a number of suggestions about how their adjustment to secondary school could be eased. They were particularly critical of:

- poor supervision at lunchtimes
- the unfriendliness of some older pupils
- the absence of storage lockers which meant that they had to carry equipment and books from lesson to lesson
- no dedicated recreational space for Year 7 pupils
- insufficient personal support from teachers.

Quality of teaching in Years 6 and 7

70. In Year 6, all the schools visited continued to teach English and mathematics throughout the summer term, with pupils receiving a daily mathematics lesson and literacy hour. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. In mathematics, the teaching in six out of ten lessons was good or very good; in English, it was good or very good in a slightly higher proportion.

71. The best lessons were planned thoroughly, conducted at a good pace and involved all pupils. Teachers made good use of direct teaching, had a clear idea of the learning objectives for the lesson and made these clear to pupils. There were high expectations of pupils' participation and teachers made good use of assessment and interventions to enable pupils to make progress. They used a range of resources in both literacy and mathematics lessons, including overhead projectors for demonstration and explanation in mathematics and shared text work in English, and flip charts and whiteboards for illustrating, recording or demonstrating. In several classes, pupils used hand-held whiteboards to support mental and written calculations and for writing and drafting.

72. The teaching of either English or mathematics was also observed in the Year 7 classes in the schools to which pupils transferred. The proportion of teaching that was good or very good was lower than in the Year 6 lessons. It was good in almost a half of the Year 7 lessons, satisfactory or better in nine in ten lessons, but unsatisfactory in one in ten.¹

³ The annex gives an analysis of teaching in Years 5-8 in full inspections of primary and secondary schools carried out in 2000/01

73. Most of the secondary schools visited had recently introduced a three-part lesson structure and had taken account of the Key Stage 3 Frameworks for English and mathematics, then in pilot form, when planning schemes of work for Year 7.

74. In the effective lessons, Year 7 teachers:

- used their subject knowledge well
- used a three-part lesson structure
- recapped work from previous lessons and identified learning objectives clearly for pupils at the start of the lesson
- identified key vocabulary and displayed it for pupils' information
- involved pupils in lively, interactive teaching with good levels of challenge
- used ICT effectively to support direct whole-class teaching
- managed resources well, including hand-held whiteboards for interactive work
- deployed teaching assistants well to help individuals and groups of pupils
- displayed pupils' work and subject-related materials and resources effectively
- made good use of homework
- provided pupils with work to do independently that was matched appropriately to their needs.

75. In the small proportion of lessons seen in Year 7 that were unsatisfactory, the teachers' management of pupils' behaviour was poor and there was a general lack of engagement from the pupils. There were worrying signs of disaffection among some of the pupils at this early stage of Year 7. The teachers did not know enough about what the pupils already knew or could do and this resulted in a lack of challenge. This low level of challenge adversely affected pupils' attitudes to learning and contributed to some of the poor behaviour. Weaknesses in transfer arrangements were a contributory factor.

LEA support for transfer

76. The survey schools received little guidance or support from LEAs on how to ensure effective transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. All the

LEAs planned and co-ordinated admissions and appeals and published information on transfer programmes to parents. Some LEAs had well-established transfer forms that could be completed by primary schools and passed to partner secondary schools. Two of the LEAs were developing authority-wide electronic systems to transfer data from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. There had been difficulties, however, with software and with a lack of participation by some schools. A few of the LEAs had introduced systems, in addition to the national common transfer form, for recording information on achievement in the National Curriculum that could be passed to secondary schools. Transfer arrangements were complicated in one LEA where the age of transfer varied.

77. Successful projects developed by clusters of schools had been made available to a wider group of schools across a few of the LEAs and funding has been directed towards innovative approaches in the production of bridging units and other continuity projects. Few, if any, of these initiatives had had an impact beyond the schools that developed them, however, and some had been discontinued in the schools in which they were established originally. The LEAs were still keen to support good practice and some had supported a new round of projects, including work on improving pupils' motivation and study skills, and on tracking attainment and target-setting. However, the LEAs were doing little to monitor or evaluate the impact of transfer arrangements or curriculum continuity projects.

78. The LEAs in the survey welcomed the introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy as a means of improving progression between Key Stages 2 and 3. They recognised that schools are generally more successful in managing the personal and social implications of transfer than in developing curriculum continuity or common teaching approaches.

Conclusions

79. The pupils interviewed for this survey, after they had transferred to Year 7, had settled in well to secondary school and had soon overcome any fears they might have had about the new school. The pastoral aspects of transfer appear to have worked well for them.

80. There is more to successful transfer than this, however. While there were useful developments in

the curricular aspects of transfer among the groups of schools in the survey, they were isolated. Overall, schools were making limited progress in this area. There was little sign that the survey schools were tackling the need for improvement in the continuity of the curriculum, ensuring pupils made better progress in Year 7, and preparing them for the changes of teaching and learning they would encounter in their new school.

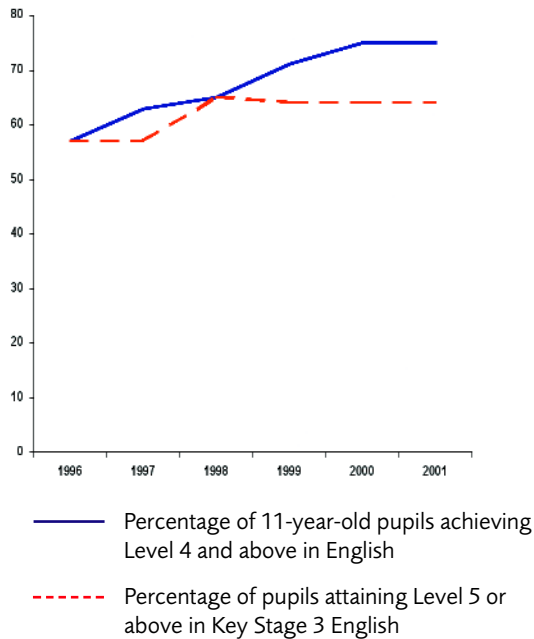
81. The government has set ambitious targets for Key Stage 3 in 2004 and beyond, well above those currently being achieved in English, mathematics and science. The progress of schools towards these demanding targets is likely to be restricted while the weaknesses in continuity and progression between Key Stages 2 and 3 remain.

82. Promoting continuity and progression is one of the key objectives of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Central to the strategy are the frameworks for the teaching of the core subjects in Key Stage 3 and the training being organised for all teachers. Funding for summer schools is being maintained, new transition units are being produced for English and mathematics for Years 6 and 7, and materials for catch-up programmes in Year 7 are now available to all schools. There is also specific funding to support all secondary schools in their efforts to improve transfer. Along with the steps taken nationally on the transfer of data, these initiatives provide the basis for a more deliberate and systematic approach to improving transfer than has been apparent in the past. They offer grounds for optimism, but much needs to be done if the weaknesses described in this report are to be remedied.

Annex A: National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 2 and 3

Comparisons between the increases in standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 3 since 1996 show bigger gains being made at Key Stage 2. Chart 1 shows an increase in English of 18 percentage points for level 4 at Key Stage 2, compared with an increase of only seven percentage points for level 5 at Key Stage 3 over the same five-year period. The figures (chart 2) for mathematics show increases of 19 and 9 percentage points for Key Stages 2 and 3, respectively.

Chart 1: Comparison between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 test results in English over time

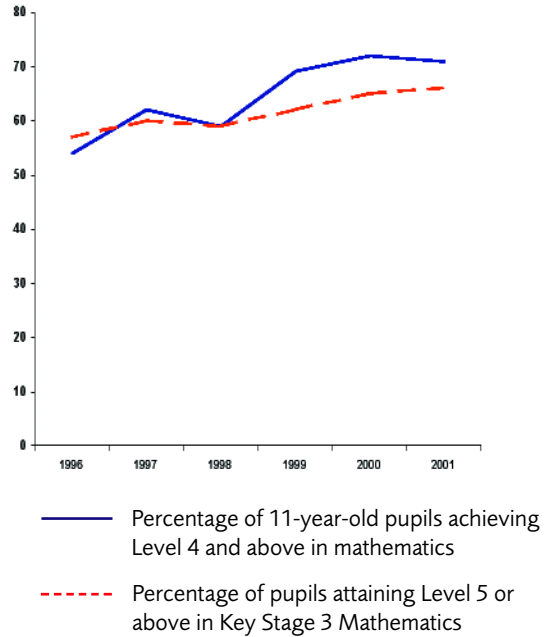


Source: OFSTED

Quality of teaching in Years 5–9

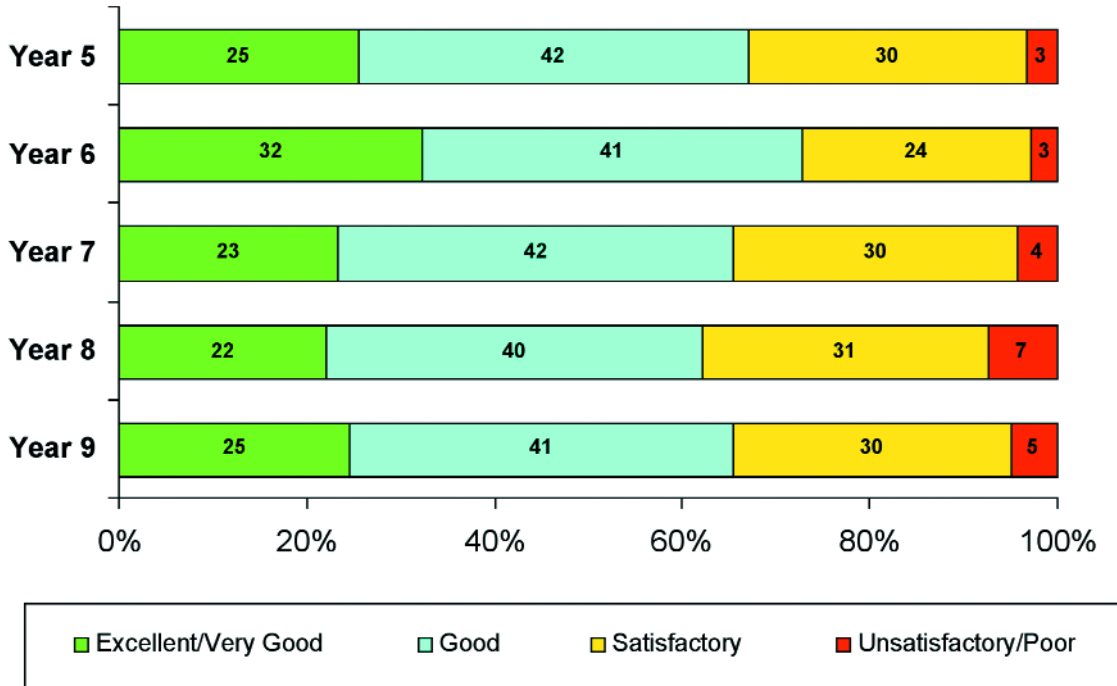
Section 10 inspections in 2000/01 show a pattern of decline in the quality of teaching from Year 6 to Year 8. Charts 3 and 4 show a peak in the quality of teaching in Year 6 in English and mathematics, followed in Years 7 and 8 by an increase in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and a decline in the amount of excellent or very good teaching.

Chart 2: Comparison between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 test results in mathematics over time



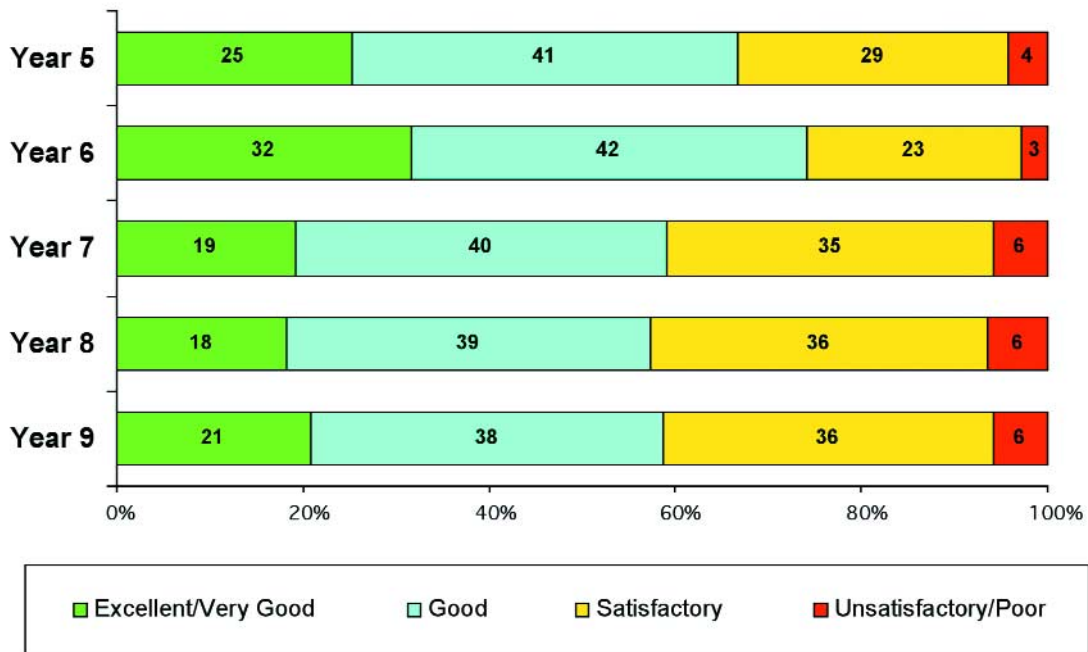
Source: OFSTED

Chart 3: Teaching in English lessons in primary and secondary schools excluding middle schools, 2000/01 (full inspection only)



Source: OFSTED

Chart 4: Teaching in mathematics lessons in primary and secondary schools excluding middle schools - 2000/01 (full inspection only)



Source: OFSTED

