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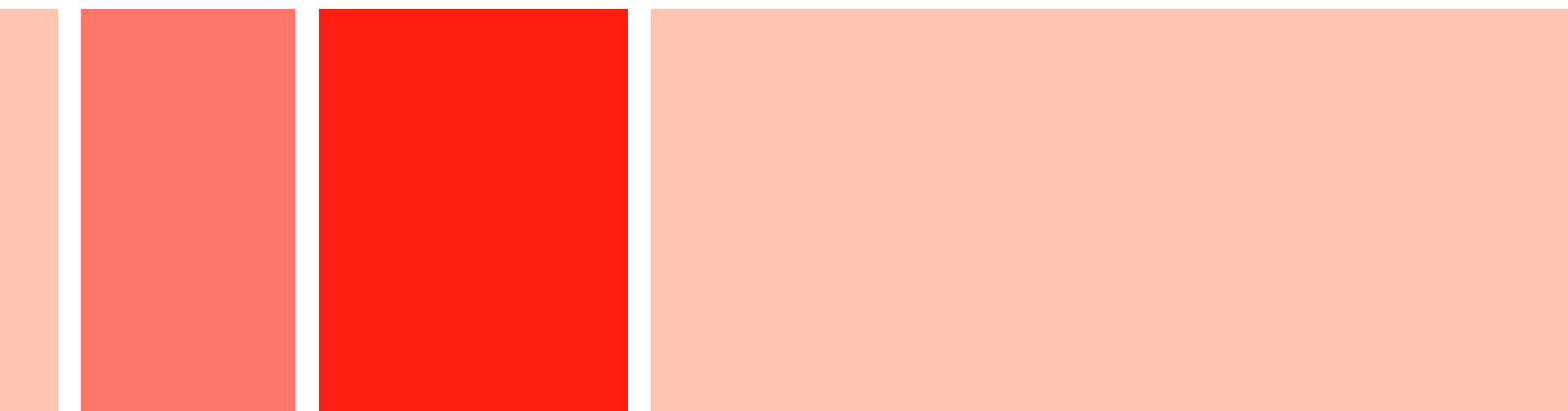
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Evaluation of the first three years of RAISE: Final Report



Evaluation of the first three years of RAISE: Final Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily
those of the Welsh Government

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Raising Attainment and Individual Standards of Education (RAISE) programme was launched in 2006, initially as a two year programme that would “target disadvantaged pupils and seek to raise their levels of performance” (WAG, 2006a). In 2008, the funding for schools was extended for a further two years and funding to support Children Looked After by Local Authorities was extended for a further three years.
- 1.2. Over the three year period (2006-2009) covered by this Final Report, £16.25m has been available annually for the RAISE programme. Of this sum, around £14.5m has been allocated to eligible schools¹, £1 million has been allocated to Local Authorities to support the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in years 10 and 11 and the remainder has been allocated to the administration of the grant, centrally organised events and activities, evaluation and the support provided to the programme by Regional Consortia and Regional Coordinators.
- 1.3. All schools with at least 50 statutory-school-age pupils, 20% or more of whom were eligible for free school meals (FSMs), a proxy indicator of socio-economic disadvantage, received RAISE funding. A total of 648 schools received funding in 2006-2007, made up of 535 primary schools; 69 secondary schools and 32 special schools. This represented approximately 30% of primary schools, 28% of secondary schools and 75% of special schools (Estyn, 2010). With the exception of cases where a school closed or was amalgamated, these schools continued to receive RAISE funding² for three academic years, until summer 2009. The amount of funding that they received depended upon the numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. Primary schools received funding of between £11,000 and

¹ 14.6 million was allocated in 2006/07 and 14.4 million in 2007/08

² Those schools whose percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals fell below 20% continued to be funded

£30,000³; secondary schools received funding of between £47,000 and £220,000 and special schools received funding of between £16,000 and £22,000.

1.4. Schools were required to target the funding at “pupils who are disadvantaged or most at risk of low attainment – or of leaving full time education with no qualifications”. The eligible uses of the fund were:

- additional support in the classroom including the use of learning mentors;
- individual or small group work focused on literacy, numeracy or other aspects of learning;
- out of hours activities;
- development of home–school links;
- support from the community or through development of activities under the community focused schools programme;
- collaboration with FE institutions or other partners;
- behaviour support;
- improving attendance;
- support for disadvantaged pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school;
- building links with Pupil Referral Units and specialised behavioural units so as to enhance the educational opportunities of pupils and assist their reintegration into the mainstream;
- activities which link with development of other programmes such as the foundation phase and, in relevant areas, of the Flying Start programme;
- the purchase of specialist equipment or communication aids to enable pupils to access the curriculum;
- in the case of special schools development of projects with mainstream schools;
- revision and preparation to take any external qualification approved for use with pupils under 16; [and]

³ By the third year of RAISE, this had fallen to 528 primary schools.

- other activity which the school can demonstrate is directed specifically at supporting the target groups of pupils (WAG, 2006a).

1.5. Given the breadth of eligible activities, the RAISE programme team encouraged schools to first focus upon the purpose of the grant: to target pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and raise their attainment, and to use the list to help them identify the most effective way of achieving this, rather than starting with the list of activities in order to choose how to use their RAISE funding.

1.6. The purpose of the looked after children RAISE annual grant of £1 million was to support the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and was focused on improving their educational outcomes, particularly as they approach public examinations at the age of 16. However, in 2008, the scope was extended to enable Local Authorities to provide intervention at an earlier age. In addition, more emphasis was placed on children looked after by Local Authorities who were educated out-of-county but still within Wales.

2. MAIN FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Context for RAISE

- 2.1. Literature reviewed for this evaluation showed a strong relationship between poverty and poor educational attainment (paragraphs 3.1-3.3). The gap between the attainment of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and those from wealthier backgrounds is linked to differences in their individual characteristics and capabilities; their families; and the schools they attend (paragraphs 3.6-3.13).

The targeting of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds by RAISE

- 2.2. Eligibility for free school meals (FSMs) is the best available proxy measure of the socioeconomic disadvantage of pupils at a school level (paragraphs 6.2.-6.8).
- 2.3. Although, as the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs in a school increases the average attainment of pupils in the school decreases, there is no ‘tipping point’, after which an increase in the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs leads to a disproportionate reduction in the average attainment of pupils within the school (paragraphs 6.9-6.13).
- 2.4. The first threshold for inclusion in RAISE required that at least 20% of a school's pupils were eligible for FSMs. The evaluation found in the absence of a “tipping point” that this struck an appropriate balance between reaching as many disadvantaged pupils as possible, whilst ensuring that the available resource was not spread too thinly (paragraphs 6.14-6.15).
- 2.5. The second threshold for inclusion in RAISE required schools to have at least 50 pupils. The evaluation found this restriction less appropriate and meant that pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in approximately 75 small schools did not benefit from RAISE funding (paragraph 6.16).

- 2.6. Most RAISE schools targeted disadvantaged pupils. However, RAISE schools also targeted a small number of pupils who were under-achieving but who were not from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, few pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds with higher levels of achievement were targeted (paragraphs 6.18-6.20).

The impact of RAISE upon pupils' attainment and achievement

- 2.7. Across Wales, the attainment of pupils eligible for FSMs has increased in all four Key Stages since RAISE started in 2007 (paragraphs 7.3-7.5). A key issue for the evaluation was to assess the extent to which this increase was attributable to RAISE.
- 2.8. The increase in the attainment of FSM pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been greater than that of non FSM pupils. Therefore, the gap between them closed a little over the period 2007-2009 (paragraphs 7.3-7.5).
- 2.9. However, the increase in the attainment of non FSM pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 has been greater than that of FSM pupils. Therefore, the gap between them increased over the period 2007-2009 (paragraphs 7.3-7.5).
- 2.10. Historically, the performance of FSM pupils has tended to be lower in schools with a high overall proportion of FSM pupils. These schools were eligible for RAISE funding. During the period 2006-2008, in Key Stage 2, FSM pupils in RAISE schools did better than FSM pupils in non-RAISE schools and the gap between FSM pupils in RAISE and non RAISE schools fell from 10.2 percentage points in 2006 to 4.4 percentage points in 2008. However, in Key Stages 3 and 4 the attainment gap between FSM pupils in RAISE and non RAISE schools increased and in Key Stage 1, there was little change in the gap (paragraphs 7.6-7.7). Therefore, it is likely that much of the gain in FSM pupils' performance in Key stages 3 And 4 was not due to RAISE.

2.11. Schools, Regional Coordinators and Estyn Inspectors all reported that most RAISE supported pupils were making good progress. This assessment may appear to be inconsistent with the data on pupil attainment. However, this assessment reflects gains in pupils' basic skills and their social and emotional skills and dispositions, meaning it is a broader measure than attainment (paragraphs 7.8-7.13).

Differences in impact in different schools

2.12. The impact of RAISE upon pupils has not been uniform: pupils in some schools have achieved more than others. The evaluation concludes that much of this variation is because the effectiveness of schools and the challenges they faced differed (paragraphs 8.2. 8.8).

2.13. The most effective schools were best placed to exploit the opportunities RAISE provided to develop strategies to tackle the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and low levels of attainment. Some schools were able to use RAISE funding to build on their existing work to become more strategic, testing out new approaches, and becoming more effective in both targeting and tackling needs (paragraphs 8.7. 8.8).

2.14. Evidence suggests holistic strategies that apply systems thinking to tackling the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and low levels of attainment are the most effective. This is because there is no single causal factor associated with socioeconomic disadvantage, so addressing more factors increases the chances that the specific needs of a child will be addressed and that specific weaknesses in a school that contribute to under-achievement are addressed; there is the potential for synergies between different interventions; and holistic strategies reduce the risk that different interventions will conflict with, or cancel, each other out (paragraphs 8.9. 8.12).

The impact of RAISE funding upon schools

- 2.15. RAISE had a range of positive impacts upon schools. They included a growing awareness and, in some cases, understanding of the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment (paragraph 9.2-9.3); the enabling, sustaining and, in some cases, catalysing of action to address the link (paragraph 9.4-9.5); staff development and the introduction of new ways of working (paragraph 9.6-9.8); developing and extending the curriculum (paragraph 9.9-9.10); enhanced support for pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (paragraphs 9.9-9.10); and improvements in monitoring and evaluation (paragraphs 9.11.-9.12).

The legacy of RAISE funding for schools

- 2.16. Almost all RAISE funded schools are keen to ensure RAISE has a legacy but some changes will be easier to sustain than others. Changes in culture and working practices that are “embedded” in the school, such as changes in teachers’ understanding of the links between socioeconomic disadvantage and low levels of attainment, will be easier to sustain than those, such as the employment of additional support staff that “extended” the school (paragraphs 10.1-10.3).

The impact of RAISE funding for Children looked after by Local Authorities

- 2.17. At a national level, the proportion of children looked after by their Local Authority in Wales achieving at least one and at least five GCSEs A*-G increased over the period 2002-2008 (paragraphs 11.3-11.9).
- 2.18. The rate of increase in the proportion of children looked after by their Local Authority gaining at least one GCSE A*-G was slightly higher in the RAISE period (2007-2009) than it was in the preceding five years (2002-2006) (paragraphs 11.3-11.9).

- 2.19. The rate of increase in the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities gaining at least five GCSE A*-G was similar in the RAISE period (2007-2009) to that of the preceding five years (2002-2006) (paragraphs 11.3-11.9).
- 2.20. Overall, although the evidence of a positive impact upon of the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities is limited, there is stronger evidence from both RAISE Looked After Children's Coordinators and children looked after by Local Authorities, that RAISE has had a positive impact upon their educational experiences and their social and emotional skills and dispositions. This finding is consistent with evaluations of comparable initiatives in England (paragraphs 11.22-11.23, 11.34-11.35).
- 2.21. The evidence of the impact of RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities upon schools and Local Authorities is positive but patchy (paragraphs 12.1-12.4).

The Welsh Government's role

- 2.22. Although presented as a single programme, the two strands of RAISE funding for schools and for children looked after by Local Authorities have in effect operated as distinct programmes. (paragraph 13.1).
- 2.23. Proposals for RAISE funding for schools were made swiftly and initially there was limited engagement with Local Authorities. This, combined with concerns that the proposals sidelined Local Authorities, meant that many schools were not effectively supported and challenged by Local Authorities when developing their proposals for the use of RAISE funding. Local Authority engagement with RAISE improved considerably as the programme developed, but the initial problems contributed to weaknesses in many schools proposals (paragraphs 13.2-13.15).
- 2.24. Each of the themes identified for the fourth year of RAISE funding are appropriate, although there was evidence of a greater need and/or greater evidence of the efficacy of some themes. Taken in isolation the themes do not

include important areas such as leadership and pedagogy. However, when viewed in the context of other Welsh Government policies, which include these areas and which emphasise the need for systems thinking, they provide a useful starting point for schools wishing to identify actions to tackle the link between socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational attainment (paragraphs 13.7.-13.25).

- 2.25. Proposals for RAISE funding to support children looked after by Local Authorities were simpler to administer because funding was devolved directly to Local Authorities. However, there were also weaknesses in the range and type of proposals that were put forward by Local Authorities (paragraph 13.26-13.27).
- 2.26. The objective of RAISE, to target pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and raise their attainment, was clearly aligned with objectives in the *Learning Country: Vision into Action*. However, at an operational level, RAISE has been less well aligned with other Welsh Government programmes and policies intended to support these strategic objectives (paragraphs 13.28-13.29).

Regional Consortia and Local Authorities' role

- 2.27. Local Authorities support for schools has been patchy (paragraph 14.2-14.3).
- 2.28. In two Consortia there has been strong leadership from senior officers, which has helped to develop a more strategic approach to tackling the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment. In the other two consortia, Regional Coordinators have taken on leadership roles. In one of these consortia, the Regional Coordinator worked closely with Local Authorities and schools to develop the RAISE programme while, in the other consortium, the work was more focused upon individual schools (paragraphs 14.4).
- 2.29. Assessments of the impact of Regional Coordinators are disputed: some schools have valued their work whilst other schools and Estyn have been more sceptical of their impact. Regional Coordinators strongly dispute this assessment, which

they believe rests upon a misunderstanding of their role, which includes, but goes beyond simply working with schools (paragraphs 14.6-14.11).

- 2.30. RAISE funded work was often poorly integrated with Local Authority strategies to tackle child poverty (paragraphs 14.13-14.16).

Schools' Role

- 2.31. Initially, schools had little time to prepare and many chose narrowly focused but 'tried and tested' approaches, often focused upon literacy. In many schools proposals developed over time, becoming more holistic (paragraph 15.1).
- 2.32. School's monitoring of RAISE funded work has been more effective than their evaluation of it (paragraph 15.2-15.4).

The value for money of RAISE

- 2.33. It is not possible to quantify the cost or financial benefit per pupil of RAISE, limiting the scope to assess the programme's value for money (paragraph 16.3.-16.6)
- 2.34. A qualitative assessment of the programme's value for money suggests it offered a reasonably efficient way of disbursing funding but that the impact (or value) of this funding was limited by weaknesses in the programme (paragraph 16.5).

Conclusions

- 2.35. RAISE aimed to target disadvantaged pupils and to raise their attainment. Targeting was imperfect and, in effect, many schools opted to promote equality of outcomes over equality of opportunity by targeting under-achievement rather than socioeconomic disadvantage. Nevertheless, the programme reached large numbers of disadvantaged pupils. The evidence of an impact on their attainment is strongest for pupils in Key Stage 2, although there is evidence of positive impacts upon pupils' basic skills and their social and emotional skills and dispositions in all four Key Stages (paragraph 17.1, 17.27).

- 2.36. The evidence from RAISE, and the literature, suggests that schools serving disadvantaged areas whose pupils do better than would be expected given their socioeconomic background, do so principally because they embody the characteristics of an effective school. They are effective, in part, because interventions, such as programmes to improve basic skills, are part of a holistic strategy aimed at narrowing the gap between the educational attainment and experiences of pupils from more and less socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, (paragraph 17.3).
- 2.37. The RAISE programme has illustrated how additional funding can help schools become more effective at ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential, but is not of itself sufficient. RAISE demonstrates that what a school does is more important than how much it spends. Moreover, although there is large body of evidence and a broad consensus on what schools can do to help children achieve more, there is much less consensus on how a school can apply and implement this knowledge and become more effective. Whilst RAISE has contributed to this understanding, illustrating both the value and some of the limits of the impact of additional funding, the evidence it provides is incomplete. (See paragraphs 17.4-17.5).
- 2.38. Similar conclusions apply to RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities. Evidence suggests the most effective Local Authorities achieve good outcomes not simply because they provide additional support; it is because this support is part of a systems wide approach (paragraph 17.8).
- 2.39. The key strengths of the RAISE programme included the devolution of funding directly to schools (paragraphs 17.10-17.12); the way in which it addressed the impact of both pupil level and school level socioeconomic disadvantage (paragraphs 17.16); and the impetus given to strengthening consortium working in two areas (paragraphs 17.17).

2.40. The key weaknesses of the RAISE programme included the way in which funding was devolved directly to schools paragraph (17.19); the rush to develop the programme and the initial failures to adhere to either systems thinking or tri-level reform in its planning or operation (paragraph 17.20); schools' planning for the transition of RAISE pupils from Key Stage 2 to 3 (paragraph 17.23); the time limited nature of the funding (paragraph 17.24-17.25); and the limited overall impact upon pupils who were not targeted for support (paragraph 17.26).

Recommendations

2.41. RAISE supported the commitment in the Learning Country: Vision Into Action (WAG, 2006c), the Welsh Government's overarching strategy for learning, to "narrow the gap" between the attainment of pupils from more and less socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It represented one of a range of initiatives that supported this goal⁴ and a key conclusion of this evaluation is that all these activities should clearly relate to an overall strategy for raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners and narrowing the gap in performance between them and other learners. In that context, this evaluation has identified the need for specific action on the part of schools, Local Authorities and the Welsh Government. It is critical that these actions combine to form a coherent approach across all three of these levels of the education system.

Schools should:

- 2.41.1. Ensure that the nature of the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment is both widely recognised and understood by school leaders, teachers and support staff.
- 2.41.2. Ensure that school leaders, teachers and support staff have high expectations of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, so that the link between socioeconomic

⁴ These include and included initiatives that are part of the School Effectiveness Framework, the National Attendance and Behaviour Review and Strategy, the statutory guidance and regulation on inclusion and pupil support and on the health, education and well-being of children looked after by Local Authorities and the forthcoming child poverty strategy, which all include measures to support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils and their families.

disadvantage and poor educational attainment is never an excuse for under-achievement.

- 2.41.3. Improve their capacity to both identify and meet the needs of all socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, including children looked after by Local Authorities and those with moderate and high levels of achievement.
- 2.41.4. Integrate interventions aimed at raising the attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, such as literacy support, into whole school strategies to raise attainment.
- 2.41.5. Work with others so that the symptoms of socioeconomic disadvantage and its root causes can be tackled in a coordinated way. This is likely to involve engagement with parents, carers and the community and a range of public and voluntary sector partners.
- 2.41.6. Improve the evaluation of the impact of their work to identify and support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, using both headline indicators, such as the achievement of expected levels at each Key Stage, and complementary indicators, such as measures of gains in basic skills and social and emotional skills and dispositions.
- 2.41.7. Work with others schools in their cluster to ensure a continuity of support when socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils make the transition from primary to secondary school.

RAISE suggests that Local Authorities should:

- 2.41.8. Work with schools to help them embed changes that successfully support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils so they can be more easily sustained.
- 2.41.9. Target additional support at socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils in schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs, who are likely to be doubly disadvantaged.

- 2.41.10. Monitor and evaluate the performance of FSM pupils in schools and use this information to inform strategies to support and, where appropriate, challenge schools that are not raising the attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils.
- 2.41.11. Robustly monitor and evaluate the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils (including children looked after by Local Authorities) at a Local Authority level, benchmarking their performance against other Local Authorities, including those in their regional consortia, and other groups of pupils
- 2.41.12. Develop integrated strategies for raising the attainment of disadvantaged learners that will ensure coherence across local child poverty strategies, the Children and Young People's Plan and all social services and education policies.”

RAISE suggests a need for the Welsh Government to:

- 2.41.13. More effectively analyse the performance of FSM pupils at a Local Authority and national level, improve access to and publicise this analysis.
- 2.41.14. Work with inspectorates, such as Estyn, to strengthen the evaluation of the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils at a school, Local Authority and national level.
- 2.41.15. Ensure that future policies and programmes in this area apply systems-thinking and tri-level working, so that future funding and initiatives to support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils are developed in partnership and integrated with social justice and social care policies at the national, local and school level.
- 2.41.16. Ensure that future funding to support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils uses the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales to provide clear objectives, support and challenge and accountability structures and processes.
- 2.41.17. Increase the differentiation of school funding to more effectively support the attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils.

3. THE CONTEXT FOR RAISE*⁵

Introduction: the attainment gap

- 3.1. The relationship between disadvantage and poor educational attainment is clear. Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study, a major longitudinal study of childhood development in the UK, has identified differences in the development of children from advantaged and disadvantaged families from as early as nine months. By the age of three, children from disadvantaged backgrounds (defined in terms of family poverty and low level parental education) are up to a year behind children from more advantaged families (Feinstein, et al, 2007).

- 3.2. The gap in early childhood development contributes to the gap in educational attainment as children progress through school. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to start behind their more advantaged peers and tend to fall further behind as they progress through school. Perhaps even more strikingly, evidence from the 1958 and 1970 Cohort studies shows that even when children from disadvantaged backgrounds start off in the top quarter of pupils in reading and maths they tend to fall behind as they progress through school (Feinstein, et al, 2008). A similar pattern was found in a recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation sponsored study of children's progress between 1998 and 2003 (Cassen & Kingdon, 2008).

- 3.3. Benchmarking data can be used to explore the attainment gap. This groups schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for FSMs into bands, such as schools with less than 10% of their pupils eligible for FSMs. It enables the performance of schools, measured by the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level at each key stage, to be compared with that of pupils in other schools in the same band and with schools in other bands.

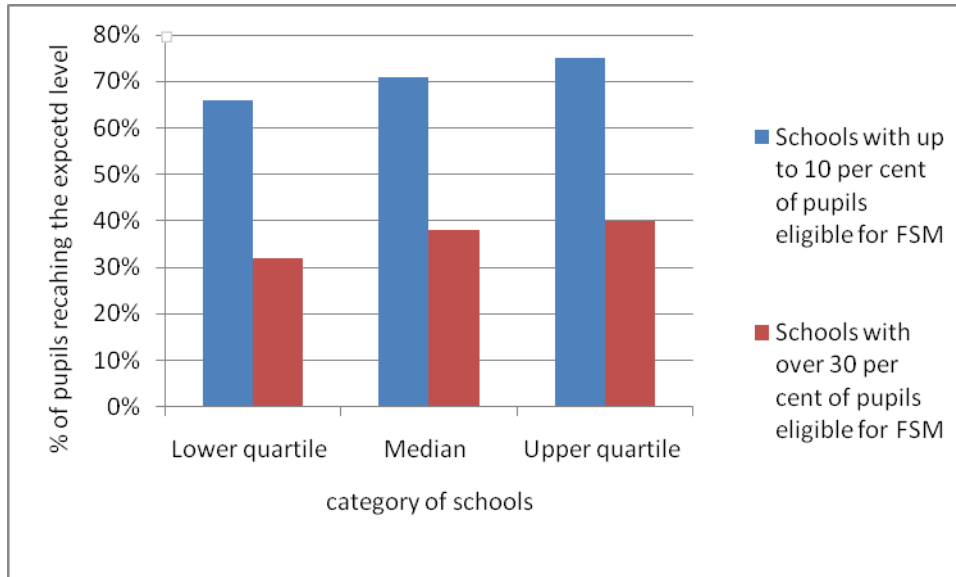
⁵ This section is adapted from Holtom & Sims, 2008

3.4. Graph 3.1. uses benchmarking data for 2007, the first year of RAISE to explore and illustrate the attainment gap between the performance of pupils in schools in Wales with high (>30%) and low (<10%) overall proportions of pupils eligible for FSMs, in Key Stage 3, where the gap is widest. In order to compare the range of performance of pupils in schools in these two categories of schools (i.e. high and low FSM schools), three measures are used:

- the upper quartile, the value that separates the average attainment of pupils in the top quarter of schools from the remaining three quarters of schools, which provides an indication of the performance of pupils in a relatively high performing school in each of the two categories;
- the median, the value that separates the average attainment of pupils in the top half of schools from the bottom half of schools, and which provides an indication of the performance of pupils in middling performing schools in each of the two categories; and
- the lower quartile, the value that separates the average attainment of pupils in the bottom quarter of schools from the remaining three quarters of schools, and which provides an indication of the performance of pupils in lower performing schools in each of the two categories.

3.5. Graph 3.1 uses these three measures to compare the performance of pupils in each of the two categories. Most notably it illustrates the difference between the performance of pupils in the upper quartile of schools with more than 30% of their pupils eligible for FSMs which represent relatively high performing schools in this category, and the performance of pupils in the lower quartile of schools with less than 10% of their pupils eligible for FSMs, which represent relatively low performing schools in this category. The comparison shows that the performance of pupils, in even the relatively high performing schools in the high FSM category lags behind the performance of pupils in relatively poorly performing schools in the low FSM category.

Fig 3.1. Key Stage 3 benchmark data, 2007



	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Schools with up to 10 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM	66%	71%	75%
Schools with over 30 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM	32%	38%	40%

Source: National Pupils Database

Factors that influence educational attainment

3.6. In exploring why the attainment of children from different backgrounds differs so much, research has identified a range of factors that influence attainment. These can be grouped under three themes, which we discuss in detail below:

- Individual characteristics and capabilities;
- The family; and
- Schools.

3.7. The key **individual characteristics** that are positively linked to attainment include gender (girls typically performing better than boys)⁶; belonging to certain ethnic groups⁷; good behaviour and attendance; cognitive and non-cognitive skills; the absence of special educational needs; being born earlier in the school year; strong prior attainment; high aspirations and a strong motivation and desire to learn (Duckworth et al, 2009; Feinstein, et al, 2004). Crucially many of these factors are associated, meaning they can have a cumulative effect when a child or young person is exposed to multiple risk factors due to, for example, their gender, ethnicity and special educational needs.

3.8. The key **family** characteristics that are positively linked to attainment include: a high socioeconomic status (including factors such as having parents who are employed and have a high income); a rich “home learning environment” (e.g. reading regularly to children) and parental engagement in education; parental aspirations and interest in their child’s education⁸; not growing up in care (i.e. not a looked after child); growing up in a stable family with good relationships between family members; growing up in a smaller family; having parents, and in particular mothers, with high levels of prior education; and not being born to a teenage mother (Duckworth et al, 2009; Feinstein, et al, 2004). As with an individual’s characteristics and capabilities, many of these family factors are associated or inter-related with each other, so that for example:

- Family size is correlated with parental education;
- Teenage mothers tend to have lower levels of educational attainment than older mothers; and

⁶ For example, at Key Stage 3, where the gap is largest, the percentage of girls achieving the CSI has been between 9 and 10 percentage points above the percentage of boys achieving the CSI (WAG, 2010).

⁷For example, a higher percentage of pupils from a Chinese or Chinese British ethnic background achieved the CSI than any other ethnic group at all the Key Stages; while the Black ethnic group had the lowest percentage of pupils achieving the CSI at each Key Stage (WAG, 2010).

⁸ “parental aspirations are key factors in the attainment of young people, perhaps even more important than other family and parent characteristics. Recent studies indicate that parental aspirations may have a greater effect on national test scores than other parental variables such as health, values, and involvement in learning.” (p. v, Duckworth et al, 2009)

- Many children looked after by Local Authorities have grown up in unstable, sometimes fractious families with poor home learning environments.

3.9. The key **school** characteristics that are positively linked to attainment include: attending “effective” schools (that is to say, schools that “add value”, and whose pupils do better than the norm when factors such as their prior attainment, ethnicity and socio-economic status are taken into account); schools with a low proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSMs)⁹ (a proxy indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage); schools with a low proportion of pupils whose second language is English; schools with high levels of attainment; and attending schools with a high proportion of girls (Duckworth, et al, 2009).

The link between disadvantage and poor educational attainment

3.10. Some of these factors, such as the quality of teaching in a school or the quality of interactions between parents and children, directly influence attainment or children’s capabilities. Others, such as parental levels of education and the socioeconomic context in which a school operates, have a more indirect effect: they “influence” and “constrain” other factors. (Feinstein, et al, 2004). For example, parents’ education is one of range of factors that influences the way they interact with their children and as we explore further below, the socioeconomic context in which a school operates is one of a range of factors that can influence the quality of teaching in the school. This helps explains how factors such as socioeconomic disadvantage can influence attainment.

3.11. As we summarise below, many, but by no means all of these factors, are correlated with, linked to or caused by socioeconomic disadvantage. Nevertheless, there is no intrinsic link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment. Not all children from disadvantaged backgrounds are exposed to risk factors associated with poorer educational attainment, such as low

⁹ Although there is an inverse relationship between the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and average attainment of pupils, because the relationship is non linear, there is no tipping point, or tipping phase, after which average attainment drops precipitously.

levels of parental education and attending schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, and some children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve 'against the odds'.

- **Individual characteristics and capabilities** – the British Cohort studies demonstrate that children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have lower levels of cognitive development (the ability to learn) and have more behavioural problems. In school this can manifest itself in poor literacy and numeracy and weak social and emotional skills, leading to problems in accessing the curriculum and forming relationships with peers and teachers and, consequently, alienation from school. This failure can undermine children and young people's belief in their ability to learn (their self-efficacy), and consequent motivation to learn. Children and young people who don't see the value or point of education are also likely to have low levels of motivation to learn (Feinstein, et al, 2007)
- **Poor or ineffective support** – research suggests that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds tend to get less effective support and encouragement from adults, most notably parents, but also from professionals such as teachers, youth workers, education welfare and social workers (Jones, 2005; Desforge & Aboucher, 2003).
- **The challenges facing schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils** – Ruth Lupton's work (2004, 2005) suggests that without additional funding, schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs often find it more difficult to establish the elements of an 'effective school'. For example, teachers and school leaders may be forced to spend more time 'fire-fighting', coping with problems such as poor behaviour, than teaching and planning.

3.12. These factors are interlinked, and often mutually reinforcing, so a pupil who enters school with poor levels of literacy, numeracy and weak social and emotional skills will often struggle in school and may become disaffected and disruptive. As a

consequence their parents may provide less support and encouragement, whilst their teachers find they are devoting more time to trying to control their behaviour and less time to teaching them, further slowing their progress.

3.13. In conclusion, the evidence from research suggests that schools account for approximately 15% of the differences in pupil attainment in secondary schools (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007) and potentially more when family and individual characteristics are particularly weak (Duckworth, et al, 2009). Moreover, the *Narrowing the Gap* studies (see boxed text) clearly demonstrate that some schools are more successful than others in tackling the link between disadvantage and poor educational attainment.¹⁰ Equally, given the range of different factors that influence attainment, there are limits to what schools acting alone can achieve.

Narrowing the Gap

The *Narrowing the Gap* studies, reports of a task-and-finish group of the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association, examined the factors that contribute to the gap in performance between primary schools (phase 2) (WAG & WLGA, 2004) and secondary schools (phase 1) (WAG & WLGA, 2002) serving disadvantaged and more advantaged areas. The studies identified a number of factors necessary for driving school effectiveness, which in turn contributed to higher attainment, including:

- Effective leadership and management¹¹,
- Being community focused and working with others¹²

¹⁰ Although given the range of factors, there is inevitably a limit to the difference a school alone can make to pupil attainment.

¹¹ The phase 1 study highlights the importance of “Having key personnel in a position to drive school improvement” and the phase 2 highlights the importance “Leadership: the head teacher’s leadership, leadership throughout the school and the leadership of the governing body”; and “Efficient and effective organisation and management”.

¹² The phase 1 study highlights that “Developing the community focus of the school as a resource to be used by all ages in the community raises the profile of education and brings with it the potential for multiple benefits for learners, schools and their communities.” The phase 2 study highlights the importance of “The engagement and commitment of pupils and their parents”; and “Mutual support,

- A strong focus upon Improvement and Accountability¹³
- Effective Intervention and Support¹⁴
- Monitoring of learning and teaching and promotion of effective practice
- Making effective use of attainment data; and
- Effective curriculum and teaching, underpinned by Networks of Professional Practice.¹⁵

These are consistent with research into school effectiveness, reflected in the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (WAG, 2008b).

validation and valuing from all those connected with the school". "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"

¹³ The phase 1 study highlights the importance of "Monitoring of learning and teaching"; and "Making effective use of attainment data".

¹⁴ The phase 1 study highlights the importance "[supporting] Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition", "Behaviour management"; "Securing regular pupil attendance" and the "development of literacy skills".

¹⁵ The phase 1 study highlights the importance of the "promotion of effective practice" and the phase 2 study highlights the importance of "The teaching team: working together to fully utilise and improve their expertise".

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

4.1. The **aim** of this evaluation is to assess the impact and effectiveness of the RAISE programme and the **objectives** of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the extent to which the overall aims and objectives of RAISE have been met;
- Determine the contribution of RAISE to improvements in individual standards of education of the pupils targeted for support^[16];
- Identify the keys strengths of RAISE and any constraints/issues that may have impeded its effectiveness;
- Assess the value for money of the programme including its contribution to improvement in individual standards of education in schools in Wales; on long term capacity building in school improvement and in improving the educational attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities as well their attainment in further education, higher education and training;
- Provide recommendations as to how the Welsh Government, Local Authorities and schools can best build upon the RAISE programme, drawing on best practice and lessons learned from the initiative and, where appropriate, other similar schemes; and
- Consider the effectiveness of the role played by the Welsh Government and Local Authorities in supporting the RAISE programme and, in particular, any new posts created to support the implementation of the RAISE initiative and the work undertaken by Schools Improvement Professionals in connection with RAISE funding.

4.2. The evaluation was also required to consider the following questions and issues:

¹⁶ This objective was potentially ambiguous because “standards” are used to describe both the standards of education attained and the quality of education (Cambridge Primary Review, 2009). It was agreed with the RAISE Project Leader that the evaluation objective referred to the standards of education attained and this objective is therefore addressed through our discussion of the impact of RAISE upon pupils’ attainment and achievement.

- The RAISE programme's alignment with Welsh Government objectives and with local policy and strategies;
- Evidence of the impact of RAISE in terms of improving individual standards of achievement in schools; the delivery of educational outcomes (or potential for delivering) on pupils receiving support, including looked after children;
- The programme's overall cost effectiveness, value for money and any continuing need to spend;
- The impact of RAISE in promoting integrated and coherent responses to pupils' needs including the use made of established good practice in school improvement and multi-agency working; and
- RAISE's impact on Local Authority's role as both corporate parent and educating authority for looked after children

And to capture what can be learned from the programme including:

;

- Any unintended or unexpected impacts that occur
- The aspects of the programme that are most effective, the barriers that have been faced and what could be improved;
- How effectively the Welsh Government's vision and objectives in making the RAISE funding available was communicated to, and shared by, schools and Local Education Authorities; and
- The sustainability of projects supported by RAISE.

5. METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of RAISE funding for schools

5.1. There was a widespread fear at the start of the evaluation of RAISE that the programme was going to be “over-evaluated”. Interviewees from schools and Local Authorities consistently pointed to the multiple layers of monitoring and evaluation, including, on an annual basis:

- Schools’ self-evaluations;
- Local Authorities’ reviews of RAISE;
- RAISE Regional Co-ordinators’ evaluation reports; and
- Estyn’s remit to review RAISE funding.

5.2. In response, the People and Work Unit committed itself to working with and making full use of these different layers of evaluation and only undertaking fieldwork and analysis where these different layers of evaluation could not supply the information required by the external evaluation. This both minimised the risk of unnecessary duplication of time and effort, reducing the burdens placed upon RAISE’s stakeholders, and enabled the triangulation of data, by using multiple sources. As a consequence, the external evaluation of RAISE funding for schools draws upon six key sources, which we discuss in detail below:

- A review of the RAISE database;
- A rolling literature review;
- Visits to 60 RAISE funded schools;
- A review of the reports prepared by Regional Coordinators;
- A review of Estyn’s three reports on RAISE (Estyn, 2007, 2008, 2009); and
- Interviews with seventeen key stakeholders.

5.3. It was envisaged that school self-evaluations could also be used. However an initial review of a sample of 80 school self-evaluation returns, drawn from five

Local Authorities¹⁷, in order to assess their potential for use by the evaluation found that because different schools had measured different things in different ways, it was not possible to use the self-evaluations to generate comparable data on pupil performance. The review also suggested there were some methodological weaknesses in most schools' self-evaluations, including the lack of time series data and data on comparison groups, that made their use problematic (Holtom, 2008).

- 5.4. Because school self-evaluations could not be used to assess the aggregate impact of RAISE upon pupil attainment, an analysis of the attainment of pupils eligible for FSMs, as a proxy indicator of their inclusion in the RAISE programme, was planned. There were delays in the release of the data and the team working on the data encountered technical problems, which meant that they were overtaken by Estyn, who undertook and published a similar analysis in 2008 and 2009, which we make full use of.
- 5.5. It was also planned that the evaluation would also draw upon an in-depth analysis of data on pupil attainment over the last six years. However, delays in the release of this data meant that it was not possible to complete the analysis in time for this report.
- 5.6. ***Analysis of the RAISE Database:*** Schools eligible for RAISE funding were required to prepare a pro-forma outlining their proposed use of grant and to then agree this with their Local Authority. In early 2007 we reviewed 626 of the 648 school proposals¹⁸ (pro-formas) and recorded information on the expected outcomes of the work (e.g. improvements in literacy and numeracy, improvements in children and young people's social and emotional skills) and the means of achieving these outcomes (e.g. employing a Learning Support Assistant,

¹⁷ Flintshire, Gwynedd, Cardiff, RCT and Pembrokeshire .The counties were selected to provide a reasonable spread across primary and secondary, rural/urban settings, English/Welsh medium, and the four regions. We looked at returns from primary and secondary schools in each of these counties

¹⁸A small number of school proposals were either not in the files during the time of review or were inadvertently missed.

establishing a nurture group). We used this to develop a database that provided an overview of RAISE funded work in schools.

- 5.7. **Literature review:** As part of the scoping work for this evaluation a short focused review of the literature was undertaken. Although there was not sufficient time nor resource to undertake a systematic review of the literature, this review was able to draw upon a number of earlier reviews, including the *Narrowing the Gap* studies (WAG & WLGA, 2002, 2004); a rapid evidence assessment of interventions that attempt to overcome the link between deprivation and educational attainment (Arad, 2007) commissioned for RAISE, and a series of reviews of education and poverty commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007; Egan, 2007; Raffo, et al, 2007).
- 5.8. The initial scoping review had been ‘refreshed’ throughout the evaluation, drawing upon a range of studies published after the initial review, including the Bramley review of school funding (Bramley & Watkins, 2007) and subsequent research into outcomes based funding (Matrix Evidence, 2009); a rapid evidence assessment of the interventions that attempt to improve behaviour and attendance in schools and other learning settings (Sims, et al, 2008); reviews by the Child Poverty Expert Group (2008) and National Assembly for Wales’ Children’s Committee into the links between poverty and poor educational attainment (NAfW, 2008); research into the impact of support staff upon pupils and teachers (Blatchford, 2009); research from England into the links between poverty and poor educational attainment (e.g. DCSF, 2009); and a systematic review of the literature on young people’s disengagement from learning (Bowen, et al, 2010).
- 5.9. **Visits to RAISE schools:** Analysis undertaken for our first interim report on RAISE funding for schools (Holtom, 2008a) identified a number of issues that warranted further investigation through visits to schools, including:

- The relationship between RAISE funded work and non-RAISE funded work in the school and the contribution and 'added value', if any, of RAISE funded work to non-RAISE funded work, and of non-RAISE funded work to RAISE funded work;
- The relationship between RAISE funded work in primary and secondary schools in different clusters;
- The impact, if any, of RAISE funded work on pupils, the school itself, the community and Local Authority;
- The efficacy of different RAISE funded approaches;
- The links between RAISE funded strategies in schools and local policies, such as Children and Young People Plans, Community First Partnership plans and RAISE funding for Children looked after by Local Authorities; and
- How schools responded to the opportunities created by RAISE's devolved structure, and the effectiveness of the support provided by Local Authorities (including Regional Coordinators).

5.10. 48 schools were visited in the second year of evaluation. In order to construct the sample, a methodology for identifying schools was developed. The methodology was intended to ensure that the sample of schools that we visited included a range of schools that had adopted one of the three broad approaches to using RAISE funding highlighted in the analysis for the first Interim report, i.e.:

- A focus in particular upon enhancing literacy and numeracy through classroom based interventions;
- A focus in particular upon developing a supportive environment for young people, such as, developing home-school links, developing their social and emotional skills and enhancing pastoral support; and
- A focus in particular upon systemic change by, for example, using RAISE funding to develop their school improvement strategies.

5.11. The methodology was also intended to ensure that the sample included a range:

- of schools from the four different regions (Central South, North Wales, South East and South West and Mid Wales); and
- Primary, secondary and special schools with different characteristics (e.g. rural/urban).

5.12. The methodology produced the sample outlined in table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Distribution of schools in the sample					
Region School Type	Central South	South West & Mid	South East	North	All Wales
Primary	9	10	9	6	34
Secondary	3	2	3	2	10
Special	1	1	1	1	4
Total # of schools	13	13	13	9	48

5.13. Having identified the number of schools we wished to visit in each region, schools were selected in consultation with Regional Coordinators and then were approached by members of the PWU's research team (Sarah Lloyd-Jones, Rhodri Bowen, Bethan Wyn-Jones and Duncan Holtom). Participation in the evaluation was voluntary and a small number of schools chose not to participate.

5.14. Schools were visited over a two month period in late 2008. Wherever possible, the research team spoke to a member of the school's senior management team, teachers and support staff involved in RAISE and children or young people targeted by RAISE. Semi-structured interviews were used.

5.15. Our second Interim Report on RAISE funding for schools (Holtom, 2008) identified the need to better understand a series of themes, issues and challenges:

- multi-agency working;
- schools approaches to measuring and evaluating the impact of RAISE upon attainment and achievement;
- the role, potential and impact of support staff, such as Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), given research suggesting a mixed impact (Blatchford, et al, 2009); and
- the scope to use short term project funding, like RAISE, as an investment in sustainable change.

5.16. In total, 12 primary and secondary schools from across Wales were visited over the period January-March 2010. As before, potential schools were identified through consultations with Regional Coordinators, and then approached, and if willing, visited by members of the People and Work Unit's Research team who spoke to school leaders and, in some cases, teachers and support staff and pupils.

5.17. This approach, which relied upon the knowledge and judgment of Regional Coordinators in identifying schools to visit, was not intended to result in finding a representative sample and the sample of 60 schools visited cannot necessarily be considered representative of all RAISE schools. However, as the emerging findings have been regularly presented to, and discussed with, Local Authority representatives and the school visits have been contextualised with the findings of Regional Coordinators and Estyn (discussed below), we are confident that, taken together, the different sources of data enable us to make evaluative judgements about RAISE with a reasonable degree of confidence.

5.18. **Regional Coordinators Reports:** Regional Consortia are required to produce an annual report based upon visits to schools and discussions with Local Authorities which the Coordinators' agreed should outline responses to five key questions developed through discussions between the Welsh Government Regional Coordinators and the PWU:

- How well do schools understand the overall aim of RAISE?

- How effectively are schools monitoring and evaluating their RAISE activities?
- How well are schools progressing in respect of the aims and key features of the RAISE programme?
- How well are schools planning to sustain the benefits of the RAISE programme?
- How could the RAISE programme develop further?

5.19. **Estyn:** Estyn’s remit has included a review of the impact of RAISE. Their first report (Estyn, 2007) evaluated “the extent to which schools that receive the RAISE grant are working with their Local Authorities to promote the Welsh Government’s social justice agenda by addressing the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and under achievement” (p. 1, *ibid.*). The report is based upon visits to a sample of RAISE schools and eight Local Authorities¹⁹ and explores how schools and Local Authorities initially took forward RAISE funded work, including planning and managing the work and establishing monitoring and evaluation systems (*ibid.*).

5.20. Estyn’s second report has a “particular focus on how effective it [RAISE] was in helping schools and Local Authorities to tackle the underachievement of pupils with socioeconomic disadvantage” (p. 5., Estyn, 2008). It is based upon findings from the visits of HM Inspectors to 19 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, six specials schools and five Local Authorities. It considers the “impact of RAISE upon standards”, including the gap between the performance of learners entitled to FSMs and other learners; “the implementation of RAISE in schools”; and “National, regional and Local Authority issues” (pp. 6-7, *ibid.*).

5.21. Estyn’s third report (2009) evaluates the third year of the RAISE programme, the “focus...[of the report] ...is on the effectiveness of the programme in helping to raise the performance of disadvantaged pupils” (p. 1, Estyn, 2009). The report is based upon visits to 25 primary schools, 13 secondary schools, three special schools and eight Local Authorities. The report considers the impact and legacy of

¹⁹ 27 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and three special schools.

RAISE, the use of RAISE funding by schools and the leadership and management of RAISE.

5.22. Estyn's fourth report (2010), considers RAISE, but has a wider focus, and "looks at how schools are tackling child poverty and disadvantage in Wales" (p. 1, *ibid*). It draws upon evidence from the three earlier Estyn reports on and from inspection reports on schools and Local Authorities.

5.23. **Key stakeholder interviews:** over the three years of the evaluation, seventeen key stakeholders from the Welsh Government, Local Authorities and academic and voluntary sectors were interviewed. A full list is included in Section 18.

Evaluation of RAISE funded work for Children looked after by Local Authorities

5.24. As with RAISE funding for schools, because Local Authorities were required to undertake their own self-evaluations and maintain a detailed database of each looked after child supported by RAISE, there was a considerable amount of data that could be used by the external evaluation, although unlike RAISE funding for schools, this was not covered by Estyn's remit. This was complemented, where needed, by additional fieldwork. This report therefore draws primarily upon seven key sources of data:

- An initial scoping review of the literature on the educational experiences and achievement of children looked after by Local Authorities (Holtom, 2008), updated and refreshed throughout the course of the evaluation;
- A review of Local Authorities' self-evaluation returns;
- Two rounds of interviews with looked after children's education (LACE) coordinators or other Local Authority staff involved in RAISE funded work for children looked after by Local Authorities;
- Interviews with children looked after by Local Authorities in two Local Authorities (Pembrokeshire and the Vale of Glamorgan)

- A statistical analysis of the quantitative data on the characteristics, circumstances and attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities, drawing upon the RAISE LAC database and data published by the Data Unit Wales;
- A systematic review of Children and Young People's Plans, noting any references to RAISE funded or other work to support children looked after by Local Authorities; and
- Interviews with three key stakeholders from the Welsh Government and Voluntary Sector (a full list is included in the appendix).

6. DID RAISE TARGET DISADVANTAGED PUPILS?

6.1. As outlined in the introduction, RAISE funding was directed at schools with 50 or more statutory-school-age pupils, where 20% or more of those pupils were eligible for FSMs.²⁰ Schools were then required to target disadvantaged pupils within their schools. In order to assess whether RAISE targeted disadvantaged pupils, we have focused upon three questions in our evaluation:

- Was eligibility for FSM an effective way of identifying disadvantaged pupils?
- Was the threshold for inclusion in RAISE (i.e. that at least 20% of the pupils needed to be eligible for FSMs), an effective way of targeting support for disadvantaged pupils? And
- Did RAISE funded schools target disadvantaged pupils appropriately and effectively?

Is eligibility for free school meals an effective way of identifying disadvantaged pupils?

6.2. Although as outlined in section 3, the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment is clear, there are no direct measures of pupil poverty at a school level, making the identification of disadvantaged pupils difficult. FSMs are the most widely used proxy indicator, but remain an imperfect measure. For example, rates of FSMs:

- vary considerably between schools, due in part to differences in take up of FSMs;
- provide only a proxy indicator of disadvantage, reflecting, in part, the well-established link between low income and poor educational attainment but not capturing the other factors, such as the mother's levels of education, which are associated, but not synonymous, with low incomes and which contribute to this link; and

²⁰ It is important to note that the criteria was eligibility rather than take up, which is more inclusive, because, as we discuss on page 26, not all pupils eligible for Free School Meals take up this entitlement.

- is a binary measure, which does not allow for the degree of disadvantage to be considered; for example, it does not discriminate between those children and young people who are in families just above the thresholds for eligibility for FSM (and who may be little more disadvantaged than those just below the threshold) and those who are substantially above the thresholds (and who are unlikely to be disadvantaged). (DCSF, 2009; Shepherd, 2009 citing research undertaken by Caci).

Eligibility for Free School Meals

Children are only eligible for FSMs if their parents or guardians are entitled to:

- Income Support, payable to those on a low income who are not required to look for work (e.g. lone parents, carers and those who are sick or disabled);
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), payable to those on a low income who are required to look for work in order to qualify for benefits; or
- Immigration Asylum Seekers Allowance

6.3. Given the problems with FSMs as a measure of the disadvantage of a school's pupil population, alternative ways of identifying disadvantaged pupils have been considered. The principal alternative has been proposals to use an area based measure of disadvantage such as the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (see boxed text). This would avoid problems such as the variations in the take up of FSM. It is also a more holistic measure that captures important factors linking disadvantage and poor attainment, such as lower levels of parental education, that are not reflected in eligibility for FSM. As an area based measure, the WIMD could also help target pupils who are doubly disadvantaged by the poverty of their family and by the poverty of the area in which they live in.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of deprivation in small areas in Wales. The small areas the WIMD covers are known as Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA). In total, there are 1,896 LSOAs in Wales and each has about 1,500 people in it. The index provides a measure of the relative deprivation of these different areas (the LSOAs). Areas are ranked from one, the most deprived, to 1,896, the least deprived. An area has a higher deprivation rank than another if the proportion of people living there who are classed as deprived is higher.

As assessment of the deprivation of the people in each area is based upon eight factors known as “domains”:

- income
- housing
- employment
- access to services
- education
- health
- community safety
- physical environment.

Because it is a relative measure, the WIMD only tells you that an area is more or less deprived than another area on the index; it cannot be used, for example, to say an area is twice as deprived as another, only that an area is more deprived than another.

Source: the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation,
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/wimd/?lang=en>

6.4. Nevertheless, there are potential problems with using the WIMD. It is highly probable that there is a correlation between living in a deprived area (as defined by the WIMD) and pupil attainment, but we cannot be sure of this. Research in England

comparing school quality with area deprivation scores suggests that there is a correlation, although it is weaker than the correlation with the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM (Lupton, 2004). Analysis undertaken for the Bramley report into school funding (Bramley & Watkins, 2007) suggests that there is likely to be a strong correlation between the WIMD and attainment²¹, but also notes a number of problems with its use as a substitute measure. For example, there can be a mismatch between the characteristics of the LSOAs where a pupil is located and the characteristics of their immediate neighbourhood. LSOAs are not intended to represent a particular 'neighbourhood'. They are intended to provide geographical areas that, unlike electoral wards, have roughly equal populations (as noted, an average of 1,500 people) and whose boundaries will not change as often as electoral wards. Their consistent size means that compared to wards, it is easier to compare individual areas (LSOAs) and their stability means that it will be easier to track change over time. However, because LSOAs are not intended to represent a particular neighbourhood, what residents perceive as their community or neighbourhood may be made up of several different LSOAs whose characteristics may be quite different to the one they are resident in.

6.5. There are other potential problems with using the WIMD:

- Firstly, because the education, skills and training domain of the WIMD includes average point scores at Key Stages 2 to 4, a measure using the WIMD would

²¹ Using a simplified needs analysis that draws upon some of the indicators used in the WIMD they find a relatively good match between the allocation of expenditure it would suggest and an allocation based upon FSM. However, they find that some Local Authorities, such as Powys, and Torfaen would probably lose out whilst other Local Authorities, such as the Vale of Glamorgan would gain (Bramley & Watkins, 2007).

identify schools serving disadvantaged areas in part upon the level of their pupils' performance, a factor that is influenced by, but which is not determined by, socio-economic disadvantage. This means it would discriminate against effective schools which "added value", and whose pupils did well notwithstanding their socio-economic status, in favour of more poorly performing schools²²;

- secondly, in order to use the WIMD to identify eligible schools, it would be necessary to map either pupil postcodes or school catchments areas against the WIMD LSOAs, so that it would be possible to identify the proportion of pupils living in disadvantaged areas attending each school. It would also be necessary to define a measure of disadvantage, such as living in a LSOA in the bottom 25% of the WIMD.
- thirdly, the lack of annual updates of the WIMD, would mean that as areas changed through, for example, inward or outward migration, the proportion of pupils in a school who were disadvantaged could also change, meaning that the wrong schools might be targeted for support whilst others in need were missed, until the WIMD was next updated. In contrast, FSM data is updated every year providing the scope to vary allocations, although in practice, all schools which were eligible in year 1 remained eligible for RAISE funding, even if the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs fell below 20%; and
- fourthly, there would be a risk that significant numbers of disadvantaged children who live outside disadvantaged areas would be missed. This can be particularly problematic in rural areas, as measures such as the WIMD tend to be better at identifying concentrations of poverty (i.e. where there are lots of poor people living in close proximity as you find in many urban areas) than identifying the extent of poverty (i.e. the numbers of poor people). (Holtom, 2008).

6.6. Moreover, whilst there is evidence of an area effect (see e.g. Lupton, 2005), in which the attainment of pupils in schools serving disadvantaged areas tends to be lower than those of schools serving more advantaged areas, the evidence of the

²² Nevertheless, an outcomes focused approach, such as that taken by the Bramley review, (Bramley & Watkins, 2007)

impact of this upon pupil attainment is weaker than the evidence of impact of family poverty. This suggests that targeting schools with a relatively high proportion of pupils eligible for FSM, is likely to be more effective than targeting schools serving disadvantaged areas. In addition, the evidence suggests that there is an even stronger link between family poverty and poor pupil attainment. This suggests that targeting pupils from disadvantaged family backgrounds is also likely to be effective.

- 6.7. The two approaches to targeting, by school and by pupil characteristics, may be combined by first directing funding at schools with a relatively high proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs and then targeting disadvantaged pupils within those schools (as is currently the case). This enables pupils who are likely to be doubly disadvantaged by both their family's poverty and the poverty of the area and their peers, the so called "double whammy", to be targeted (Estyn, 2009). RAISE did this by first identifying schools with more than 20% of their pupils eligible for FSMs and then secondly, requiring those schools to target disadvantaged pupils within their school.
- 6.8. Therefore, despite its limitations, FSMs remains the most widely used measure and, based on the evidence we have reviewed, is the most appropriate way of targeting (identifying) schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. This does not mean, though, that individual RAISE schools should not complement this measure with other measures of disadvantage, drawing upon local information about disadvantage in their area in order to identify disadvantaged pupils within the school.

Is the threshold for inclusion in RAISE an effective way of targeting support for disadvantaged pupils?

- 6.9. There is an inverse relationship between the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs in a school and the average attainment of the pupils in the school. As Graphs 6.1-4 illustrate, as the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs in Wales increases average

attainment increases. Crucially though, there is no “tipping point” or phase after which an increase in the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs produces a disproportionate decrease in average attainment.

Graph 6.1. Key Stage 1, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007

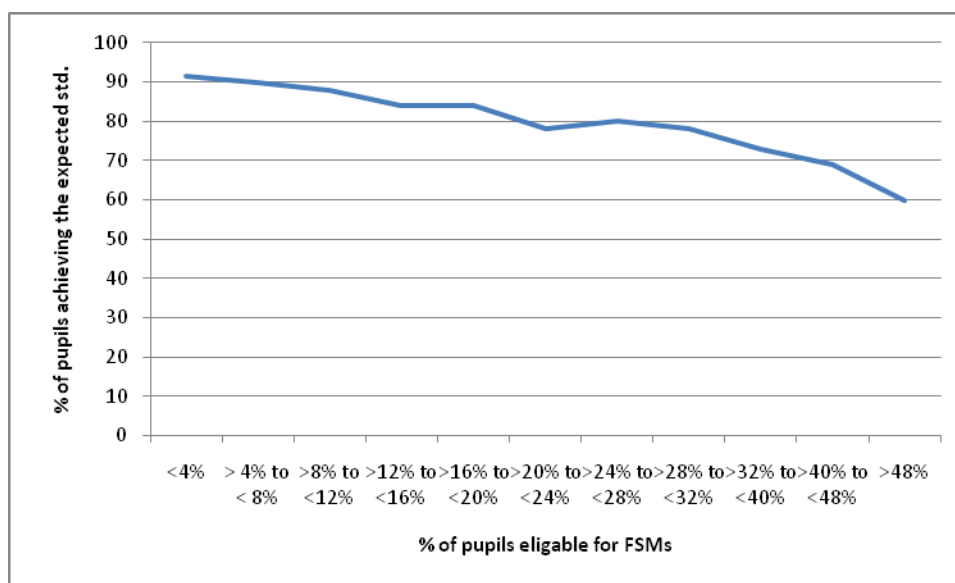


Table 6.1. Key Stage 1, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007											
% of pupils eligible for FSMs	<4%	> 4% to < 8%	>8% to <12%	>12% to <16%	>16% to <20%	>20% to <24%	>24% to <28%	>28% to <32%	>32% to <40%	>40% to <48%	>48%
% of pupils achieving the expected std.	91%	90%	88%	84%	84%	78%	80%	78%	73%	69%	60%

Source: National Pupil Database

Graph 6.2. Key Stage 2, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007

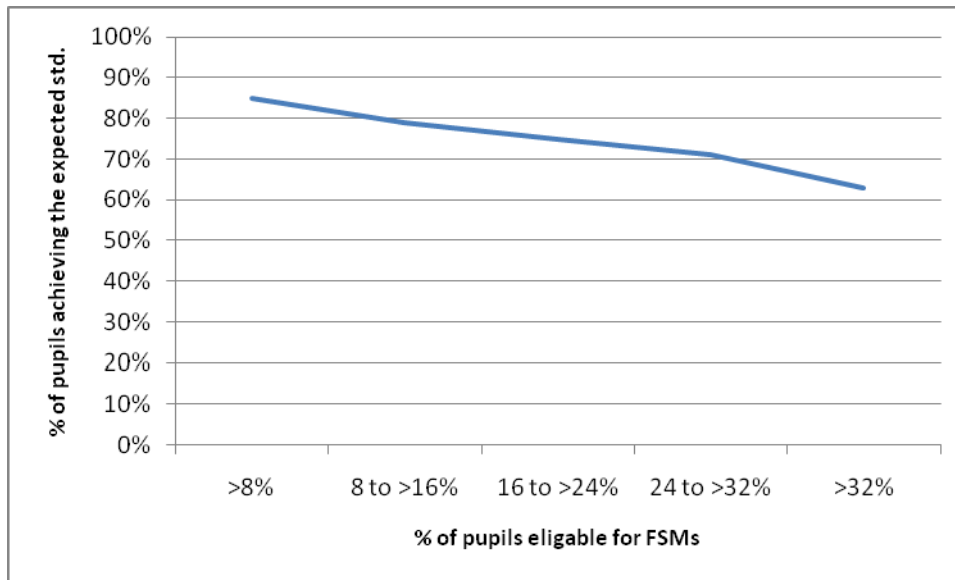
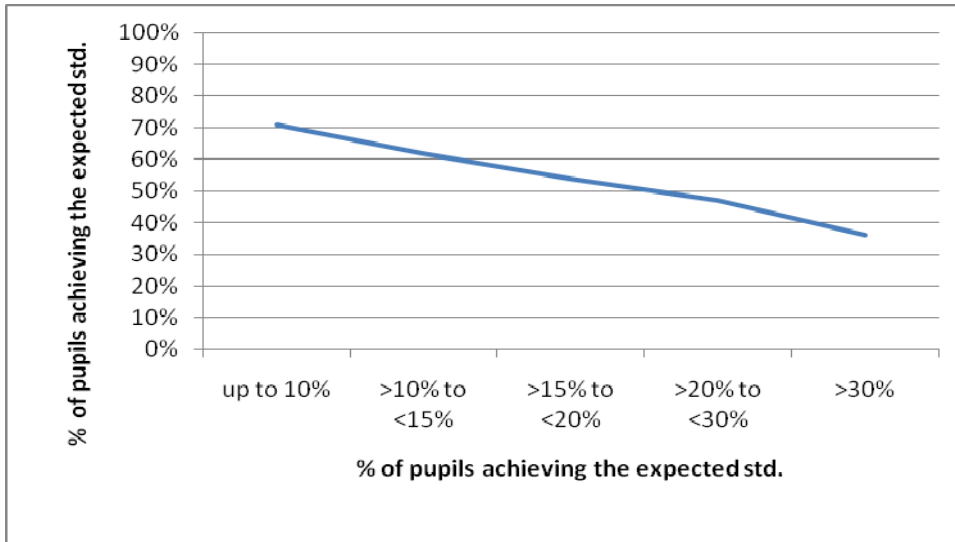


Table 6.2. Key Stage 2, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007

% of pupils eligible for FSMs	>8%	8 to >16%	16 to >24%	24 to >32%	>32%
% of pupils achieving the expected std.	0.85	0.79	0.75	0.71	0.63

Source: National Pupil Database

Graph 6.3. Key Stage 3, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007



Source: National Pupil Database

Graph. 6.3. Key Stage 3, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2007					
% of pupils eligible for FSMs	up to 10%	>10% to <15%	>15% to <20%	>20% to <30%	>30%
% of pupils achieving the expected std.	71%	62%	54%	47%	36%

Source: National Pupil Database

Graph. 6.4. Key Stage 4, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2006

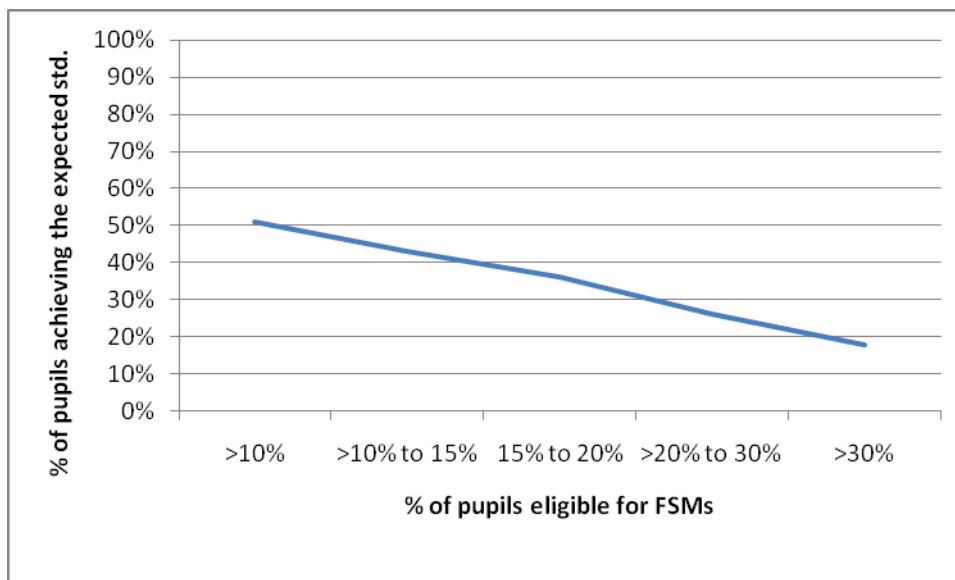


Table. 6.4. Key Stage 4, Median CSI, Benchmark Information, 2006

% of pupils eligible for FSMs	>10%	>10% to 15%	15% to 20%	>20% to 30%	>30%
% of pupils achieving the expected std.	51%	43%	36%	26%	18%

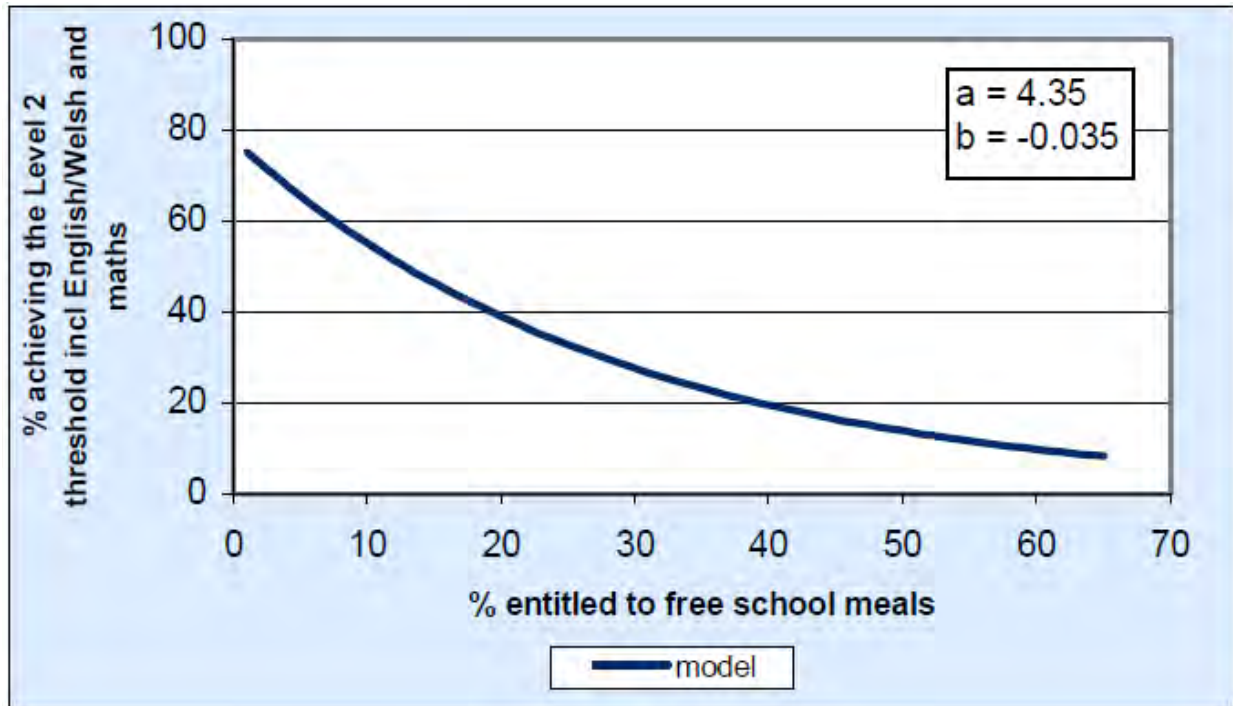
Source: National Pupil Database

6.10. Graphs 6.1. to 6.4. illustrate the clear inverse relationships, in which an increase in the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM is linked to a decline in attainment. They also illustrate how the proportion of pupils failing to achieve the expected standard increases at each Key Stage and how the strength of the inverse relationship between the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM and the attainment of pupils within the schools increases.

6.11. Graphs 6.1. to 6.4. also suggest that the strength of the inverse relationship between the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM and the attainment of pupils within the schools does not increase markedly once the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM reaches a certain percentage, such as 20%, as the work of Ruth Lupton and others might imply. It might be expected that a critical mass or tipping point would be reached, at which point the strength of inverse relationship would increase, providing a clear rationale for setting the threshold for eligibility of RAISE funding at that point, but this does not appear to be the case, and the published data, used in the graphs above, suggests a relatively linear relationship.

6.12. More detailed analysis of the relationship between academic achievement and entitlement to FSMs by Statistics for Wales (WAG, 2010) confirms the strong inverse relationship between eligibility for FSM and academic attainment, but finds that the relationship is non-linear, that is to say that at high levels of entitlements for FSM, a reduction in the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs only produces a small effect upon attainment. In contrast, at low levels of entitlement to FSM, a reduction in the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs produces a large effect upon attainment. This non-linear relationship means that there is no precise tipping point or 'cliff edge', after which attainment drops sharply. As Graph 6.5. clearly demonstrates, at Key Stage 4 where the relationship is strongest, attainment drops most sharply as the percentage of pupils entitled to FSMs increases from 0% to 10%. After this the impact increases steadily but less dramatically as the percentage of FSMs increases.

Graph 5.5. Achievement of the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics, by free school meal entitlement, 2009



Source: Welsh Government²³

6.13. Although there is no tipping point, it may be worth noting that the first Narrowing the Gap study found that as the percentage of pupils in a school eligible for FSMs increases above 15%, the progress of those pupils begins to fall behind the average for all secondary schools. That is to say, in secondary schools with less than 15% of their pupils eligible for FSMs, the value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 tends to be above the average for all schools in Wales. In contrast, in schools with more than 15% of their pupils eligible for FSMs, the value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 tends to be below the average for all schools in Wales (WAG & WLGA, 2002). This is not a tipping point as such, as increases in

²³ Academic Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals, 2009, available online at <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2010/100318sb132010en.pdf>

the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs does not produce disproportionate decreases in average attainment once the percentage reaches 15%, but it does represent a crossing point, at which pupils' progress begins to fall behind the average for all secondary schools.

- 6.14. In some cases the schools we visited highlighted examples of other schools that fell short of the 20% threshold but who, in their judgment, would have benefited from RAISE funding. Moreover, a number of cases of small schools with very high proportions of their pupils eligible for FSMs were drawn to our attention by interviewees who felt it was inappropriate to exclude them. Nevertheless, schools accepted that the line had to be drawn somewhere and that the 20% threshold was reasonable.
- 6.15. We conclude therefore that the current 20% thresholds strikes an appropriate balance between reaching as many disadvantaged pupils as possible whilst ensuring that the available resource is not spread too thinly.
- 6.16. In contrast, we conclude that the decision to exclude small schools denied a small number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attending the approximately 75 small primary schools with more than 20% of their pupils eligible for FSMs, support from RAISE, was not appropriate. The decision was justified on the basis that the aim of RAISE was to target those schools with the highest incidence (or number) of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and by definition, these small schools had only a low incidence of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, although the numbers may have been relatively small, there was no other compelling reason to exclude these pupils. Our assessment of the evidence (see e.g. Estyn, 2006) is that whilst there are factors, such as greater levels of parental engagement, that may help mitigate the impact of disadvantage upon such schools, other factors, such as the difficulties in meeting learning needs because classes often include pupils of different ages at different stages of development, may aggravate the impact of disadvantage upon schools. We acknowledge that a

compromise would need to be struck between ensuring that schools received sufficient funding to make a difference, by, for example, establishing a ‘floor payment’, whilst ensuring that they did not benefit disproportionately²⁴, but find that overall, there was no compelling reason for excluding these schools.

Did RAISE funded schools target disadvantaged pupils effectively?

6.17. The question of targeting socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils has been a sensitive one. The original terms and conditions for the grant - “Schools are required to target the funding on supporting pupils who are disadvantaged or most at risk of low attainment - or leaving full time education with no qualifications”²⁵ - were poorly drafted²⁶ and did not explicitly stipulate this. However, this was the publicly stated objective of the programme, and this was reflected in the information provided to schools and the RAISE Project Leader and the RAISE Regional Coordinators have all consistently communicated this message to schools and Regional Coordinators report that almost all schools understand the purpose of the RAISE grant.

6.18. The evidence from our schools visits, Estyn’s visits and Regional Coordinators’ reports all suggests that most schools targeted disadvantaged pupils. However:

- In some cases targeting of disadvantaged pupils was deliberate, but in many others it was by default, as pupils were targeted on the basis of academic need, rather than socioeconomic disadvantage. However, the strong correlation between socioeconomic disadvantage and under-achievement combined with the targeting of RAISE funding upon schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs, and in most cases, a still higher proportion of pupils who could be considered disadvantaged, even if not eligible for FSMs, meant that schools were confident

²⁴ The funding formula including weighting for the number of pupils and a floor payment would increase the funding per pupil in small schools.

²⁵ Final Notification letter, ‘RAISE – Raising Attainment & Individual Standards in Education in Wales’ dated 11th May 2006, sent to Local Authority Directors of Education

²⁶ Due to the inclusion of “or” after the requirement to support “pupils who are disadvantaged.”

that this approach meant that disadvantaged pupils were still targeted, albeit by default.

- Even when disadvantaged pupils were targeted, low levels of literacy and/or social and emotional development were used as a secondary criterion for targeting. As a consequence of this, and of targeting primarily on the basis of under-achievement, there is limited evidence that disadvantaged pupils who were performing at or above average but who could potentially achieve even more with additional intervention and support, were being targeted (Holtom, 2009, Estyn, 2009).
- There is some evidence of 'spill over', so that even where pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were targeted, pupils who are from more advantaged backgrounds also benefited (although some schools see this as a strength of the programme); and
- Not all schools use the same definition of 'disadvantage': for some it meant claiming FSMs, for some it meant eligibility for FSMs (whether taken up or not), for others it meant financial poverty (irrespective of eligibility for FSMs), and in a small number of cases it included social-disadvantage, such as growing up in care.²⁷

6.19. Having considered the evidence, we conclude that RAISE funded activity has targeted disadvantaged pupils, but that it has also targeted a small number of pupils who are struggling, but who are not disadvantaged, and it has not targeted all pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend RAISE schools. The failure of many schools to target disadvantaged pupils who are achieving moderately well, but who might achieve more with additional support, is a serious weakness of the way in which most schools have implemented the RAISE programme. In effect schools promoted equality of outcome over equality of opportunity. Moreover, the failure of some schools to deliberately target disadvantaged pupils may also have

²⁷ This reflects wider debates about the definition of 'poverty', which can be defined in absolute and relative terms and which can be defined using a single criteria, typically income or consumption or by using multiple criteria.

meant that rather than focusing upon root causes, schools focused upon addressing the symptoms of disadvantage, i.e. low levels of achievement and attainment. In contrast, the wider benefits for all pupils that may flow from work with the most disadvantaged, such as a reduction in disruptive behaviour in classrooms, is a strength of RAISE.

6.20. The requirement for schools to target one group of pupils, to in effect positively discriminate in favour of them, in order to promote equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome, has proved difficult for some schools and Local Authority officers. Given the resistance amongst such schools to positive discrimination on the basis of disadvantage, it is possible that schools would have found it easier to focus upon meeting pupils' "additional learning needs" (WAG, 2006b). This would still have had the effect of positively discriminating in favour of some pupils, but might have been more acceptable to schools. It might also have helped focus attention upon the causes of poor educational attainment. However, a focus upon inclusion and additional learning needs would have lacked the political profile that disadvantage and, in particular, child poverty has and which RAISE has helped establish in schools. It would have diluted the focus upon disadvantage, as many but by no means all pupils with additional learning needs will be disadvantaged and some pupils who are disadvantaged will not have "additional learning needs". The use of the term "additional learning needs" may also have caused some confusion, because of its association with special educational needs²⁸ and the lack of an agreed definition of what constitutes an additional learning need.²⁹

²⁸ The (former) Education Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee (ELLS) review reports on special educational needs (NAfW, 2004c, 2006, 2007) recommended that the broader concept of 'additional learning needs' be used in preference to 'special educational needs' and four pilot projects have been established to explore how the committee's recommendations and the results of a consultation on reform of provision for pupils with special educational needs have been established.

²⁹ The current Assembly Government Guidance, Inclusion and Pupil Support, describes pupils who have additional learning needs as those "those learners whose needs are greater than the majority of their peers" and illustrates it through a list of pupils who may have greater needs. (WAG, 2006).

7. HAS RAISE INCREASED THE ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT OF DISADVANTAGED PUPILS?

Introduction

7.1. The standard approach to the assessment of the impact of a programme like RAISE upon attainment and achievement involves an estimation of the counterfactual, what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) represent the gold standard for assessing the counterfactual (Cook & Gorard, 2007). Where, as in the case of RAISE, randomisation was not possible,³⁰ other methods are needed. These include:

- Interrupted time series designs, in which trends in a standardised series of observations, such as young people's attainment, over time are analysed to identify "interruptions" in the sequence of observations such as a change in the trend, following the intervention; and
- The use of comparison groups³¹, such as pupils not eligible for FSMs in RAISE schools and pupils in non RAISE schools (GSRU, 2007).

7.2. These quantitative methods can be complemented by more qualitative, evaluative judgments. These judgments may be based in part upon an assessment of quantitative evidence, such as evidence of pupil's progression in standardised tests but are not restricted to these and may also draw upon other types of evidence, such as observations of pupils. This may mean that they are less rigorous, but may also mean that they are more rounded judgments. In this section we consider the evidence from all three.

³⁰ This would involve the random allocation of the population, in this case, pupils eligible for Free School Meals in RAISE schools, into either a programme (or "treatment") group, who would benefit from RAISE funded intervention or a control group, who would not benefit from RAISE funding. The change in outcomes, such as attainment, before and after the intervention could then be measured for both groups (GSRU, 2008). There would have been significant ethical and practical barriers to this type of exercise.

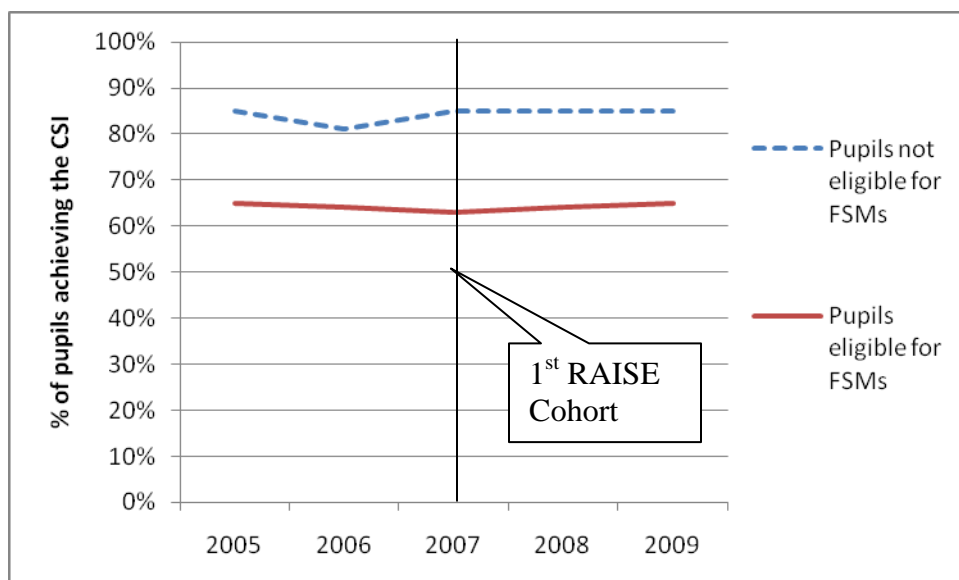
³¹ These are similar to a "control group", in that they offer a "policy off" group to compare with the "treatment" group (the group benefitting from the intervention). However, unlike a control group, assignment to the two groups is not random. Outcomes for these groups represent an estimate of the counterfactual, what would have happened without the intervention.

Time Series data: overall trends in pupil attainment

- 7.3. As outlined in sections 2 and 5, eligibility for FSMs is a commonly used proxy indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage. If RAISE had a large impact upon the attainment of FSM pupils, this could be enough to raise the average attainment of all FSM pupils. The impact would need to be large though, because approximately one third of primary school age pupils and just under half of secondary school pupils eligible for FSMs do not attend RAISE schools (Estyn, 2010). Moreover, schools were discouraged from only targeting assessment year groups, and as we outline in section 5, many RAISE schools did not use eligibility for FSMs as a means of identifying pupils for support nor did they try to support all pupils eligible for FSMs. Therefore, only a proportion of FSM cohort was supported.
- 7.4. Subject to these important caveats, Graphs 7.1 to 7.4 illustrates the trends in the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs, and the percentage of those not eligible for FSMs, achieving the core subject indicator (CSI)³², at Key Stages 1-4. The key points to note in relation to trends in the attainment of pupils eligible for FSMs are:
- The modest increase in attainment in all 4 Key Stages from 2006-2007 onwards, which represents the first cohort to benefit from RAISE funding.
 - The greater increases in attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 compared to Key Stages 3 and 4. Because the increases in the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving the core subject indicator, was greater than the increase amongst pupils not eligible for FSMs, the gap between the two narrowed a little.
 - In Key Stages 3 and 4, increases in the percentage of pupils not eligible for FSMs achieving the core subject indicator was greater than the increase amongst pupils eligible for FSMs, so that the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for FSMs and those not eligible, increased over the period.

³² The core subject indicator relates to performance in English or Welsh, Mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.

Graph 7.1. Trends in the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for free school meals achieving the CSI, Key stage 1, 2005-2009

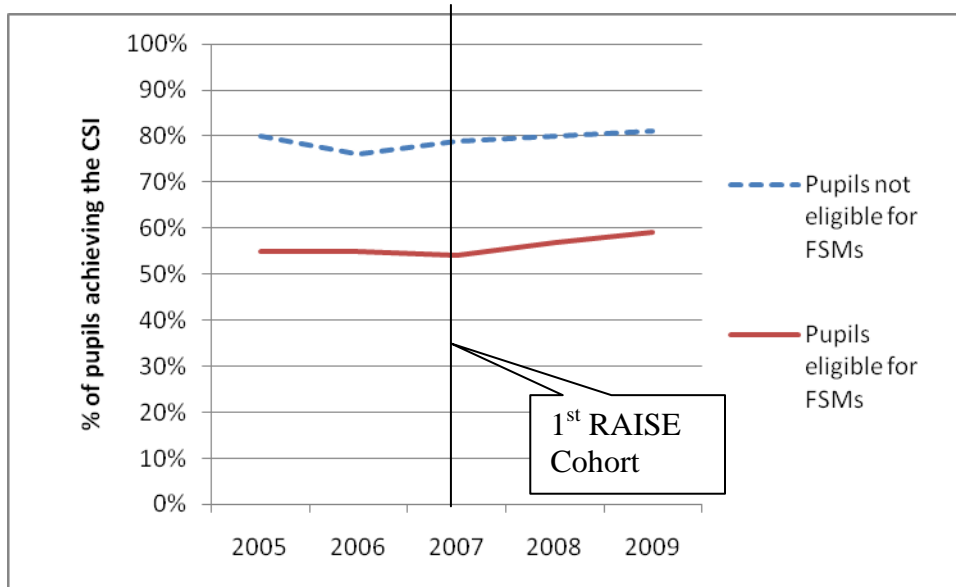


Source: Welsh Government

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Pupils not eligible for FSMs	85%	81%	85%	85%	85%
Pupils eligible for FSMs	65%	64%	63%	64%	65%

Source: Welsh Government

Graph 7.2. Trends in the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for free school meals achieving the CSI, Key stage 2, 2005-2009



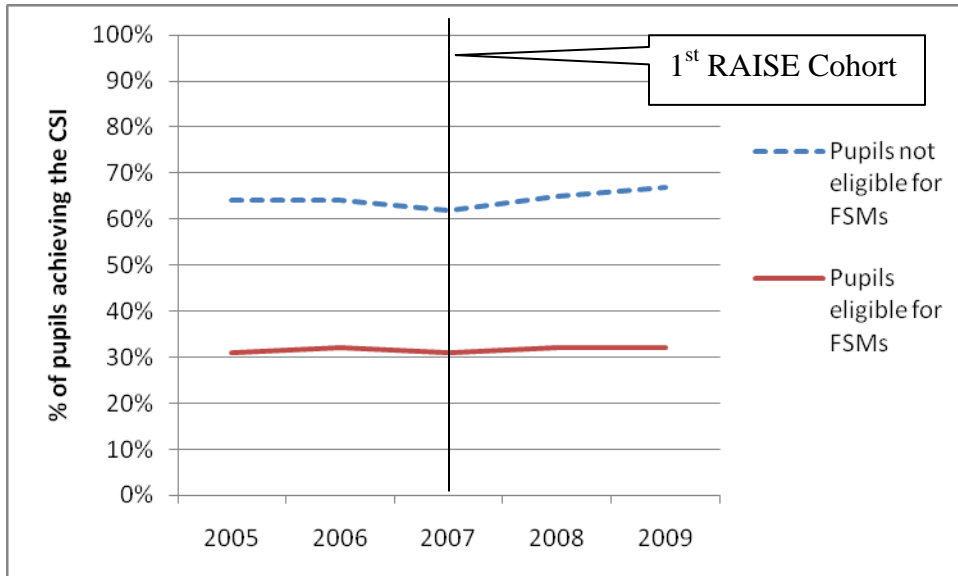
Source: Welsh Government

Table 7.2. The percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for Free School Meals achieving the CSI, Key stage 2, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Pupils not eligible for FSMs	80%	76%	79%	80%	81%
Pupils eligible for FSMs	55%	55%	54%	57%	59%

Source: Welsh Government

Graph 7.3. Trends in the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for free school meals achieving the CSI, Key stage 3, 2005-2009



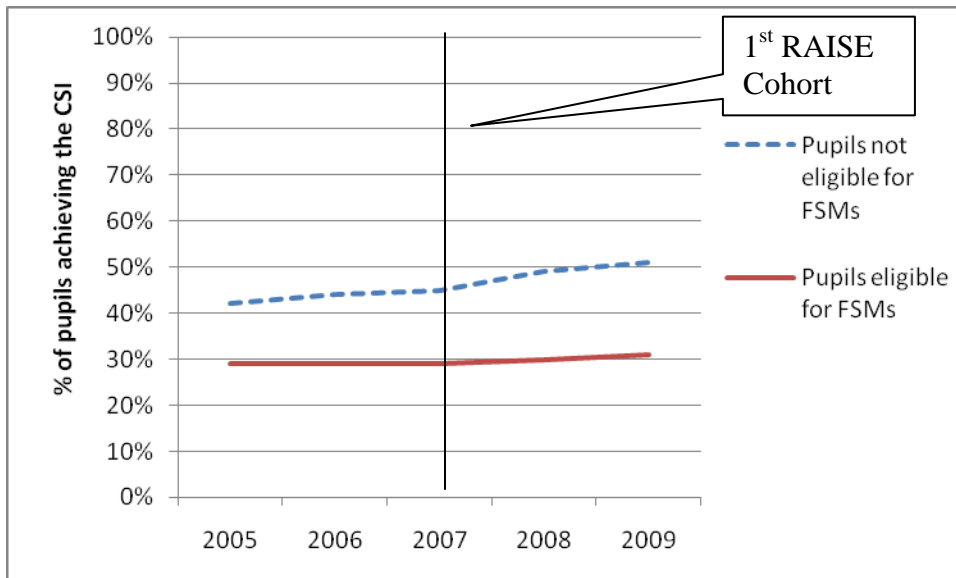
Source: Welsh Government

Table 7.3. The percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for Free School Meals achieving the CSI, Key stage 3, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Pupils not eligible for FSMs	64%	64%	62%	65%	67%
Pupils eligible for FSMs	31%	32%	31%	32%	32%

Source: Welsh Government

Graph 7.4. Trends in the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for free school meals achieving the CSI, Key Stage 4, 2005-2009



Source: Welsh Government

Table 7.4. the percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for Free School Meals achieving the CSI, Key Stage 4, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Pupils not eligible for FSMs	42%	44%	45%	49%	51%
Pupils eligible for FSMs	29%	29%	29%	30%	31%

Source: Welsh Government

7.5. Graph 7.5. shows the gap in the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs and those not eligible for FSMs, achieving the core subject indicator at each Key Stage for the period 2005-2009. It shows that:

- At Key Stage 1 and 2, after peaking in 2006-2007, the gap has closed somewhat;
- At Key Stage 3 the gap has remained stubbornly wide; and
- At Key Stage 4, the gap has actually widened somewhat.

Graph 7.5. The percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for free school meals achieving the CSI, Key stages 1- 4, 2005-2009

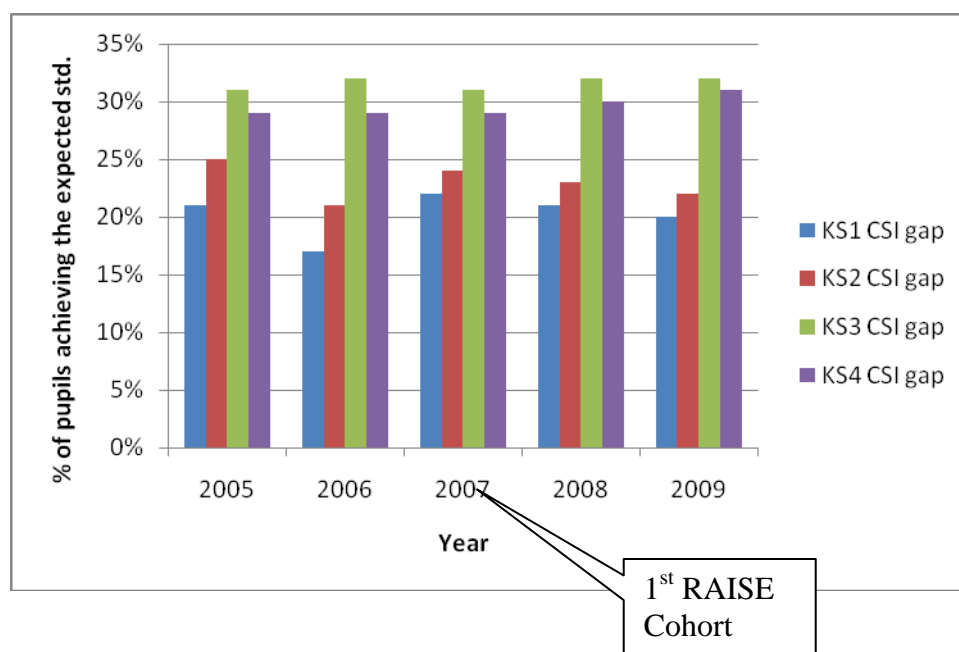


Table 7.5. The percentage of pupils eligible for free schools and those not eligible for Free School Meals achieving the CSI, Key stages 1- 4, 2005-2009					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
KS1 CSI gap	21%	17%	22%	21%	20%
KS2 CSI gap	25%	21%	24%	23%	22%
KS3 CSI gap	31%	32%	31%	32%	32%
KS4 CSI gap	29%	29%	29%	30%	31%

Source: Welsh Government

Time Series data: trends in pupil attainment in RAISE and non RAISE schools

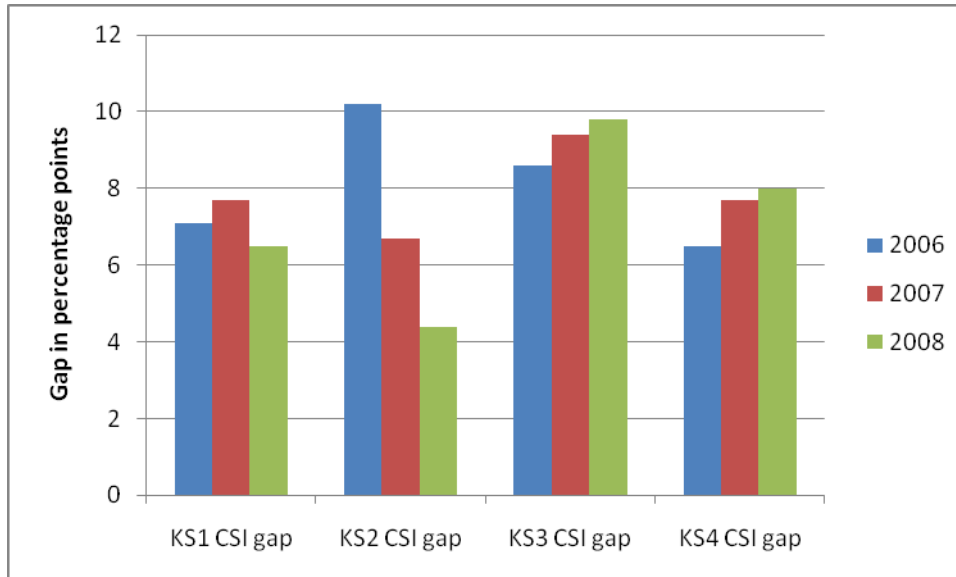
7.6. An analysis of the performance of pupils eligible for FSMs in RAISE schools is a more discriminating measure of the likely impact of RAISE, than an analysis of the performance of all pupils eligible for FSMs. This is because the proportion of pupils

within this group who have benefited from RAISE funded interventions will be higher than the proportion of all pupils eligible for FSMs who are likely to have benefitted. Their performance can also be compared with that of pupils in non RAISE schools eligible for FSMs, who can act as a comparison group (see paragraph 7.1).

7.7. Graph 7.6. shows the gap between the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs in RAISE schools achieving the CSI and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs in non RAISE schools achieving the CSI. It shows that:

- At Key Stage 2, the gap between the performance of FSM pupils in RAISE and those in non-RAISE schools fell from 10.2 percentage points to 4.4 percentage points over the period.
- However, in both Key Stages 3 and 4 the gap increased slightly over this period (p. 14. Estyn, 2010).

Graph 7.6. The gap (in percentage points) between the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in RAISE schools achieving the CSI and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in non RAISE schools achieving the CSI, 2006-2007



Source: Estyn, 2010

Table 7.6. The gap (in percentage points) between the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in RAISE schools achieving the CSI and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in non RAISE schools achieving the CSI, 2006-2007

	2006	2007	2008
KS1 CSI gap	7.1	7.7	6.5
KS2 CSI gap	10.2	6.7	4.4
KS3 CSI gap	8.6	9.4	9.8
KS4 CSI gap	6.5	7.7	8.0

Source: Estyn, 2010

7.8. Because the attainment of pupils in a particular cohort tends to vary from year to year, due to chance variations in their abilities it is likely that some of the variation

in attainment over the three years is due to chance rather than the impact of RAISE. The consistency and scale of the decline in the gap at Key Stage 2 suggests this change is not simply due to chance and that RAISE has had an impact. In contrast, the pattern of change in Key Stage 1 is much less consistent and the scale of change is much smaller, increasing the likelihood that some or all of the yearly change is simply due to chance variations.

Evidence from qualitative assessments

7.9. Schools, Regional Coordinators and Estyn inspectors have all made qualitative, evaluative judgments on RAISE. Drawing upon a range of evidence. They consistently find that RAISE has had a positive impact upon both the attainment and the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. For example:

- Regional Coordinators report that schools find that RAISE is having a positive impact upon pupils literacy, social and emotional skills and dispositions and in some cases, their attainment (Davies Jones, 2009; George, 2009; Snowball, 2009);
- Estyn report that “Pupils benefiting from RAISE-funded work make at least good progress in about four-fifths of the schools visited” (p. 3, Estyn, 2010); and
- All the schools we visited reported RAISE pupils making significant gains. This was reflected in a range of measures, including increases in reading ages, increases in standardised tests scores (such as NFER assessments), progression through national curriculum levels, improvements in attitudes and behaviour, reductions in exclusion and increases in attendance. Moreover, in the professional judgment of those we interviewed, the progress made by pupils targeted by RAISE is greater than it would have been if they had not been targeted. In many cases this evidence is judged to be sufficiently compelling to provide the basis for the school to continue funding the activity when Welsh Government funding for RAISE ends.

7.10. Moreover, unlike the purely quantitative evidence discussed previously, these gains are consistently reported for pupils in all four Key Stages.

The apparent inconsistency between the purely quantitative measures and the more qualitative evaluative judgments of impact

7.11. The two most likely explanations of this apparent inconsistency between the purely quantitative measures of impact, such as time series data and an analysis of comparison groups, which suggest some impact at Key Stage 2, but no impact at Key Stages 3 and 4, and more qualitative evaluative judgments of impact, which suggest a much larger impact across all four Key Stages, are:

- the use of different measures of success, meaning that different things are being measured; and
- measurement error.

7.12. ***The evidence that different measures of success are being used:*** Estyn and our schools visits found that RAISE schools are most likely to report progress in terms of literacy, and to a lesser degree, social and emotional development and dimensions of well-being, such as self-esteem. Although these factors are likely to contribute to increases in attainment, as measured by teacher assessments, they are not necessarily sufficient conditions for raising attainment: A pupil's literacy, social and emotional skills and/or well-being may increase, but this does not necessarily mean that their attainment in English, mathematics and science will increase. Indeed, there is evidence that when a child is taught by support staff rather than a teacher, as was often the case with RAISE, they may actually make slower progress as a consequence³³ (Blatchford, et al, 2009). Crucially, relatively few schools use “headline indicators”, such as the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator when assessing the impact of RAISE (Estyn, 2010).

³³ The study found that although support staff had a positive impact on aspects of achievement such as behaviour, there was a negative relationship between the amount of support a pupil received and the progress they made in English and mathematics and science: “The more support pupils received, the less progress they made” (in these subjects) (Blatchford, et al, 2009).

Moreover, because the analysis of the performance of pupils eligible for FSMs is based upon the percentage of pupils, achieving the core subject indicator, the expected level at each Key Stage, it is a very much narrower, binary measure of pupil performance. For example, a pupil whose attainment is just below the expected level is treated in the same way as a pupil a long way below the expected level. Therefore, it is possible that the performance of a RAISE pupil could have increased markedly, but because it did not increase enough for them to reach the expected level, this increased performance is not recorded.

7.13. The percentage of pupils, achieving the core subject indicator is also a narrow measure in the sense that it only measures the performance of a proportion of the cohort targeted for support. It only captures the performance of pupils in assessment year groups (the final year of each key stage) and schools were actively discouraged from only targeting assessment year groups in order to massage their school performance. Moreover, as noted (see paragraphs 6.17-6.20), not all pupils eligible for FSMs were targeted and some pupils who were not eligible, were targeted for support.

7.14. ***The evidence of measurement error:*** Teacher assessments at the end of each Key Stage, whilst imperfect, are likely to be a more robust measure of pupil performance. Teacher assessments are standardised and were expected to provide robust evidence (Daugherty Assessment Review Group, 2004), although Estyn has recently questioned the consistency of Key Stage 2 assessments (Key Stage 3 assessments, are judged to be more reliable) (Estyn, 2010b). In contrast, in order to assess impact, RAISE schools have used a wide range of different measures of pupil progress whose validity and reliability are harder to assess. The evidence from Estyn, Regional Coordinators and our own visits to schools suggests that the evidence of progress reported by schools needs to be interpreted cautiously, because of methodological weaknesses, most notably the

small numbers of pupils involved in some schools³⁴; the lack of comparison or control groups; the lack of pre/post interventions comparisons³⁵; and the failure to always systematically measure social and emotional outcomes.³⁶

7.15. **Conclusions:** whilst measurement error cannot be ruled out, it is likely that the apparent inconsistency between the evidence from time series data and comparison groups and the qualitative, evaluative judgments of the impact of RAISE, made by schools, Regional Coordinators and Estyn inspectors is due to a large degree, upon difference in measurement. Specifically the measures schools have used are in the main measures of dimensions of achievement³⁷, such as basic skills and social and emotional skills and dispositions³⁸, rather than attainment.

7.16. In interpreting the impact upon attainment, it is also important to bear in mind that the relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and poorer educational attainment tends to be stronger in secondary schools and the gap between pupils from more and less socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds is wider (WAG & WLGA, 2002). Moreover, there is some evidence that “It becomes harder to reverse patterns of underachievement by the teenage years” (p. 7, Goodson & Greg, 2010). Therefore, it is unsurprising that secondary schools have found it harder to improve attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 than primary schools have done. More broadly, it may still be too early to measure the full impact of RAISE upon the attainment of pupils in any of the four Key Stages. For example, pupils’

³⁴ Small numbers increase the risk that chance variations in the characteristics of the group, such as their capabilities, bias the results.

³⁵ In some schools there was a lack of baseline data, so it will difficult to assess the distance travelled.

³⁶ These can be challenging to measure systematically and some schools have relied upon somewhat impressionistic and anecdotal evidence.

³⁷ Estyn define achievement in terms of pupils’ success in attaining agreed learning goals, their progress in learning and the development of their personal, social & learning skills.

³⁸ The term “social and emotional dispositions and skills” has been developed as part of the Demonstrating Success project, which aims to develop tools for measuring young people’s progress. It is used to describe four groups of skills: “interaction”, “respect for others”, “motivation and active participation” and “independence”. It includes a range of skills, attitudes and behaviours and covers the majority of the “soft” outcomes identified by schools, such as increases in motivation, self-efficacy and improvements in attendance and behaviour, that support academic achievement.

gains in basic skills and social and emotional skills and dispositions, if sustained, may lead to increases in attainment in subsequent years.

8. DIFFERENCES IN IMPACT IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

Introduction

- 8.1. The evidence on the programme as a whole, that it is likely to have increased pupils' basic skills and their social and emotional skills and dispositions across all 4 Key Stages but that, to date, any impact upon attainment has been limited to Key Stage 2, does not mean that the impact has been even across all primary, secondary and special schools. The evidence from Estyn, Regional Coordinators reports and our visits to schools all suggests considerable variation in the targeting, quality and reach of RAISE funded work, and therefore its likely impact. One reason for this may be differences in overall school effectiveness (see School Effectiveness Framework, WAG 2008, for a description of the characteristics of effective schools). This in turn is likely to have influenced the type of strategy developed by the school and, in particular, whether it was narrowly focused, or more holistic.

Socioeconomic disadvantage and school effectiveness

- 8.2. Ruth Lupton's research (2004, 2005) into the effectiveness of schools in disadvantaged areas has informed our thinking about RAISE. As outlined in section 3, she identifies a range of additional costs which schools serving socioeconomically disadvantaged communities face. She argues that these additional costs are often aggravated by factors such as a "charged emotional climate" (with pupils living in stressful conditions, who were often unhappy, anxious, tense, traumatised or angry) and behavioural problems, making the school a more "unpredictable" environment to work in. This in turn means that members of the senior management team and teachers are often reacting to problems and crises, what she dubs "fire fighting", rather than pro-actively focusing upon effectiveness. She concludes that this means that without additional funding, schools serving disadvantaged communities struggle to provide the same quality of education as schools serving less disadvantaged communities.

8.3. In order to test out Ruth Lupton's theories, we discussed them with schools in our second round of visits to schools and during RAISE conferences. In effect, it was presented as a hypothesis. Schools have responded positively to it, recognising, and describing to us many of the challenges and costs she identifies. These reflected the need to invest more in additional support to meet the high incidence of 'additional learning needs'³⁹ amongst their pupils, in order to promote inclusion. They were primarily composed of three broad types of intervention:

- support for literacy, numeracy and speech and language development;
- pastoral care, to address social and emotional needs and behavioural problems; and
- engaging parents and carers.

8.4. In addition, schools highlighted the cost of providing for pupils' welfare. Examples of this included time spent liaising with other agencies, such as the police and social services; in providing supplementary care to pupils whose parents were unable or unwilling to provide care; restructuring the day to ensure that pupils could have three meals within the school day; and administering medicines. Although difficult to quantify, the time and consequent costs, were judged to be considerable, reducing the time that could be devoted to other aspects of school effectiveness. There were also examples of direct financial costs, such as subsidising trips, buying school uniforms and a school that had bought a washing machine and sometimes washed children's school uniforms. Although improvements in pupils' welfare were expected to help pupils access the opportunities offered by the school (and could therefore be viewed in terms of inclusion), in contrast to the types of support outlined above, this was not the prime motivation.

³⁹ The Assembly Government is committed to an inclusive education. In order to realise this, the concept of "additional learning needs" is used to cover the needs of "learners who require additional support either due to their circumstances or because they have a longer-term disorder or condition". By meeting these needs, schools can ensure that all pupils can access the opportunities it offers (p.2. WAG, 2006)

8.5. Schools we visited also identified a range of impacts of RAISE that were helping them address some challenges they faced. They included the positive impact that some RAISE interventions had upon:

- Pupils' behaviour, by for example improving the behaviour of individual pupils and withdrawing challenging pupils from mainstream classes, which in turn helped teachers focus on teaching and learning rather than behaviour management;
- Teachers' expectations, by for example, demonstrating that given appropriate support, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds could achieve;
- Pupils' motivation and engagement with education; and
- The time senior management could devote to strategic planning, by increasing the capacity of their teaching and support teams so that they could deal with more day to day problems.

8.6. On the basis of this analysis and drawing upon evidence from our school visits, in broad terms we found that there were three groups of RAISE schools:

- Those schools whose RAISE funded work was and has remained narrowly focused on a single issue, such as improving pupils' literacy or their behaviour. Evidence from evaluations of comparable interventions in other schools, suggests these are likely to have an impact upon pupils' basic skills and their social and emotional skills and dispositions and that this is measurable within the short term (see boxed text);
- Those schools whose RAISE funded work was initially narrowly focused, but which has evolved over the three years to address a range of other issues. Evidence from evaluations of comparable interventions in other schools, suggests these more holistic approaches are likely to have a greater impact, an issue we explore further below. However, because the impact of this work is likely to have increased over time, there may be time lag before the full impact is measurable (cf. Estyn, 2010a); and

- Those schools which had already developed a holistic strategy to address the links between poverty and poor educational attainment, which were already making good progress in narrowing the gap and which used RAISE funding to strengthen and extend this.

8.7. Our analysis suggests that the three groups reflect, in part, differences in schools' effectiveness and the challenges they faced in 2006-2007 when developing their RAISE proposals. In order to explore this, it is useful to think about schools sitting on a continuum of effectiveness. At one end lay the most effective schools, those serving disadvantaged communities, but who were 'bucking the trend', who had strong distributed leadership, with clear values and expectations, strong links with families, the wider community and partner organisations, professional learning communities, effective strategies to provide support and intervention, challenging targets and effective self-evaluation and excellent pedagogy (c.f. WAG, 2008b, Estyn, 2010a; WAG & WLGA, 2002, 2004). These schools had a clear understanding of the needs of pupils and their achievement and the challenges the school faced in meeting those needs and raising attainment further. RAISE provided additional funding which enabled them to better meet pupils' needs. At the other end of the spectrum lay less effective schools, facing multiple challenges and with a consequently much weaker understanding of the needs of their pupils and their achievement and the challenges and of what the school could and needed to do in order to raise their attainment.

8.8. Many of the schools in the first group are likely to have been "fire fighting", struggling to think strategically and to have been less effective as a consequence. Those in the second group may have been able to use RAISE funding to help 'put out' some of the fires (to continue Ruth Lupton's metaphor), giving them the breathing space to think and act more strategically, an issue we discuss further below, helping them become more effective. In contrast, the greater success of those in the third group in tackling the link between poverty and poor educational

attainment before RAISE started, meant that they were less likely to be “fire fighting” and more likely to be able to think strategically from the outset.

Evidence from evaluations of comparable interventions in other contexts

Evaluations of **literacy interventions** suggest that “Good impact - sufficient to double the standard rate of progress - can be achieved, and it is reasonable to expect it.” They identified 18 schemes that all provided evidence of this level of impact in at least one study: Better Reading Partnerships, The Catch Up Project, Cued Spelling, Family Literacy, Inference Training, Interactive Assessment and Teaching, Multi-sensory Teaching System for Reading, Paired Reading, Parental Involvement, Phono-Graphix , Reading Intervention, Reading Recovery, Reciprocal Teaching (for reading accuracy), Somerset, THRASS (for reading, though less reliably for spelling), AcceleRead, AcceleWrite, Reader's Intelligent Teaching Assistant, and Paired Writing.” Moreover, they report that “most of the schemes which incorporated follow-up studies showed that the children maintained their gains” in literacy or numeracy (Brooks, 2002)

Evaluations of interventions with **parents and carers** suggest that those that increase parents and carers “engagement” in education (as distinct from their involvement in their child’s education) can contribute to both increases in attainment and school effectiveness (Harris & Goodall, 2009).

Evaluations of **Nurture Groups**⁴⁰ suggest they can generate positive impacts in terms of emotional and behavioural development, educational progress; reintegration into mainstream education and a reduction if support needs and upon the school, in areas such as ethos. However, with the exception of a large scale study of nurture groups in Glasgow, there are significant methodological

⁴⁰ A nurture group involve small numbers of children (typically less than 12) and aim to foster a supportive, safe environment, that can increases children’s feeling of security sand self-worth children. They focus on emotional and social development as well as academic progress (Estyn, 2009, Reynolds et al, 2009)

weaknesses in most studies. The Glasgow study reported impacts on children's attainment and their social, emotional and behavioural development (Reynolds, et al, 2008).

Evaluations of some **behaviour** interventions, such as behaviour and education support teams, report positive outcomes in terms of improvements in behaviour and attendance, a reduction in exclusions and in some cases, a small positive impact upon learning (Sims, et al, 2008).

Differences in the impact of narrow and holistic strategies

8.9. Although, as outlined above, there is good evidence from both RAISE and other comparable projects, that single issue interventions, like literacy support, make a difference, the evidence is also clear that successful schools in disadvantaged areas, are successful not because they implement specific initiatives such as Catch Up, but because they embody the characteristics of an "effective" school, that is to say, they have effective leadership, curriculum and teaching, they work with others, they are part of networks of practice, they have effective strategies for intervention and support and improvements and accountability⁴¹ (WAG, 2008b; Estyn, 2010a; WAG & WLGA, 2002) . There is no silver bullet, no single thing that will break the link between poverty and poor educational attainment. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Firstly, as outlined in section 3, there is no single factor associated with poverty that causes poor educational attainment. Whilst some factors, such as poor literacy, or the quality of the home learning environment, may be more salient than others (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007; Desforge & Aboucher, 2003), this does not mean that increasing literacy or improving the home learning environment is a sufficient condition, nor does it mean that every child growing up in poverty has

⁴¹ Therefore in general terms, they do the same things as all successful schools (Estyn, 2010b). However, because the nature of the challenges they face is different and the magnitude of those challenges is often greater, the nature of, for example, their leadership, their curriculum and teaching and their intervention and support strategies differ from those of other schools.

poor literacy or grows up in a poor home learning environment. Addressing more factors increases the chances that the specific problem or range of problems experienced by each child in poverty are addressed. Similarly, there is a danger that a focus upon a single solution, such as providing additional support, distracts attention from addressing other more systemic problems, such as weakness in teaching or assessment (cf. OfSTED, 2010).

- Secondly, there is a potential for synergies between different interventions, so that the sum, or overall impact, becomes greater than the impact of the individual parts. For example, improving a child's literacy, enhancing their social and emotional skills and working to support their parents, so that they are better able to help and encourage their child and become engaged in their education, may create a virtuous cycle. For example, it may mean a child is better able to access the curriculum and manage their behaviour, so that they enjoy school more, and this is consolidated by encouragement from home, and as their achievement grows, so does their enjoyment and consequently their motivation, which further enhances their achievement, and so on.
- Thirdly, more holistic strategies reduce the risk that different interventions or factors will conflict, undermining or cancelling each other out. For example, efforts to enhance a child's self-efficacy, their self-belief, in their ability to learn and to achieve, may be undermined by parents, step parents and carers whose own experiences of education may have been negative, and who consequently have little self-efficacy themselves and are fearful of their child over-reaching themselves and failing, or who may even be threatened by their child's success, so that they do little to encourage and may even try to discourage or denigrate their child's self-efficacy, self-motivation and aspirations.

8.10. The relationships between different factors emphasises the importance of "systems thinking", of thinking about the relationships between different parts, or "components" of the system (see boxed text). It also emphasises that it is likely to

be extremely hard for schools to break the link between poverty and poor educational attainment when acting alone. For example as Estyn conclude in their last annual report:

Inter-agency partnership working, such as that being promoted through the national strategy for developing Children and Young People's Plans in each Local Authority area, is also potentially very powerful in trying to break the cycle of social and educational disadvantage. Coherent action across a range of public service areas is required to have a sustained impact on that complex and deeply embedded problem. (p vi, Estyn, 2010b).

8.11. This conclusion is supported by a range of other studies into the educational attainment gap (see e.g., Egan, 2007; CPEG, 2008; WAG & WLGA, 2002).

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking means thinking about the relationships between different parts of a system, rather than trying to isolate individual components of the system, in order to understand them. So, for example, in order to understand a school, how it works and how it might develop, you cannot simply examine the school in isolation; it is necessary to think about how it relates to other 'components' in the system, such as the Local Authority, the community and the family. In effect, it means thinking about things holistically, viewing things in context.

Systems thinking is consistent with approaches such as results based accountability⁴² which emphasises that many of the goals of public policy, such as narrowing the educational and experiential gaps, cannot be achieved by any one organisation (or component of the system), such as schools, and nor should they be held accountable for this. Instead, all the components in the system share collective responsibility for achieving this goal (Friedman, 2005).

⁴² Results based accountability is an approach that focuses upon desired outcomes, and works back to identify how progress toward this goal can be measured and which partners contribute to its achievement. For more information go to <http://www.raguide.org/>

8.12. RAISE is therefore likely to have had the greatest impact where RAISE funding was underpinned by systems thinking and used to support a wider systematic change within and beyond the school. For example, this could include work with partner organisations working with pupils' parents and with other schools in the cluster in order to ensure a continuity of support when pupils make the transition from primary to secondary school. It is likely that these changes are likely to have had an impact upon both pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils from more advantaged backgrounds. This may mean that the true impact upon the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is somewhat masked as their gains in attainment, basic skills and social and emotional skills and dispositions may be partly matched by gains by pupils from more advantaged backgrounds.

9. THE IMPACT OF RAISE FUNDING UPON SCHOOLS

9.1. Evidence from Regional Coordinators, Estyn and our own visits to schools⁴³ has consistently identified a range of impacts in schools. In summary, these include (we discuss each in detail below):

- A growing awareness of the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment in almost all schools;
- In many schools, a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the link, leading to increased expectations of the achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Enabling, sustaining and, in some cases, catalysing action to address the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment;
- Developing the role of school support staff;
- Developing and extending the curriculum;
- Enhancing support; and
- Improving monitoring and evaluation.

9.2. ***Awareness and understanding of the issues:*** Most of the schools we visited described staff as being aware of the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment before the programme, but said that the focus RAISE has provided had “deepened and broadened” this understanding, as one Regional Coordinator put it (p.2, George, 2009). In some schools, it has challenged teachers’ expectations of what individual pupils might achieve, although the impact of this across the school has been mixed. The research team visited schools which reported that this raised awareness had had an impact on the culture and ethos of the whole school whilst in others it was clear that the impact had been limited primarily to those directly involved in RAISE. In a few

⁴³ As outlined in section 4, in order to identify schools to visit, RAISE Regional Coordinators were invited to suggest schools which they felt were notable in their use of RAISE funding. Therefore, although in this section we use evidence for or the school visits to illustrate how school used RAISE funding, the findings draw from a wider set of data than our school visits.

schools, this understanding extends to the needs of children looked after by Local Authorities.

RAISE focused us, made us stand back and think about what we really needed and became the basis of pedagogy. It created discussion for us as a staff and it changed us. The impact has been profound. Head of a primary school with over two thirds of their pupils eligible for FSMs.

9.3. Where this broader and deeper understanding was developed across the school there was evidence of how they developed their strategies over the course of the RAISE programme. This has included:

- Extending RAISE funded work to include more pupils and or to address other areas of need, most commonly, by complementing interventions directed at raising literacy and numeracy with strategies which aim to enhance pupils' social and emotional skills and dispositions;
- Improving links between the school and parents and carers, although many schools also report the difficulties they encountered in trying to strengthen links; and
- Developing partnership with other agencies, such as the Youth Service

It has helped us break down barriers with parents. We haven't had an angry aggressive parent for 3 years – a massive change. Head of a primary school with over 70% FSM eligible children.

We screen everyone for maths and reading anyway, then we listed the FSM pupils and chose from that – it was not a synonymous list but many who scored badly in maths (not always reading) were linked to problems with confidence and absenteeism. We used this to show parents they were supposed to be involved in children's learning and then worked with the families. Head of a rural primary school.

9.4. **Sustaining, enabling and catalysing action:** Most of the schools we visited were aware of the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment and most were taking action to address this, even if it was often focused upon the symptoms, such as poor literacy and numeracy, rather than the root causes. For these schools the RAISE programme helped increase the profile of the challenge and encouraged and enabled them to consolidate, sustain and in some cases extend existing activities to address it. This reflects one of the weaknesses of RAISE funded work, that some schools used the funding to uncritically continue what they were already doing, or what they should have been doing already, such as providing reading support for pupils who had poor literacy. Schools we visited were sometimes critical of colleagues in other schools for this, and the guidance given when RAISE was introduced, for not being more strategic in targeting the use of funding.

9.5. In some schools RAISE was a catalyst for more radical action with a greater impact. One Head Teacher described how such short-term targeted funding is essential as a tool to enable a school to 'risk' something new, to try new approaches that could not be justified untested if they had to be funded from the core budget. Once tried, decisions could be made about whether to use core funding to sustain them or not. Similarly, one of the Regional Coordinators described Head Teachers reporting that RAISE had been "a 'massive shot in the arm', enabling the start-up of projects that could not have been funded otherwise. Another Head Teacher described the injection of RAISE funding as a sort of 'rocket fuel' which has enabled the school to travel much further along a road it had already identified as the route it aspired to take (p. 8, George, 2009).

RAISE gave us a push for something we really wanted to do, and let us implement it quickly. It would have taken 3 or 4 years to take the steps we took in one. It focused us on new targets, like a really bright girl in year 6 who did

not need reading or maths but needed help with social skills. Primary school Head.

RAISE became a big part of everything – reading, maths, social skills and attendance – it impacted on everything and gave the target group that extra push. It worked because it was a programme we could devise and we thought long and hard about it. Primary school Head

- 9.6. **Staff development and practice:** One of the most notable impacts of RAISE has been upon the role of support staff, such as learning support assistants, who have taken on new and more demanding roles, often directly supporting pupil's progress and in many cases developing a richer understanding of pupils' circumstances, needs and potential which can be shared with other teaching staff.

It has brought the staff together and they now welcome LSA⁴⁴ support.
Primary school Head

- 9.7. Many schools identify the impact of training, most notably in relation to specific interventions, such as Catch Up, in addition to the development of their knowledge and understanding, as discussed above. In a small number of schools visited, such training has enhanced leadership roles within the school, developing the roles of staff such as learning coaches, inclusion managers and behaviour and support managers, in effect strengthening distributed leadership within these schools. We discuss the potential wider benefits of this further below. In a small number of cases, it has helped highlight weaknesses in teaching, leading to training.

RAISE allowed for whole school training, so that teachers could build oracy, literacy and reading skills into all their lessons. Primary school Head

⁴⁴ Learning Support Assistant

RAISE gave us the opportunity to train all staff in how to teach reading, including the sports teacher. It has made such an impact – but grants should always make a difference. Special school Head

- 9.8. The impact of this upon staff is reported to include improvements in approaches to teaching and learning. For example, one Regional Coordinator reports “teachers planning more effectively to design learning experiences suited to the needs of particular groups of learners. This has often been linked with work to develop thinking skills across the curriculum.” (p. 9, George, 2009). A number of schools commented on how RAISE had developed approaches that link onto the School Effectiveness Framework, with staff visiting other schools, reviewing their work and its impact and developing self-evaluation processes.

Because of RAISE we have transitioned easily into SEF. We have become used to sharing good practice, building on how RAISE has worked within the school and across the catchment area. Secondary school Head

- 9.9. **Developing the curriculum:** Analysis of the RAISE proposals showed that over half of secondary schools have used RAISE funding to develop their curriculum offer for pupils in Key Stage 4, this has included the provision of a wider choice of accredited qualifications including Open College Network (OCN), ASDAN and other vocational qualifications, and to a lesser degree, at Key Stage 3. Primary schools were encouraged to align their work with the Foundation Phase and around a quarter explicitly cited this in their final proposals.

In year 2 we used RAISE, in effect, as a pilot project for the Foundation Phase. It helped us shift to talking becoming more important than writing, for example. Primary school Head

- 9.10. **Enhancing support:** In many RAISE schools, the additional funding has been used to extend and enhance intervention and support strategies for pupils that

were already in place. Many Head Teachers explained that when RAISE was introduced as a two year cycle of funding it encouraged them to look at how they could work within the structures they had already got in place, rather than setting up new ones that they feared could take half the funded period to bed in. The most common form of this has been literacy and numeracy interventions, followed by work to support social and emotional skills and behaviour. In a small, but growing number of schools, the recognition that schools cannot meet the needs of pupils alone and that a more holistic or systemic response will have greater impact means that schools are increasingly working with partners as part of a 'team around the child' approach⁴⁵.

We needed to get the whole school involved. The first thing we decided, as a school, was that if pupils came in late it was not their fault, they are children and not in control of whether their mother gets up in time. We took on a support worker who rings at 9.30 to ask where they are. This pressures the parents, not the children. We wanted to make school somewhere where children want to come, not where they would be told off as they came through the door. As a result, absenteeism has got so much better. We cannot teach them if they are not here. Primary school Head

When a teacher leaves the classroom in our school there can be mayhem because the teacher is the security Graph, helping the children feel safe. We bid to put in toilets and showers here, and a washing machine and tumble dryer. We buy birthday cakes – we are a huge compensatory service for what doesn't happen at home – but we are inspected using the same criteria as schools in the most affluent areas. Primary Head Teacher

9.11. **Monitoring and evaluation:** As outlined in section 5, most schools have collected detailed information about pupils targeted for support. School visits

⁴⁵ Team Around the Child is a model of service provision in which a range of different professionals work together to help and support an individual child or young person.

identified a mix of Local Authority standardised testing, standardised tests such as NFER assessments, the assessments built into interventions such as Catch Up and, sometimes, their own processes. In some cases a school may be using all of these approaches. Whilst almost all schools visited were confident that they were collecting rigorous data that was allowing them to measure the impact of the work they were doing, there was little scope for looking at impacts between schools, or even where schools were using different programmes with different target groups, within schools. For example, the teacher below describes a process of evaluation which the school is happy with but if they re-tested those on the programme using the NFER scores it would enable a clearer picture to develop of how those pupils progress against the development of others in the school not on the programme.

We target through standardised tests and then compare with NFER scores - then put them on the programme. The programme has its own testing structure so we measure progress from then on using that. Primary school Head

9.12. Schools visited were clear that RAISE had had a positive impact on attendance and attainment but also commented on the difficulty of identifying an exact causal link (see appendix on Contribution Analysis). RAISE was just one of a menu of funding that was being used within schools and although its role was often described as ‘catalytic’ or, as one deputy Head described it, the organising factor that brought other pieces of work together, it was rarely clear which specific spend had resulted in which outcome. The clearer and more defined the spend, for example the provision of X programme to Y pupils for Z period, the easier this analysis was, but more holistic strategies were less simple to pin down.

We identified a target group in year 3. None of them had a reading score at all. They are now all in year 5 and have a reading score within 3 months of their age Primary school Head

We recruited an LSA who was an extra person to check on arrival times and now we have fewer than 10 pupils that regularly get in late. Primary school Head

Our exam results have improved year on year since we have had RAISE funding but I cannot say that it is because of RAISE – you couldn't have a control group. Secondary school Head

At the end of Key Stage 2 last year, with pupils who had been part of RAISE for 3 years, we had our best attainment levels ever. Attendance levels have improved from 91% to 94%. Primary school Head

Understanding differences in impact

9.13. Evidence from Regional Coordinators, Estyn, and our own visits to schools suggests a number of factors influenced the differing impact across schools. These included:

- The higher level of funding available to secondary schools;
- Openness to new ideas and the support and where appropriate challenge from RAISE Regional Co-coordinators Local Authorities and Regional Co-coordinators; and
- The leadership and, more broadly, effectiveness of schools, which we discuss further below.

9.14. ***Differences in funding:*** All schools consistently reported that the level of funding offered by RAISE was big enough to make a difference. The higher level of funding in secondary schools enabled them to develop a wider range of initiatives within their schools. Primary schools reported that, although their funding was smaller, it was a significant sum for most and this helped to focus thinking on what they could do.

9.15. ***Openness to new ideas, support and challenge for schools:*** Exposure to new ideas and ways of working was a key factor in developing many schools' RAISE funded strategies. Opportunities to share ideas, experiences and good practice included regional and national RAISE conferences; meetings between all RAISE schools in a Local Authority; and monitoring visits from Local Authority officers or RAISE regional co-ordinators. Not all the schools visited had attended conferences but those that had valued their involvement. In many, although not all, areas Local Authority officers and Regional Coordinators are credited with helping strengthen the focus upon disadvantage, rather than under-achievement (Estyn, 2010). We discuss the role played by Regional Coordinators in detail in section 14.

9.16. ***Leadership and effectiveness:*** Estyn inspections suggests the effectiveness of schools varies considerably (Estyn, 2010c) and as outlined in section 3, the research evidence suggests that the link between poverty and poor educational attainment stems in part from the characteristics of the schools and the challenges those schools face because of the area and the pupil populations they serve (Lupton, 2005). This does not mean that every school serving disadvantaged areas is less effective than those serving more affluent areas: there are schools in disadvantaged areas that buck the trend and are highly effective, adding considerable value, and there are schools serving more affluent areas which are described as "coasting", adding little value, when factors such as family background and pupil's prior attainment are controlled for.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, as we outline in section 8, this does mean that many RAISE schools are likely to have been "fire fighting" at the start of the programme, making it more difficult for them to be effective.

9.17. Crucially, our analysis suggests that the most effective schools were best placed to exploit the opportunities offered by RAISE - the additional funding it offered,

⁴⁶ Fisher Family Trust "contextual value added" analyses enable estimates to be made of the performance of pupils of the same gender, similar ages, prior attainment, who are attending schools with similar socioeconomic profiles to be made. By comparing the performance of a pupils in a school with their predicted performance, the 'value added' by the school can be estimated.

funding at a level that was large enough to make a real difference, and the freedom it gave them in how they used it. Some of these schools were able to use the funding imaginatively, producing a transformative, step change. In contrast, the least effective schools were less able to exploit the opportunities offered by RAISE and many opted for 'tried and tested', often narrowly focused, interventions most notably literacy initiatives (Holtom, 2008; Estyn, 2010). In some cases the funding was used to continue existing activity and the effect was at best evolutionary and at worst simply maintained a steady state without allowing the school to look at broader issues. More positively, as outlined in section 7, over time, RAISE funding helped some schools put out some of the 'fires' they faced, giving them the breathing space to plan more strategically.

10. THE LEGACY OF RAISE FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

- 10.1. In broad terms, there have been two types of impact of RAISE funding: those that have become “embedded” in the way the school works, such as understanding and awareness of the links between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment; changes to the curriculum and pedagogy, and those that have extended the way the school works, such as the employment of additional support staff (George, 2009; Estyn, 2010). Schools report that those elements that are embedded in the school’s culture, ethos and way of working, will be easier to sustain, because they do not require the recurrent financial expenditure that those interventions that extend the schools’ work require. Nevertheless, the sustainability of changes to the schools culture, ethos and practice cannot be taken for granted. For example, over time, it is likely that staff will move on, new priorities will emerge and so on and the impact may decline. Similarly, many schools have purchased resources or invested in physical changes in the fabric of the school, that will depreciate over time and which will need renewal
- 10.2. The perceived value of RAISE funded interventions, which we discuss in section 15, means that most schools plan to sustain some or all of those RAISE activities that extend the schools work. However, many schools are concerned about the impact that budget cuts may have upon their ability to do this. Moreover, in most cases, schools were planning to fund this extension through cut backs in other areas such as capitation budgets, which are unlikely to be cost free, that is to say, the cuts in others areas may have a negative impact that may offset in part the gains from continuing to fund RAISE activities.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In order to develop, it is necessary for schools to stop doing some things, a concept that has been described as “strategic abandonment” (Harris, et al, 2008). There is an ‘opportunity cost’, doing things that no longer serve a purpose, inevitably stop schools doing other things. Nevertheless, few schools we identified were willing or able to identify things that they felt had little or no value and could therefore be abandoned with little or no cost.

10.3. Because the impact of RAISE funding in a small number of schools has been narrow and limited, it has not changed the culture, ethos or practice of the school, meaning that the legacy is likely to be more limited. For example, one Regional Coordinator reports that a small number of schools show “little inclination” to sustain the work (p. 10, Davies Jones, 2009). Similarly Estyn report that “Only a very few schools intend to stop RAISE activities altogether where they depend on additional staffing paid by RAISE “ (P.20, Estyn 2010). None of the schools we visited reported this, but this is probably because our sample was biased toward the more interested and engaged schools.

11.THE IMPACT OF RAISE FUNDING FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Introduction

11.1. Many children entering the care system experience a range of risk factors associated with poor educational attainment, including growing up in poverty and experiences of abuse. Opinion divides over whether the care system compounds the problems of children looked after by Local Authorities - for example, as Borland, et al, report, many children “paint a picture of school experience adding to the turmoil of coming into care” (p. 56, Borland, et al, 1998, cited in Fletcher, et al, 2003) - or whether the care system helps children overcome initial disadvantage and enables them to progress educationally (C4EO, 2009; Forester et, al, n.d.). It is striking how polarised much of the literature is on this point and more nuanced assessments point to differences in outcomes for children depending on their pre-care experiences, the timing and nature of their care and suggest that the system seems to work better for some than others, that is to say, it is not wholly bad nor wholly good. Both bodies of opinion agree though that children looked after by Local Authorities are clearly a disadvantaged group and there is a strong case for support to improve the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities.

The impact of RAISE upon the achievement and the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities

11.2. In order to assess the impact of RAISE upon the attainment of Children looked after by Local Authorities, we consider a number of different sources of evidence (see boxed text for details on their use):

- Trends in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in Wales before (2001-2002-2005-2006) and after the introduction of RAISE (2006-2007-2008-2009);

- Trends in the attainment of four comparison groups – all young people, those with special educational needs, those eligible for FSMs, and children looked after by Local Authorities in England;
- Evidence from Looked After Children’s Education (LACE) coordinators and children looked after by Local Authorities themselves; and
- Evidence from comparable interventions.

Estimating the impact of RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities

An analysis of trends in data before and after an intervention is a commonly used approach to assess the counterfactual, what would have happened in the absence of the intervention and therefore provide an estimate of the impact.⁴⁸ This type of analysis can only identify a correlation, between the introduction of an intervention such as RAISE and a change in the data, such as an increase in attainment after the intervention started; it does not prove definitive evidence of a causal link. Therefore, impact assessments are often strengthened by comparing trends for the group subject to the intervention, in this case children looked after by Local Authorities in Wales, described as a “treatment” group and other groups who are not subject to the intervention, described as “control” group.⁴⁹ Outcomes for the control groups represent an estimate of the counterfactual, what would have happened without the intervention.

In this case, comparable data is available on four groups: all young people in Wales, young people in Wales with special educational needs, young people in Wales eligible for FSMs and children looked after by Local Authorities in England. None of the groups is an ideal comparison group. For example:

⁴⁸ This represents a “Single Group Pre and Post-test Design” (GSRU, 2007), Although RAISE funding for looked after children is projected to continue, for the purposes of this evaluation, which focuses upon the first three years of RAISE funding, it is treated as if it had ended.

⁴⁹ The classic example of this approach is a randomised control trial, in which participants are randomly allocated to a “treatment” and “control group”. Where, as in this case, randomisation is not possible, “non-equivalent comparison groups” are often used. These are similar to a “control group”, in that they offer a control group to compare with the treatment group (the group benefitting from the intervention). However, unlike a control group, assignment to the control and treatment groups is not random.

- attainment of all young people will include the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities. However, because the numbers of children looked after by Local Authorities are so small, the impact upon the attainment of the group as a whole is small.
- many pupils eligible for FSMs will have benefited from RAISE funding for schools;
- analysis of the RAISE databases for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 suggests that between 40%-50% of children looked after by Local Authorities have special educational needs, so will fall into both the “treatment” and “control” groups⁵⁰; and
- children looked after by Local Authorities in England have experienced a series of policy interventions designed to raise their attainment.

These measures of the counterfactual can be complemented by qualitative research to explore the process and an assessment of the evidence from comparable interventions.

Sources: GSRU, 2008; Pawson & Tilly, 1997; Cook & Gorard, 2007; Mayne, n.d.

11.3. **Trends in attainment:** we first analysed the data on trends in their attainment. There are two main sources of data on the children attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities:

- data collected by the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, through the Educational qualifications for care leavers (OC1) return. This includes information on the GCSE and GNVQ qualifications⁵¹ for all children looked after by Local Authorities who ceased to be looked after aged 16 or over, year ending 31 March, for the period 2001-2008;
- data collected by each Local Authority on the characteristics, experiences and attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities, through the RAISE

⁵⁰ In 2006/07, 40% of looked after children on the database were recorded as having special educational needs, of which 17% were statemented. In 2007/08, 49% of looked after children on the database were recorded as having special educational needs, of which 24% were statemented.

⁵¹ GNVQ qualifications could be taken in a wide range of subjects, however they have been phased out and were completely withdrawn by October 2007. Alternatives to GNVQ qualifications include vocational [GCSEs](#), BTEC diplomas and certificates, [OCR Nationals](#) and [City and Guild](#) progression awards

database. This includes information on all the qualifications (i.e. not just GCSEs and GNVQs) gained by children looked after by Local Authorities in year 11 for the period 2007-2009.

- 11.4. The differences in the type of data collected and the timescales for data collection mean that the two sets of data cannot be directly compared. Table 11.1. summarises the key differences.

Table 11.1. comparison of the data held on the RAISE database and Data Unit Wales datasets		
	Data unit Wales data	RAISE database
Age group covered	Year 11-13	Years 10 and 11
Rounding	To the nearest 5	No rounding
Data available for	2001-2008	2007-2009
Data collection period	April – March	Sep – Aug
Criteria for inclusion	All children aged 16 or over who ceased to be looked after in the year to 31 st March	All looked after children in years 10 and 11

- 11.5. If the aim is to use the two data sets to construct a time series, the most important differences to bear in mind is the time period covered by each dataset. In particular the April-March collection period for the Data Unit data means that the data set spans two academic years. For example, a looked after child whose 16th birthday fell in February 2006, who ceased to be looked after, will have turned 15 in February 2005, entered Year 11 in September 2005 and taken their examinations in the summer of 2006. Therefore, they will be included in the Data Unit Wales data for 2006, and their results will be included in the RAISE database for the 2006-2007 academic year. However, a looked after child aged 16 in April 2006, will have turned 15 in April 2005 and will also have entered Year 11 in September 2005 and have taken their examinations in the summer of 2006.

They will not be included in the Data Unit Wales data for 2007, but they will still be included in the RAISE database for 2006-2007. In addition, there are differences in the age range, which means that the Data Unit Wales data includes a small number of children (on average around 4 or 5 a year) who are aged 17 or 18, who ceased being looked after before the 31st March and who gained a GCSE or GNVQ, but who would not be included in the RAISE database because they would not be in years 10 or 11.

- 11.6. Given these differences in the Data Unit Wales and RAISE datasets, a request was made for the Data Unit to calculate the number of children looked after by Local Authorities who, based upon their date of birth, were likely to be year 11, and who gained one or more GCSE or GNVQ qualifications. This data is currently available for the academic years 2001-2002 to 2006-2007. This data is not rounded and is the best match we have for the data on the RAISE database.
- 11.7. The attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities, for the 2001-2002 to 2005-2006 academic years are based upon the Data Unit Wales data on care leavers in year 11. The Graphs for the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities for the 2006-2007 to 2008-2009 academic years are based upon the RAISE database. The key points to note include:
 - The long term trend in LAC attainment is positive: the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities achieving at least one and five or more GCSEs A*-G increases over the period 2001-2002 to 2007 -2008;
 - Although the percentage of all young people achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ A*-G increased over this period (from 92% to 94%), the rate of increase in the percentage of children looked after by Local Authorities achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ at A*-G was greater than this (from 39% to 59%). Therefore, the gap narrowed over this period. Equally, the scope for continued improvement

in the percentage of all young people achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ A*-G was inevitably more limited, because it started from a much higher base.⁵²

- Similarly, the percentage of all young people achieving at least five GCSEs or GNVQs also increased over this period (from 85% to 86%), however, the rate of increase in the percentage of children looked after by Local Authorities achieving at least five GCSEs or GNVQs was greater than this (from 25% to 35%). Although, as noted, the scope for improvement amongst all young people may be more limited, the trends mean that the gap narrowed over this period. However, the gap is closing at a slower rate than the gap between children looked after by Local Authorities and all young people achieving at least one GCSE.
- The long term trend based upon the data on trends in attainment before RAISE (i.e. 2001-2002 to 2005-2006), can be used to estimate what is likely to have happened in the absence of RAISE and this estimate, represented by the black lines on Graph 11.1, can be compared with the actual attainment over this period, represented by the red and blue lines. This comparison suggests that the actual attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities is marginally above the long term trend on the 5 GCSE A*-G measure and similar to the long term trend on the 1 A*-G GCSE Measure. This estimate assumes a linear rate of progression, that is to say, it is based upon the assumption that the trend in attainment over the period 2001-2002 to 2005-2006, before RAISE, would continue during the RAISE period (i.e. 2006-2007 to 2008-2009).

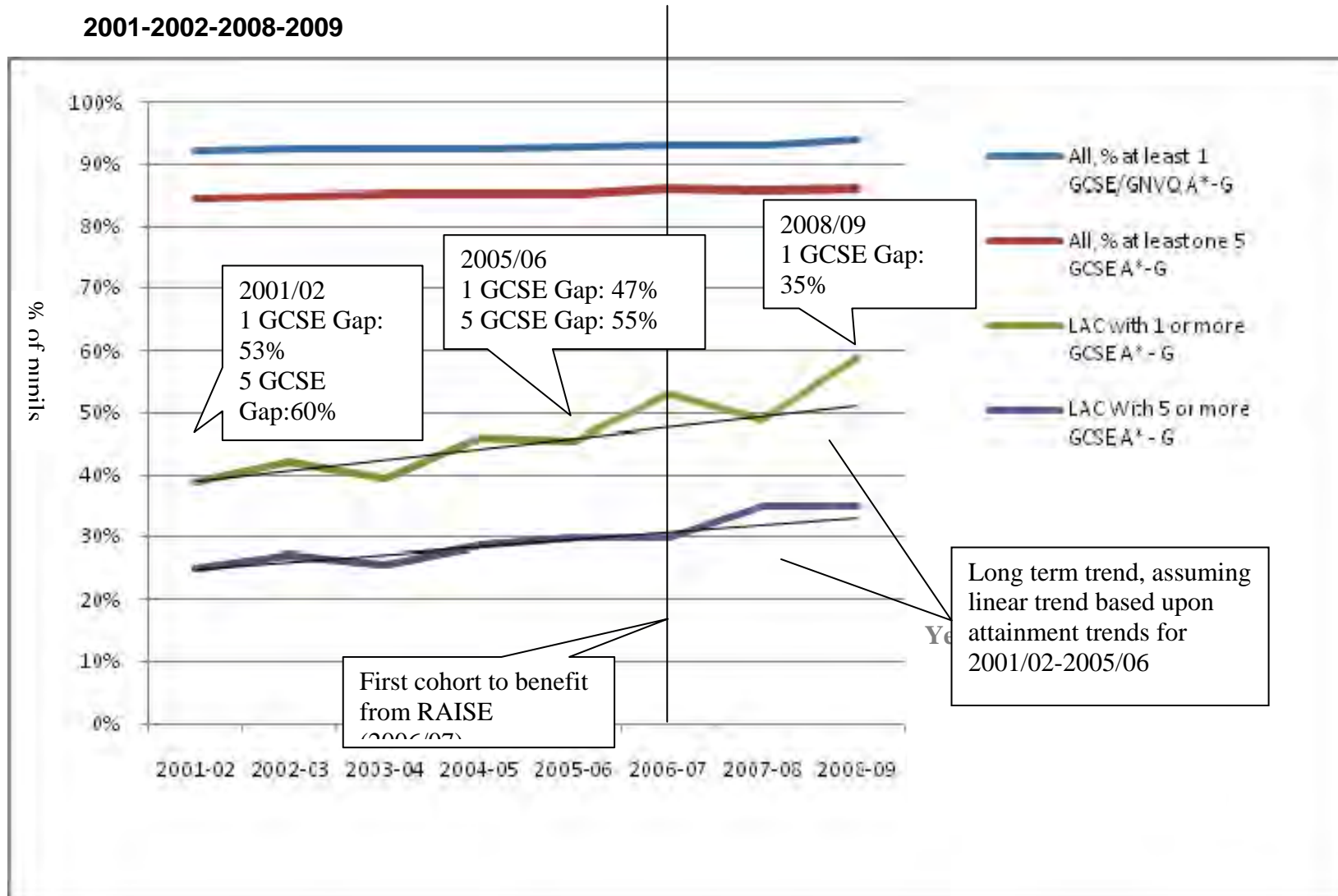
11.8. In interpreting the data on the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities it is important to consider the impact of the small numbers of such children. In total there are, on average, around 400 children looked after by Local Authorities in year 11 in each year. The relatively small numbers magnifies the impact of chance variations in, for example, the needs and abilities of

⁵² The maximum is by definition 100% and it possible that initial gains reflect gains by those young people closest to achieving this standard – the ‘low hanging fruit’ – meaning subsequent gains become more challenging to achieve.

individual children upon the overall outcomes.⁵³ This is likely to be the cause of the significant year on year variation, illustrated by Graph 11.1. in which high attainment in one year is typically followed by lower attainment the following year.

⁵³ it is unlikely that capability and need will be evenly distributed across each cohort of Looked After Children, and it is likely that if there is a particularly able cohort one year, the next year's cohort will be less capable, a phenomena known as "regression to the mean" (cf. Blastland & Dilnott, 2007).

Graph 11.1. Trends in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and all pupils in Wales, 2001-2002-2008-2009



Sources: RAISE Database and Data Unit Wales (see table 11.1.)

Table 11.1. Selected measures of the attainment of all young people and children looked after by Local Authorities in Wales 2001-2002-2008-2009								
Academic year Measure	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Percentage of care leavers who were in year 11 during the academic year with 1 or more GCSE or GNVQ A* - G	39%	42%	39%	46%	46%	53%	49%	59%
Percentage of care leavers who were in year 11 during the academic year With 5 or more GCSE or GNVQ A* - G	25%	27%	26%	29%	30%	30%	35%	35%
Percentage of all young people who were in year 11, achieving at least one 1 GCSE /GNVQ A*-G	92%	92%	93%	93%	93%	93%	93%	94%
Percentage of all young people who were in year 11, achieving at least 5 GCSE/GNVQ A*-G	85%	85%	85%	85%	86%	86%	86%	86%

Sources: RAISE Database and Data Unit Wales

11.9. Because the increase in attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities is only slightly above the long term trend, this suggests a *prima facie* case that RAISE has had limited impact at a national level (we consider the evidence of an impact at a Local Authority level further below). However, it is important to bear in mind that this trend assumes a linear progression and it is possible that without RAISE the rate of increase would have been slower.

11.10. As Graph 11.2 illustrates, the range of average attainment across the 22 Welsh Local Authorities is considerable. There are also marked year on year variations. In order to capture the full range of attainment, we use wider point scores, rather

than GCSEs.⁵⁴ Although this is the Welsh Government's preferred measure, there is some evidence that some of the difference between the attainment of looked after children at a Local Authority level reflects different approaches to the qualifications offered by Local Authorities. Specifically, some Local Authorities do not offer any additional qualifications and others offer additional qualifications that do not have points allocated to them.

11.11. In interpreting the data on attainment in the 22 Local Authorities, as with the national data, it is also important to consider the very small numbers of children looked after by some Local Authorities. For example, over the last three years:

- Five Local Authorities were, on average, looking after less than 10 children in year 11, in each year;
- 11 Local Authorities, on average, had between 10 and 20 children they were looking after in year 11, in each year;
- Six Local Authorities, on average, had between 21 and 35 children being looked after in year 11, in each year; and
- One Local Authority had on average, 57 children being looked after in year 11, in each year.

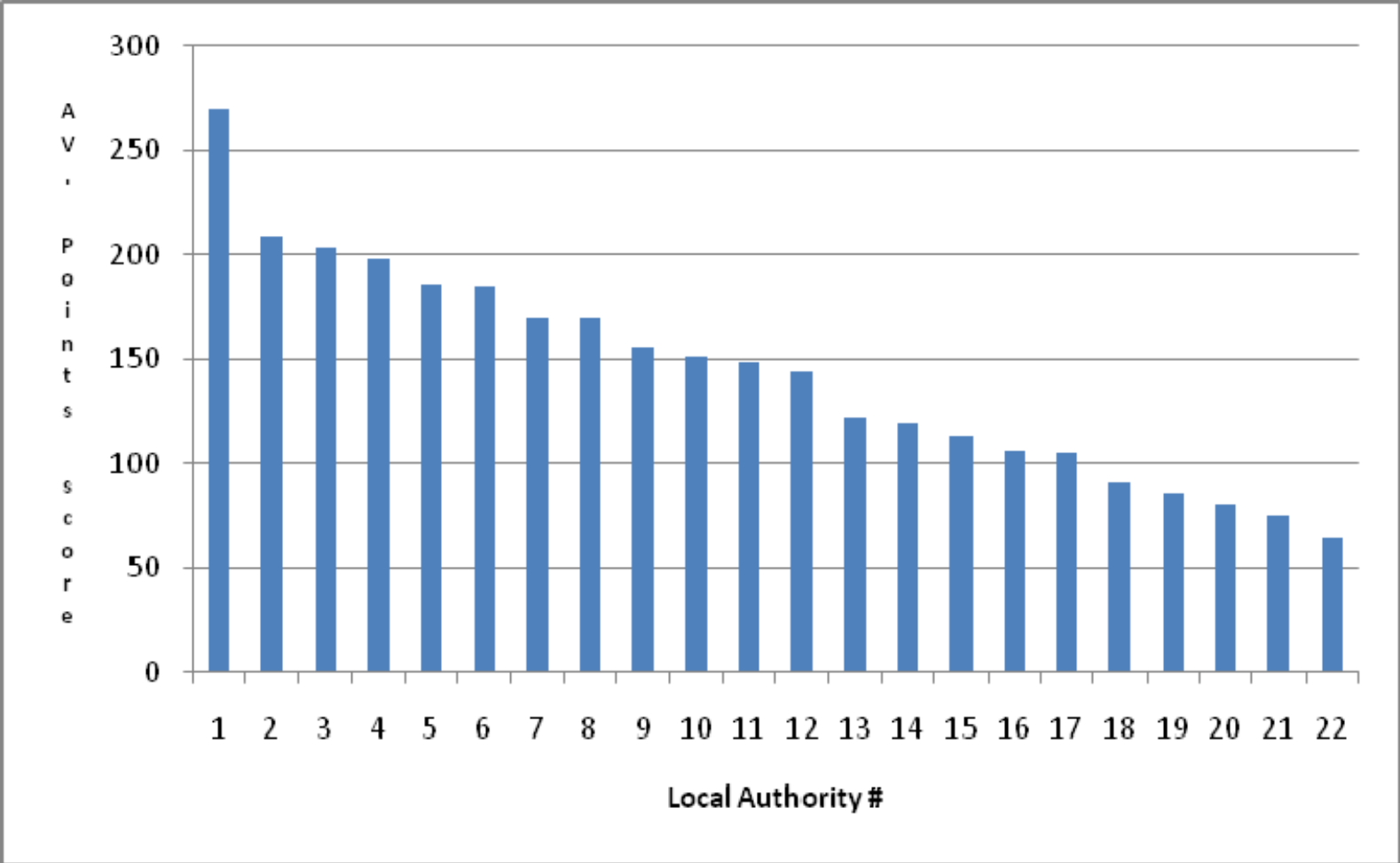
11.12. These small and in some cases very small numbers magnify the impact of chance variations in factors such as the needs and capabilities of individual children upon overall results and are likely to contribute to the yearly variation in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in each Local Authority shown in Graph 11.3.

11.13. Subject to these caveats, it is probable that the impact of RAISE will not have been even across all 22 Local Authorities and that some will have made more effective use of the funding than others and all things being equal, this will mean the impact upon attainment will have been greater in these Local Authorities. Of course, all things are not equal, and it is important to consider other factors, such

⁵⁴ It is not possible to use wider point scores to undertake a time series analysis because historical data on wider points score are not available.

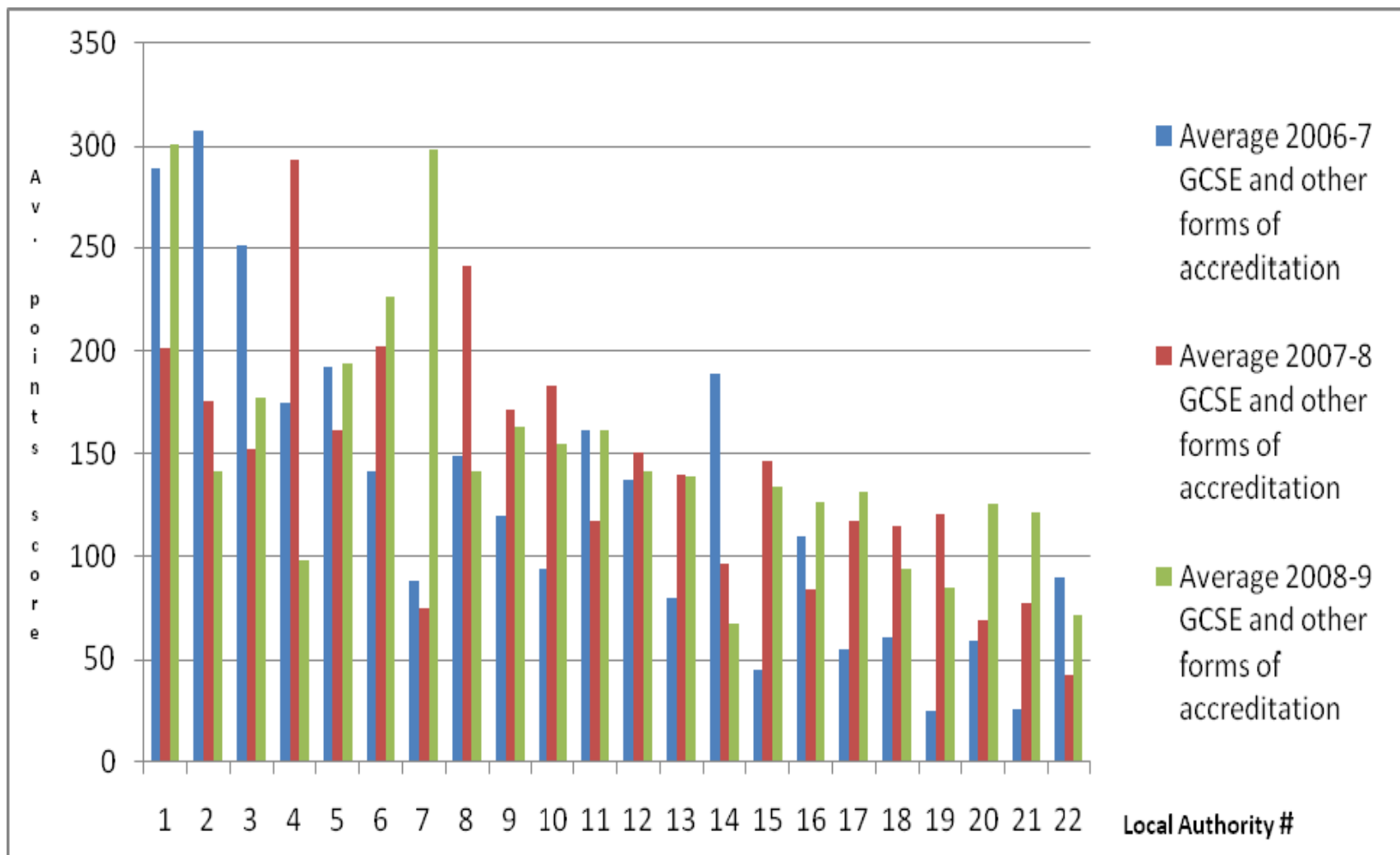
as the differences in the capabilities and needs of each Local Authorities' cohort which also impact upon attainment.

Graph 11.2 Average points score of children looked after by Local Authorities in Welsh Local Authorities over three years, 2006-2007-2008-2009 (Local Authorities are not identified in order to avoid the creation of league tables).



Source: RAISE LAC database

Graph 11.3 Average points score of children looked after by Local Authorities in Welsh Local Authorities for each year, 2006-2007-2008-2009



11.14. In order to explore possible reasons for the variation in attainment across the 22 Local Authorities, in a thematic report on RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities (Sims & Holtom, 2009) we analysed whether the variation could be explained by contextual factors, such as differences in the characteristics of individual children looked after by Local Authorities. We found that there was only a weak relationship between factors such as the incidence of special educational needs and attainment. This suggests that other factors, such as the quality of support provided to children looked after by Local Authorities, were also important. We also analysed whether there were systematic differences between:

- the factors that LACE Coordinators identified as contributing to the generally poor educational attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities – a proxy measure of their knowledge and understanding of the issues; and
- the types of interventions funded by RAISE.

11.15. We found no systematic differences in either the factors that LACE Coordinators identified or the type of RAISE interventions being implemented when we compared Local Authorities with high levels of attainment and with lower levels of attainment. However, we did find some differences in the nature of the support provided. In those Local Authorities whose looked after children's attainment was above or well above the median: we found that interventions tended to be more formal and that they adopted more individualised support and learning for children looked after by Local Authorities.

11.16. For this report we also analysed the results of Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspections of Local Authority Children's services over the last five years (2005-2009) (where available) in each Local Authority and the results of Estyn inspections of secondary schools in each Local Authority over the last three years (2007-2009). These were intended to act as proxy measures of the quality of Local Authority services and the quality of schools in each Local Authority.

11.17. Neither measure is perfect. For example if the quality of schools in a Local Authority is a factor that contributes to the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities, the impact of this will be mediated by the uneven distribution of children looked after by Local Authorities across Wales (see paragraph 11.11). In particular, it means that, the quality of schools in a Local Authority with a consistently high number of children looked after by the Local Authority, will have a more consistent impact than the quality of schools in a Local Authority with a much smaller number of children looked after by the Local Authority. Moreover, the data is incomplete: the analysis of school inspection reports provides only limited coverage because only roughly half the secondary schools in each area will have been inspected over the last three years and inspection reports were not available for all social services. Notwithstanding their weaknesses, they provide some indication of the quality of each.

11.18. In order to provide a numerical measure of quality of children services, the inspection grades (Poor / Inconsistent / Mainly good / Excellent) on CSSIW's eight judgment points⁵⁵ were assigned a score and added together⁵⁶ and multiplied by 50, in order to scale them up, so that they could be represented on the same bar graph as each Local Authorities' looked after children's wider points score.

11.19. Similarly, in order to provide a numerical measure of quality of schools, the inspection grades (Grade 1: good with outstanding features; Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings; Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings; Grade 4: some good features, but shortcomings in important areas and Grade 5: many important shortcomings) of each Local Authority's secondary

⁵⁵ Access to services, Assessment, Care management and review, Range of services provided, Quality of services provided, Arrangements to protect vulnerable people, Success in promoting independence and social inclusion

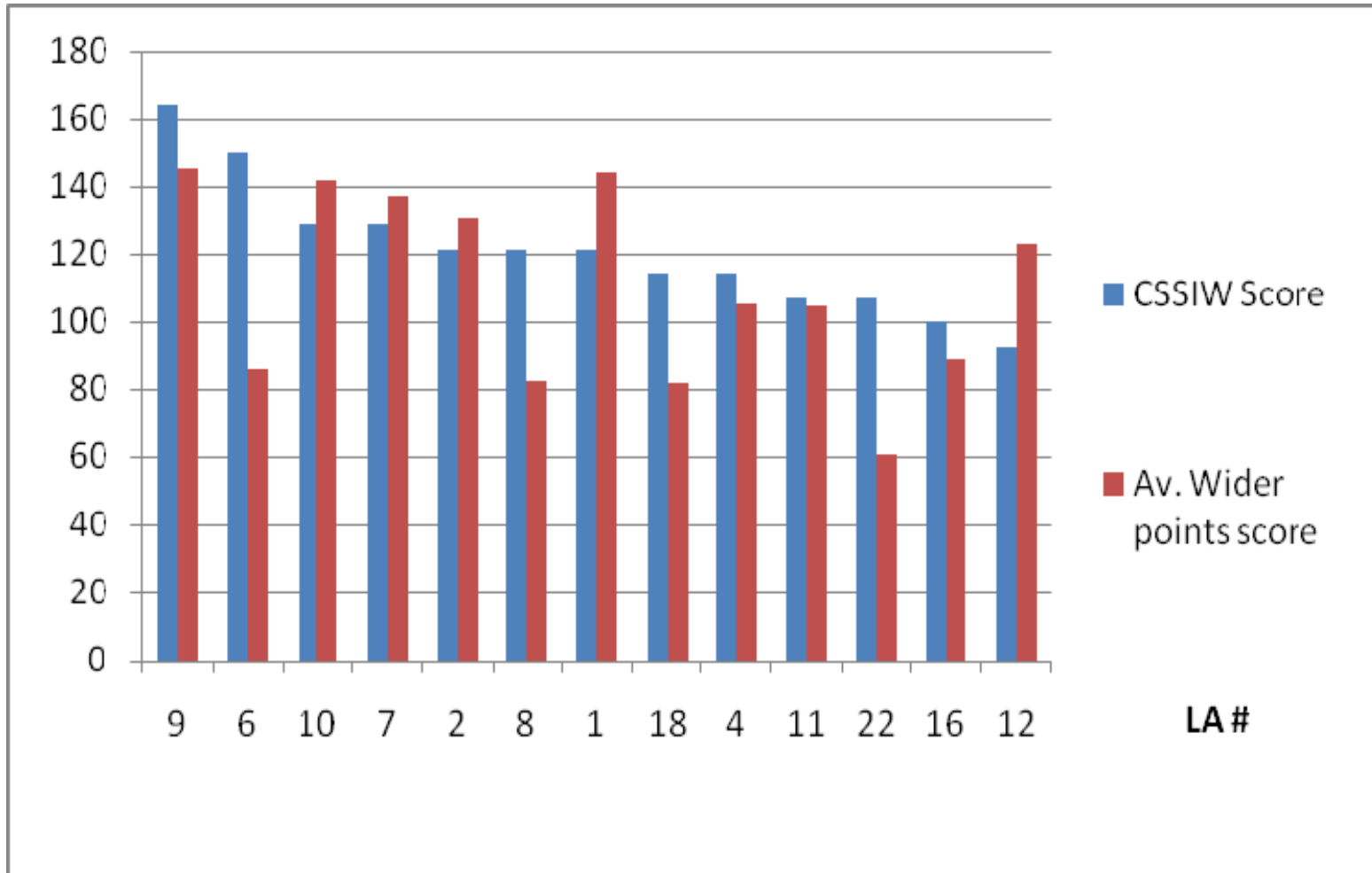
⁵⁶ Where poor = 1, inconsistent = 2, mainly good = 3 and excellent = 4

school were assigned a score and added together⁵⁷ and then multiplied by 50 in order to scale them up so that they could be represented on the same bar graph as each Local Authorities' wider points score.

11.20. As Graph 11.4. illustrates, we found that there is little or no correlation between Estyn inspection grades of secondary schools in each Local Authority and average points scores of children looked after by Local Authorities in each Local Authority, but we found some evidence of a correlation between CSSIW inspections and average point scores. Specifically, as the CSSIW scores decline, average point scores tend to also decline. This does not necessarily mean that there is a causal link though between the quality of social services (as measured by CSSIW inspections) and the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities. For example, it is also possible and indeed likely that those Local Authorities with the most effective children's services were the best placed to make effective use of the additional funding offered by RAISE.

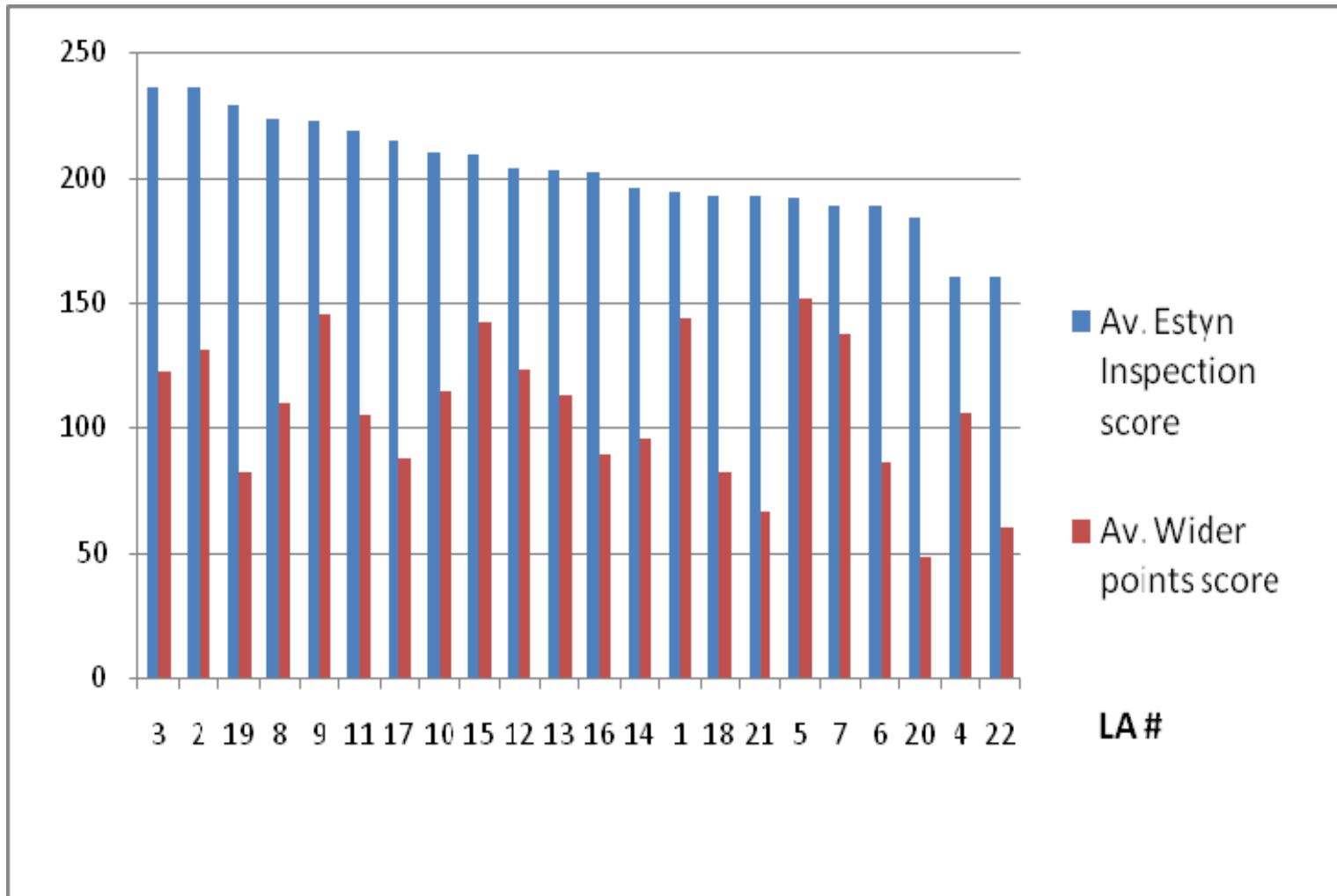
⁵⁷ Where grade 5 = 1, grade 4 = 2, grade 3=3, grade 2= 4n and grade 1 = 5

Graph 11.4 the average wider points score of children looked after by Local Authorities over the last three years in each Local Authority and their CSSIW scores (where available).



Sources: RAISE LAC database & CSSIW

Graph 11.5. The average Estyn scores for schools and the wider points score of children looked after by Local Authorities over the last three years in each Local Authority



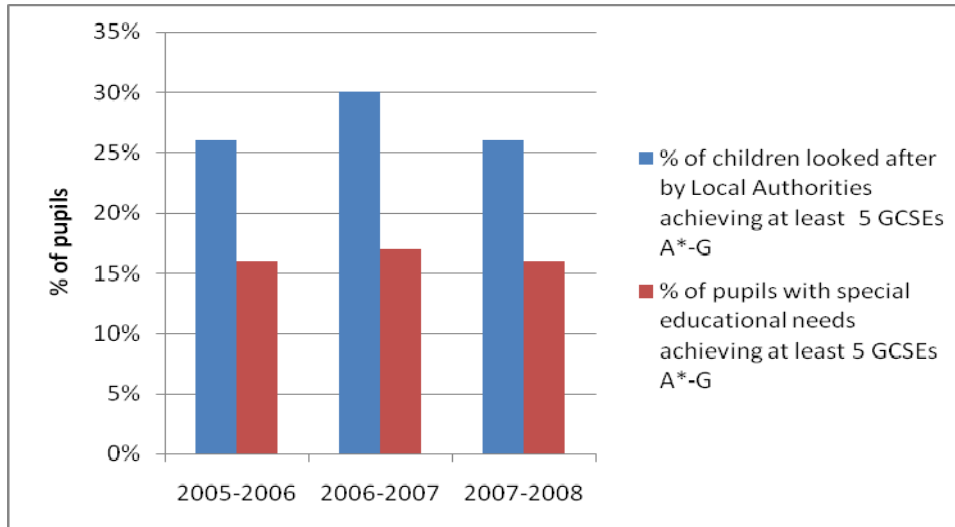
Sources: RAISE LAC database & Estyn

11.21. ***Trends in the attainment of other groups of young people:*** A comparison with trends in the attainment of two other groups of young people, those with special educational needs⁵⁸ (see Graph 11.6), and those eligible for FSMs (see Graph 11.7), indicates that the gaps have remained relatively constant. Although the performance of children looked after by Local Authorities in 2006-07 was stronger, in relative terms, than the other three groups of pupils and consequently the gap between them and these other groups closed somewhat, the weaker performance of children looked after by Local Authorities in the subsequent year, 2007-08, meant that the gaps were similar to those in 2005-06.⁵⁹ This means that gains by children looked after by Local Authorities over this period have been broadly matched by gains by other groups of pupils. This supports the conclusion that it is likely that without RAISE, the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities would have continued to increase.

⁵⁸ This is a very heterogeneous group, including pupils with a range of needs, but it is one of the few vulnerable groups for which aggregate data is available for.

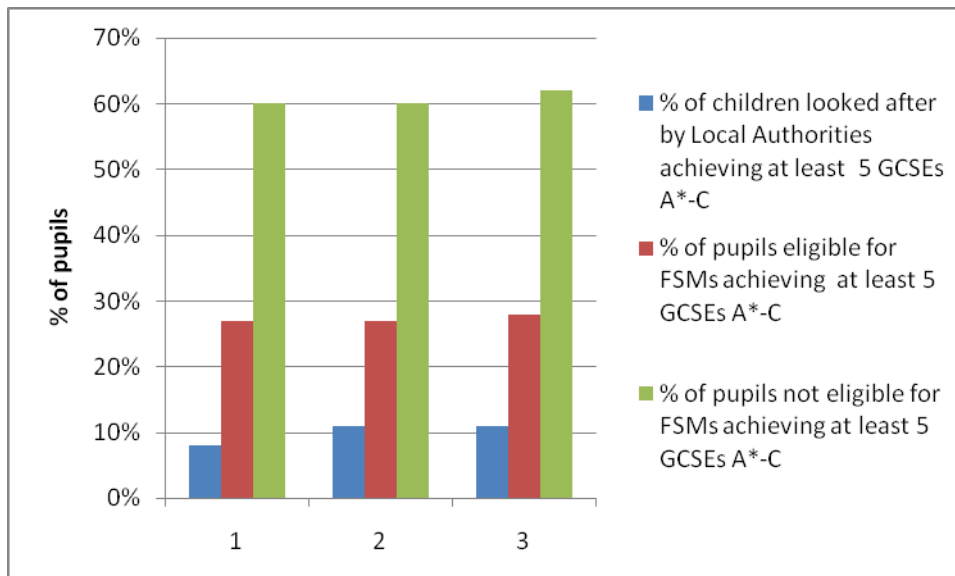
⁵⁹ The yearly fluctuations illustrate the impacts of factors such as differences in the capabilities and needs of each years' cohort upon attainment (see paragraph 11.8) and therefore, three year rolling averages, which help smooth out these fluctuation are the preferred measure, Unfortunately this type of historical data is not available for pupils with special educational needs.

Graph 11.6. The performance of children looked after by Local Authorities and children with special educational needs, 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008



Source: WAG, RAISE LAC database

Graph 11.7. The performance of children looked after by Local Authorities and pupils eligible and not eligible for FSMs, 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008



Source: WAG, RAISE LAC database

Data for Tables 11.5. and 11.6. The performance of selected comparison groups, 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008				
Tables		2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
11.6	% of children looked after by Local Authorities achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-G	26%	30%	26%
11.6	% of pupils with special educational needs achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-G	16%	17%	16%
11.7	% of children looked after by Local Authorities achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C	8%	11%	11%
11.7	% of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C	27%	27%	28%
11.7	% of pupils not eligible for FSMs achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C	60%	60%	62%

Source: Welsh Government, RAISE LAC database

Evidence from England

11.22. The evidence of a limited impact upon attainment is consistent with the evidence from evaluations of interventions in England, such as Quality Protects⁶⁰, the Taking Care of Education project⁶¹; school based initiatives such as the introduction of designated teachers⁶², the virtual school pilots⁶³ and Personal Education Plans (PEPs)⁶⁴, which have found that

⁶⁰ Quality protects was a five year programme, launched in 1998 which aimed to transform services and outcomes for England's most vulnerable children, including widening placement choice, enhancing support for care leavers and prioritising educational opportunities for looked after children (Berridge et al, 2008).

⁶¹ The Taking Care of Education project, established in 2000, aimed to improve educational outcomes for looked after children through a 'whole authority' approach, in order to enhance partnership working and direct support for looked after children (Kent, et al, 2006)

⁶² The role of Designated Teachers was established in 2000. They work with other agencies to co-ordinate support for looked after children, and address barriers to learning (Fletcher Campbell, et al, 2003)

⁶³ The virtual school head teacher acts as a Local Authority co-ordinator and champion to bring about improvements in the education of looked after children (Berridge, et al,2008).

⁶⁴ PEPs are part of the planning process for looked after children. They should be initiated by a social worker and completed with the designated teacher in school in a meeting that includes the child (Hayden, 2005)

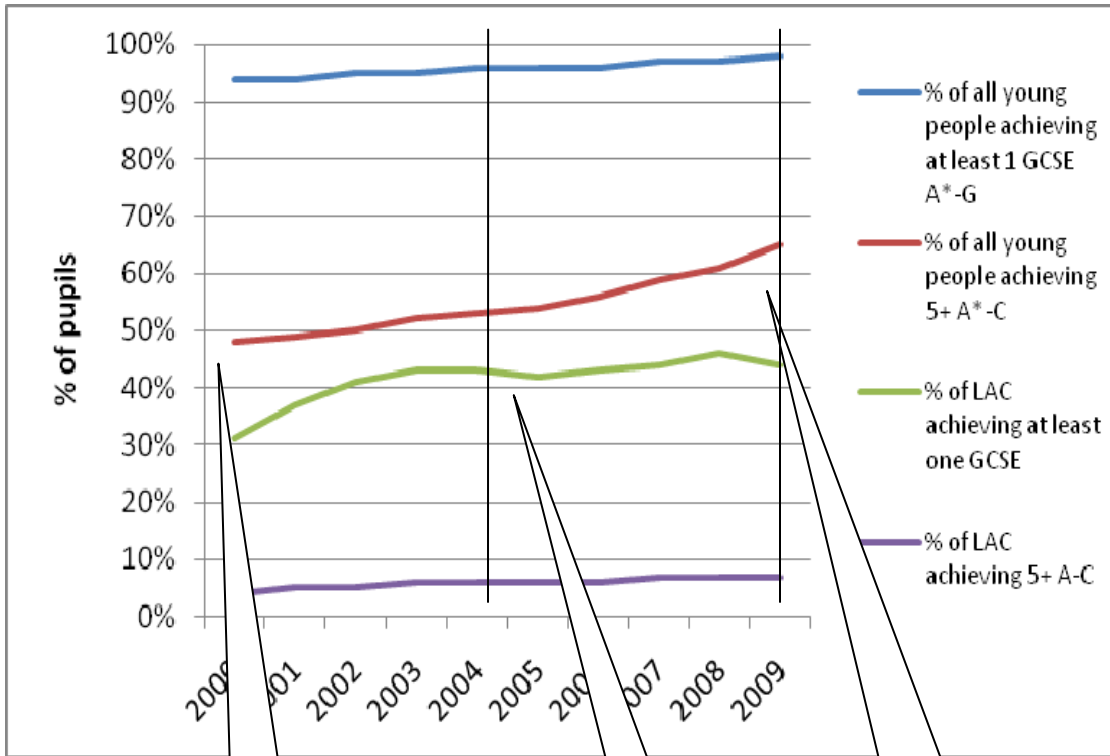
whilst they have enhanced the educational *experience* of children looked after by Local Authorities, reflected in, for example, more positive attitudes toward education and improvements in attendance, it has been much harder to improve their educational *attainment* (CFEO, 2009).

11.23. The limited impact, in terms of attainment of many of the recent initiatives in England is illustrated by Graph 11.8, which outlines the trends in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in England compared to national trends for all young people in England.⁶⁵ It shows:

- The slow, but steady increase in the proportion of all young people gaining at least one GCSE, albeit from a very high base, and the strong increase in the proportion gaining at least 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C;
- The similarly slow, but steady increase in the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A*C, albeit from a very low base;
- The sharp increase in the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities gaining at least one GCSE in the first part of the decade and the much slower progress thereafter; and
- The consequently increasingly wide gap between the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C compared to all young people.

⁶⁵ Comparisons are complicated by the different measures used. Attainment data on children looked after by Local Authorities is based upon the percentage achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ and at least 5 GCSEs (but not GNVQs) Whilst data on all pupils is based upon the percentage achieving at least one GCSEs or equivalent (A*-G) or five GCSEs (A*-G) or equivalent, meaning it is slightly wider measure (because it includes equivalent qualifications).

Graph 11.8. Trends in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in England achieving at least 1 and 5 GCSEs A*-C



Source: DCSF⁶⁶

Quality protects established in 1998, national data collection begins
5GCSE gap:

Every Child Matters established in 2004
5GCSE Gap:

2009
5GCSE Gap:
54%

⁶⁶ Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/SFR25-2009Version2.pdf>

Table 11.7. Trends in the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in England achieving at least 1 and 5 GCSEs A*-C

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
% of all young people achieving at least 1 GCSE A*-G	94%	94%	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%	97%	97%	98%
% of all young people achieving 5+ A*-C	48%	49%	50%	52%	53%	54%	56%	59%	61%	65%
% of LAC achieving at least one GCSE	31%	37%	41%	43%	43%	42%	43%	44%	46%	44%
% of LAC achieving 5+ A-C	4%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%
1 GCSE Gap	63%	57%	54%	52%	53%	54%	53%	53%	51%	54%
5 GCSE gap	44%	44%	45%	46%	47%	48%	50%	52%	54%	58%

Source: DCSF⁶⁷

Note on Graph 11.8: A direct comparison between the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and all young people in any one year is not possible because the data collection periods differ. As outlined in paragraph 11.5, data on the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities is based upon the percentage of children aged 16 or over who ceased to be looked after with GCSE or GNVQ qualifications, year ending 31 March. This means the data includes children looked after by Local Authorities in two academic years. In contrast, the data on the attainment for all children is based upon the percentage of children in year 11 achieving GCSE or GNVQ qualifications. It therefore covers a narrower age range and a single academic year. For the purposes of this graph we have matched the data on children looked after by Local Authorities aged 16 or over with GCSE or GNVQ qualifications, year ending 31 March, with the corresponding academic year, so, for example, the 2009 children looked after by Local Authorities data is matched with the 2008-2009 academic year data. The Graphs also show that overall, Wales is outperforming England in terms of the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities with at least one GCSE and with at least five GCSEs.

⁶⁷ Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2009 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/SFR25-2009Version2.pdf>

11.24. **Qualitative evidence:** Interviews with LACE Coordinators and reviews of their self-evaluations demonstrate that they believe RAISE is having a positive impact. LACE Coordinators were able to identify children looked after by Local Authorities who they believed had achieved more partly due to the support provided by RAISE, and often in part due to the efforts and determination of the young person themselves, an issue we discuss further below. However, based upon their attainment, there appear to be many other children looked after by Local Authorities who continued to struggle.

11.25. In the course of interviews, LACE Coordinators identified a range of different factors that they believed contributed to the poor educational attainment of many looked after children. The most common factors identified by Local Authority staff were, in ranking order:

- placement moves (identified by 11 Local Authorities);
- children looked after by Local Authorities having emotional needs and suffering from trauma (identified by 9 Local Authorities);
- other forms of disruption to the lives of looked after children, such as school moves, the disruption of being taken into care and being placed out of county (identified by 8 Local Authorities);
- gaps in education, due to a number of reasons including school changes and low attendance (identified by 7 Local Authorities);
- the high proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities with special educational needs or additional learning needs (identified by 6 Local Authorities); and
- Children looked after by Local Authorities who entered care during the later stages of their education, i.e. during Key Stage 3 or 4 (identified by 6 Local Authorities).

11.26. Others factors Local Authority staff identified during interviews included children looked after by Local Authorities experiencing social difficulties, behavioural difficulties, poor early experiences of education and the low expectations of some teachers and carers (Sims & Holtom, 2008).

11.27. In response, RAISE funding is used to complement and enrich other interventions which together:

- provide a range of support directly to children looked after by Local Authorities, such as academic, emotional, social and behavioural support;
- provide indirect support, such as that for schools and foster carers; and
- aim to enhance the consistency and quality of care and support, by, for example, enhancing partnership working between different agencies (ibid.).

11.28. RAISE Looked After Children Education (LACE) coordinators report that these interventions are making a difference, pointing in particular to improvements in the attitudes of children looked after by Local Authorities toward school and upon their social and emotional skills and dispositions. This illustrates the conclusion that it is generally easier to improve skills and change attitudes than it is to raise attainment.

11.29. However, whilst positive about the support offered, LACE Coordinators consistently reported a range of factors that hindered the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and helped explain the low attainment of many despite the support offered by RAISE. They included:

- The trauma of pre-care experiences;
- A reluctance or unwillingness to engage with support;
- Poor attendance and in some cases a refusal to attend school;

- Behavioural problems and in some cases exclusion from school;
- Problems with placements, including the impact of placement moves;
- Family problems, including experiences of bereavement, family break down and a return to their families from care;
- Problems with physical and mental health;
- Special educational needs, including disabilities;
- In a small number of cases, offending and anti-social behaviour, leading to the involvement of youth offending teams and in a small number of cases, detention in a secure unit; and
- In a small number of cases, pregnancy (ibid.).

11.30. Moreover, a number of LACE Coordinators identify other barriers including:

- The practical problems they had experienced ensuring that children looked after by Local Authorities who were educated out of county were adequately supported. In particular, they cited the distances workers had to cover and the consequent costs in terms of transport and time⁶⁸;
- A lack of support from schools, including problems placing children looked after by Local Authorities in schools and in accessing educational records; and
- The limited capacity of some specialist services (ibid.).

11.31. It is striking how similar the factors that RAISE Looked After Children's Education Coordinators identify as contributing to the lower levels of attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities (see paragraph 11.29) are to the factors they identify as explaining why RAISE funded support has not raised their attainment (paragraph 11.25). At one level this makes complete sense: the Coordinators consistently identify the same

⁶⁸ It is nevertheless a statutory requirement for social workers to visit children looked after by local Authorities wherever they are placed.

factors that cause and explain lower levels of attainment. However, at another level it suggests a serious weakness of RAISE. Although RAISE LACE Coordinators know and recognise the factors that contribute to lower levels of attainment, they cite the same factors as the reasons why children looked after by Local Authorities continue to under-achieve, despite the additional funding provided by RAISE. This suggests that RAISE funded interventions have been unable to address these factors which impact upon attainment.

11.32. A small number of children and young people looked after by Local Authorities who were engaging with RAISE funded support, were interviewed in the course of the evaluation. Their accounts are consistent with those of LACE Coordinators. Many highlighted the importance of the RAISE funded support that they had received, and the impact that this support had upon their educational experiences. As these interviewees reflect (all the names are changed to protect the anonymity of interviewees):

Kate: *[Without the project] I'd be really lazy. It's encouraging, they tell you, you can do it, everyone's telling me I can do it, I just needed someone there to tell me, to support me...[if I have a] free lesson, she'll sit there, give me help to make the best. She also brings in books, helps me. Rather than me sitting there thinking 'I can't do this'.*

Alison: *Sarah [their support worker] has been really good, comes in to help with my English, sent me information. In school I find it really helpful, as I got two pieces of coursework I got to finish...I enjoy it, I feel I can talk to her about anything...she's an angel, she's really, really good. If I don't understand something, I've got her number and I can phone up and ask.*

Carl: *Had loads of social workers coming round, I thought she's just another worker....[but she's] different to Social Workers...Social Workers*

are not that good, if I ask for something, [it] takes ages – Sarah [his support worker] does it straight away, like my application [to college], Sarah, she put it straight in, with a Social Worker, it'd take ages.

11.33. Their accounts illustrate the value these young people placed upon personal and learning support - one important element of RAISE funded provision, but by no means the only element. This finding is unexceptional – many vulnerable young people value the support and time that these types of worker can offer and that other professionals, such as social workers, may struggle to provide given the demands of their caseloads and the nature of their work.

11.34. **Summary of the evidence:** The time series data on the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and the evidence from comparison groups suggests that there has been only a limited impact upon attainment to date (at the time of writing, there are another two years of the RAISE looked after children programme left). This is consistent with the evidence from evaluations of comparable interventions in England. The qualitative evidence from LACE Coordinators and children looked after by Local Authorities themselves is more positive, but also highlights the range of factors that hinder attainment, suggesting impacts upon attainment of all children looked after by Local Authorities is likely to be limited.

11.35. In contrast, the evidence from LACE Coordinators and children looked after by Local Authorities on the impact upon the educational experiences of children looked after by Local Authorities and aspects of their achievement⁶⁹, such as pupils' basic skills and their social and emotional

⁶⁹ Achievement is a broader concept than attainment and includes “success in attaining agreed learning goals”; “progress in learning” and “the development of ... personal, social and learning skills “ (Estyn, n.d.).

skills and dispositions, is much stronger and is consistent with the evidence from comparable interventions in England.

The Impact of RAISE upon the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in further education, higher education and training

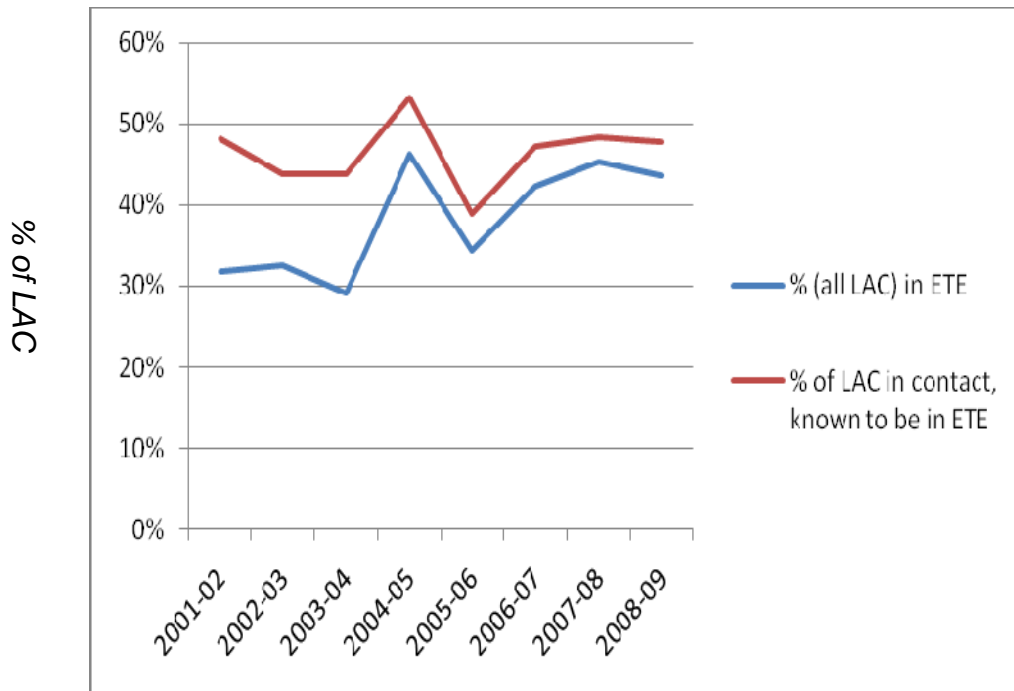
11.36. It would almost certainly be premature to assess the impact of RAISE upon the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities in further education, higher education and training, as the first cohort of children looked after by Local Authorities who benefitted from RAISE would be scheduled to attend higher education in September 2010 at the earliest. Moreover, there are no obvious data sets that could be used. Although some of the first and second year 11 RAISE cohorts (2006-2007 and 2007-2008) may have progressed to further education and completed courses in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, this would only provide limited evidence of trends. More fundamentally, the only nationally published data on post-16 outcomes for children looked after by Local Authorities is the OC3 return, data collected by the Data Unit Wales, which includes information on the activity of Care leavers on their 19th birthday, year ending 31 March. Some of the first year 11 RAISE cohort (2006-2007) will be included in the 2009 OC3 return, with the remainder included in the 2010 return.⁷⁰

11.37. Graph 11.8 illustrates the long term trends in the proportion of children looked after by Local Authorities in full or part time education, training or employment (ETE). The red line shows the percentage of children looked after by Local Authorities in touch with the Local Authority and known to be in education, training or employment and the blue line shows the percentage of all children looked after by Local Authorities (whether in touch or not) known to be in education, training or employment. It shows

⁷⁰ A request for this information has been included in the 2009-10 reporting framework.

that the overall trend is positive, but that there are significant year on year variations.

Graph 11.8. Trends in the portions of children looked after by Local Authorities in education, training or employment, 2001-2002 to 2008-2009



Source: Data Unit Wales

11.38. Although there is very little research on the experience of young people looked after by Local Authorities in further education (C4EO, 2009), evidence from other groups of young people suggests a positive relationship between educational attainment and progression into education, training and employment. That is to say, as educational attainment increases, increasing proportions of young people tend to progress into education, training and employment. (Kenway, et al, 2005). The limited research that there is suggests that this is likely to apply to children looked after by Local Authorities. Therefore, the increases in the educational attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities over the period of the RAISE LAC grants, are likely to contribute to increases in participation in education, training and employment. Further data will be required to determine whether the increases in attainment observed during the RAISE period have this effect.

11.39. The link between attainment and participation in education, training and employment is based upon a number of factors:

- positive educational outcomes enable access to education, training and employment;
- prior attainment is a key factor that influences subsequent attainment, therefore those who do well at 16, are also likely to succeed later in life; and
- positive educational outcomes are closely linked to factors such as placement stability and a positive, supportive care experience, which contribute to increased resilience and which help children looked after by Local Authorities make the transition into education, training and employment (Stein, 2006).

11.40. The principal research into the experience of young people looked after by Local Authorities who are in higher education is *By Degrees*, a longitudinal study of 129 care leavers in higher education funded by the Frank Buttle trust (Jackson, et al, 2003, 2005). This suggests that those in higher education tend to have relatively high levels of attainment (at or above the national average for all young people and therefore markedly above the average for children looked after by Local Authorities). The research also suggests they were highly motivated with positive attitudes toward school. Whilst many experienced problems and challenges in higher education, linked to both the academic and the social and emotional demands of higher education, the majority had either successfully completed their courses or were continuing their studies at the end of the research.

11.41. Overall, the available research suggests that the transition into further and higher education is often particularly difficult for care leavers and that

support is therefore crucial. However, much also depends upon the “resilience” of care leavers, manifested in, for example, their self-belief and self-motivation, and there is a limit to the extent to which even specialist support can compensate for a lack of these skills and dispositions (Jackson, et al, 2003, 2005; Stein, 2008). The impact of RAISE upon the attainment of young people looked after by Local Authorities who are in further education, higher education and training is therefore likely to depend upon a number of factors:

- The impact upon attainment, which as outlined previously, is likely to have been modest;
- The impact upon the social and emotional skills and dispositions of young people looked after by Local Authorities, such as self-motivation and self-efficacy, which as outlined previously is likely to have been positive; and
- The quality and type of the support provided by leaving care teams, which is not dependent upon RAISE funding (as outlined in paragraph 11.33 young people value some types of support more than others).

12. THE IMPACT OF RAISE FUNDING FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES UPON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 12.1. In order to assess the impact of RAISE funding upon Local Authorities, in 2007, we reviewed LACE Coordinators' annual reports in order to identify the impact they reported⁷¹ and in 2008 we systematically reviewed all 22 Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) to identify references to RAISE funded activity. This desk based review was complemented by interviews with LACE Coordinators in 2007 and 2008
- 12.2. We grouped the impacts identified by LACE Coordinators in their annual reports under the six elements of the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (WAG, 20098) and we summarise the results in table 12.1. It is important to note that because many of these impacts were not measured systematically, the table may provide a better indication of activity, rather than impact per se (Holtom, 2008).

⁷¹ In their reports they were asked to identify "what impact did the work have (both positive and negative) on institutions such as schools and the Local Authority?"

Table 12.1. Reported evidence of the contribution of RAISE Funding to establishing the six elements of the Welsh Government School Effectiveness Framework.

Element	Assessment of the impact of RAISE funded work with children looked after by Local Authorities on schools	Assessment of the impact of RAISE funded work with children looked after by Local Authorities on Local Authorities
Leadership	In two Local Authorities, RAISE funded work raised the profile of children looked after by Local Authorities in schools.	In three Local Authorities RAISE funding encouraged Local Authorities to reflect upon and change the way in which they work with children looked after by Local Authorities.
Working with others	In eight Local Authorities, RAISE funded work improved working relationships between schools and social services. In one county, RAISE funded work improved relationship between schools and foster carers.	In eight Local Authorities, RAISE funded work improved working relationships between schools and social services and in seven Local Authorities, it improved relationships between social services and foster carers. However, there is little evidence that RAISE has supported wider partnership working, that is to say, partnership working beyond schools and social services.
Networks of Professional	In eight Local Authorities, RAISE funded work improved understanding between schools and social	In eight Local Authorities, RAISE funded work improved understanding between schools and social

Practice	workers. In one county RAISE supported a conference to bring together senior management, teachers and Local Authority officers, although the impact of this is not known.	workers. RAISE has also provided opportunities for all 22 LACE Coordinators to share experiences and best practice.
Improvement & Accountability	In 10 Local Authorities, RAISE strengthened processes of assessment and planning for children looked after by Local Authorities. However, no evidence was reported of wider reviews within schools of their work with children looked after by Local Authorities.	In 10 Local Authorities, RAISE strengthened processes of assessment and planning for children looked after by Local Authorities. The monitoring requirements for the grant have also required LACE Coordinators to report more data than they would otherwise be required to do and there is some evidence of how this has been used to strengthen accountability
Intervention & Support	Schools in nine Local Authorities have welcomed the additional intervention and support for children that RAISE has offered. In one county, where RAISE has not directly funded intervention and support for children looked after by Local Authorities it has funded this indirectly, through the work of a part time LAC officer who has produced guidance and visited schools	In all but one of the 22 Local Authorities, RAISE has directly funded intervention and support for children looked after by Local Authorities. This includes, additional academic support for children looked after by Local Authorities outside of school (in 12 Local Authorities); enhancing the access of children looked after by Local Authorities to computers, by either providing laptops or access to computers (in 12 Local

		Authorities); additional pastoral support or personal development work with children looked after by Local Authorities (in 10 Local Authorities); the provision of has funded additional resources, such as revision packs (in nine Local Authorities).
Curriculum & teaching	There is no reported evidence that RAISE has improved either the curriculum or teaching of children looked after by Local Authorities within schools.	In seven Local Authorities, RAISE has helped provide a more accessible and relevant curriculum for those children looked after by Local Authorities struggling with the mainstream curriculum. In three Local Authorities, RAISE has improved access to extra curricula activities for children looked after by Local Authorities.

Source: Holtom, 2008

- 12.3. Our systematic review of Children and Young People's Plans identified some examples of interventions to raise the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities that were not funded by RAISE and that had not been previously identified. However, because in most cases, the plans focused upon outcomes, such as increasing attainment and aspirations, but did not include the operational detail of how those outcomes would be achieved, they provided little or no evidence of the impact of RAISE upon Local Authorities' work.⁷²
- 12.4. Overall, the available evidence suggests that the impact on Local Authorities of RAISE funding for children that are looked after has been important, but narrowly focused. In particular it has helped strengthen direct support for children and in some Local Authorities it has also helped strengthen partnership working. More broadly, the monitoring of the RAISE programme by the Welsh Government and the dialogue with Local Authorities initiated by the Welsh Government's Looked After Children's' Education Policy Officer, in conjunction with a recent Welsh Audit Office study into the education of children looked after by Local Authorities, has helped raise the profile of the attainment of looked after children within Local Authorities.

⁷² This is not a criticism of the plans *per se* –the focus upon outcome is important - it reflects their nature and their usefulness to this evaluation.

13. THE ROLE OF THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

13.1. Although presented as a single programme, the two strands of RAISE funding for schools and children looked after by Local Authorities have in effect operated as separate programmes. Each was developed independently, with different special advisers by different divisions of what was the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills⁷³ - with RAISE funding for schools developed within what was the Schools Improvement and Performance Division and RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities developed within the Support for Learners Division. Moreover, each has worked to different principles, embodied in different grant offer letters, and each has different management structures. As we outline in the following section, the RAISE Project leader and the Education Policy Officer for children looked after by Local Authorities, have worked closely together, but the focus has been more upon sharing information and raising awareness rather than integrating the two strands. Therefore in this section we discuss each separately.

The planning, development and communication of RAISE funding for schools

13.2. In 2006 the Welsh Government unexpectedly received additional “consequential funding” (see boxed text) of £16m in 2006-2007 and £28m in 2007-2008 following the announcement of additional funding for education in England. The Welsh Government had to swiftly agree firstly whether some or all of the funding would be allocated to education in Wales, and secondly, how it would be spent. It was agreed by the Welsh Government Cabinet that a proportion of the money would be allocated to help schools break the link between poverty and poor educational attainment.

⁷³ The Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills has now become The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Consequential Funding and the Barnett Formula

Under the “Barnett Formula”, a proportion of a change in the planned funding of a Westminster government department, such as (what was) the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)⁷⁴, is remitted to the devolved administrations, such as the Welsh Government. The exact proportion of the increase that is allocated to the devolved administrations depends upon “the comparability percentage”, a measure of the extent to which the expenditure by the Westminster department is equivalent to expenditure by the devolved administration (currently 100% for expenditure on children schools and families) and the “population percentage”, the proportion of the population of the devolved administration relative to the English population (in 2007, Wales’ population as a proportion of England’s population, was 5.84%). These are multiplied, so the increase in funding is multiplied by the comparability percentage and the population percentage. If for example the funding is £100mil, and the comparability percentage is 100%, the “consequential” funding for Wales will be $£100\text{mil} \times 100\% \times 5.84\% = £5.84\text{mil}$ (Webb, 2007)

- 13.3. While Cabinet discussed the use of the consequential funding, within the (then) Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, discussions continued about a successor to the grant known as the School Improvement Fund. This grant, totaling £3million per annum, had been allocated to Local Authorities to support schools, but some officers have suggested that the grant had not made major impact, in part because some Local Authorities had not targeted the money effectively.
- 13.4. The RAISE programme was formally announced in a Ministerial Statement on the 5th April 2006. In contrast to the School Improvement Fund, RAISE would involve substantially more money and given concerns over the administration of the School Improvement Grant by some Local Authorities, RAISE would direct

⁷⁴ The department has been superseded by the Department for Children Schools and Families.

money to schools, largely bypassing Local Authorities. It was also announced that the funding would continue in 2007-2008.

13.5. The haste to develop RAISE in the period from the announcement by HM Treasury on the 22nd March to the Cabinet Written statement by Jane Davidson on the 5th April 2006, meant that consultation with the WLGA and ADEW on the development of a new programme, was very limited. As a consequence, the WLGA and ADEW were unable to inform the programme until proposals for the programme were already well developed. A key point of contention was the Welsh Government's decision to devolve the money directly to schools, rather than Local Authorities, as The School Improvement Grant had done. As a number of interviewees put it, if the Welsh Government had concerns about the way in which the School Improvement Fund grant was being used, they should have first tried working with Local Authorities to improve its use, before deciding to bypass the Local Authorities.

13.6. The Welsh Government's initial proposals for RAISE also included provision for the secondment of four school improvement officers, seconded to the Welsh Government, who would support the project. As outlined in the job description, their "key tasks" were to be:

- To promote, develop and share best practice in tackling the link between deprivation and low pupil attainment;
- To be the regional contact point for issues relating to the RAISE grant;
- To explore with schools and LEAs⁷⁵ appropriate base-lines and performance indicators against which to evaluate initiatives supported by the RAISE grant;
- To familiarise themselves with, and promote, national and local priorities;
- To work with LEA and consortia advisory and support services, within their region, to facilitate joint-working on initiatives within and across LEA boundaries;
- To promote the principle of sustainability in RAISE initiatives;

⁷⁵ The term "Local Education Authority" has now been replaced with "Local Authority"

- To investigate, develop and facilitate opportunities for multi-agency working in support of the RAISE initiative;
- To co-ordinate, in collaboration and consultation with LEAs and consortia, and contribute to professional development events relating to the RAISE initiative;
- To monitor and evaluate initiatives supported by the RAISE grant;
- To make their particular specialist expertise available nationally, as directed by the project leader;
- To identify and promote ways in which the benefits of the RAISE initiative can be disseminated more widely for the benefit of learners throughout Wales;
- To report, each term, to the project leader on progress with the RAISE initiative within their region;
- To produce reports, as required, for the project steering group; [and]
- To provide evidence for external evaluators of the project as a whole.”

13.7. This proposal emerged as another point of contention. Many Local Authorities felt they had an established expertise with, and responsibility for, local schools that was being sidelined by the establishment of the new role. They were also concerned about the lack of funding for them to fulfil Welsh Government requirements for administering and evaluating the RAISE grant. In response to the concerns raised by the WLGA and ADEW on behalf of Local Authorities, the Welsh Government responded by reallocating the funding provisionally assigned to School Improvement Officers to four regional consortia.

13.8. Each Consortia received £50,000 “to enable them to provide support to schools and Local Authorities in their RAISE activities during academic year 2006-2007”⁷⁶ (with the expectation that this would be continued for 2007-2008) and each was required to identify a “lead contact”, who would become a Regional Coordinator, who would:

⁷⁶ Letter from Paul Morgan, RAISE Project Leader, ‘Funding for Local Authorities to provide consortia-wide support to schools participating in the RAISE programme’, dated 14th December 2006

- “attend national co-ordination meetings (the pattern to be agreed between the RAISE project leader and the leads from each region);
- contribute to national dissemination events or arrange, as appropriate, for other colleagues to do so;
- facilitate and promote links between schools within the local consortia and RAISE schools elsewhere so as to share and develop best practice and, as appropriate, to organise professional development events;
- liaise with appointed external agencies to identify evidence to support the national evaluation of the RAISE programme;
- produce regular evaluative reports on the progress with RAISE activities within the region; and
- co-ordinate the monitoring of the quality of individual schools’ RAISE initiatives within the region.”⁷⁷

13.9. The changes in the structure through which the small RAISE project team within the Welsh Government would engage with schools and Local Authorities, meant that rather than a team of School Improvement Officers working for them, RAISE would be supported by a team of Regional Coordinators, working for each consortia of Local Authorities.

13.10. In order to access RAISE funding, eligible schools were “required to agree their proposed use of grant with their Local Authority” and Local Authorities were required to “ensure that use of the funding draws on established good practice in school improvement, is consistent with individual school improvement plans and, in the case of secondary schools, fits with the plans of the local 14-19 partnership.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ ‘RAISE Regional Co-ordinators’, Letter from Paul Morgan, RAISE Project Leader dated 27th November 2006.

⁷⁸ Letter dated 11th May 2006, to Directors of Education in Wales, *RAISE – Raising Attainment & Individual Standards in Education in Wales*, from Elizabeth Taylor, former director of the Children and Schools Group in the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

13.11. In practice though, the process of approval by Local Authorities did not work as effectively as had been hoped. A number of interviewees suggested that the rancour created by the initial proposals for RAISE, most notably the decisions to devolve money directly to schools and to employ School Improvement Officers (discussed above) contributed to the reluctance of some Local Authorities to engage fully with the programme in the crucial early stages, when schools developed their proposals. As a consequence, the level of support provided to schools differed considerably in different areas. Some Local Authorities provided good support, but others appear to have uncritically signed off weak proposals from schools and even in areas where Local Authorities were fully engaged, they had relatively little time to work with schools in developing their proposals for the first year of RAISE funding.

13.12. Once submitted, the RAISE programme team within the Welsh Government reviewed all the 648 school proposals themselves. They approved roughly 15% without condition, and a further 70% subject to revisions to be agreed with a school's Local Authorities ("acceptable, but requiring some amendment"), whilst rejecting the remaining 15% as "unsatisfactory", requiring those schools to revise and resubmit their proposals. However, with neither RAISE School Improvement Officers or Regional Coordinators in post, the small Welsh Government team lacked the capacity to provide either the detailed guidance or support that might have enabled them to work more closely with schools and Local Authorities to strengthen schools' proposals. Whilst there were some very strong and innovative proposals, many schools opted for tried and tested approaches. For example, in their first review of RAISE, Estyn concluded that most primary schools used the list of eligible activities "to confirm the suitability of their existing, established ideas or programmes" and secondary schools used the list to "confirm projects they had already selected" (p. 5, p.7. Estyn, 2005; see also, Holtom, 2008).

- 13.13. Local Authorities worked closely with those schools whose proposals were judged to either be unsatisfactory or acceptable but requiring some amendment, and the revised proposals were judged to be stronger by Estyn (2007) and those we interviewed in the course of the evaluation. Nevertheless, the bulk of school proposals remained relatively narrow and unoriginal.
- 13.14. Several interviewees concluded that the lack of engagement between some Local Authorities and some schools when the initial proposals were developed was a missed opportunity that initially cast a long shadow over RAISE. We fully share that assessment. The lack of support from some Local Authorities, an issue we explore further in section 14, contributed to the weaknesses of schools' proposals.
- 13.15. The Welsh Government and the RAISE programme leader, in particular, have worked hard to improve relationships between the Welsh Government, and schools and Local Authorities after what is widely acknowledged to have been “a difficult start”, it is judged to have “improved considerably” (p. 23, Estyn, 2010). The project leader’s efforts have included an intensive programme of outreach and engagement with the Regional Coordinators, Local Authorities and schools through regular meetings and dialogue and he is regarded as “accessible, receptive to comments and suggestions, and willing to provide direct help when needed” (ibid). The consultation over the development of the RAISE strategy for 2009-2010 has further helped consolidate the relationship between Local Authorities and the Welsh Government.
- 13.16. The Welsh Government has organised a series of national conferences which “are seen to be particularly valuable in hearing about developments in relation to disadvantaged pupils, sharing good practice and in establishing informal networks” (ibid). However, other tools to encourage and enable the sharing of good practice, most notably the RAISE website⁷⁹, have taken time to establish,

⁷⁹ <http://www.raise-wales.org.uk/> & <http://www.lac-education-wales.org.uk/>

and made little progress until a consultant was commissioned to develop it, limiting their impact.

13.17. The development of the RAISE strategy for the fourth year of the funding for schools (2009-2010), was led by the RAISE programme leader and was discussed with other stakeholders including RAISE Regional Coordinators and the external evaluators (including the authors of this report). One of the outcomes of this process was the identification of eight key themes:

- Multi-agency approaches to support the progress of disadvantaged learners;
- Greater involvement of the wider community in the life and work of schools;
- Increased efforts to engage parents in the learning of their children;
- The adoption of nurture approaches to supplement the impact of the home on pupils' learning;
- Broader approaches to language development that are set in the context of a holistic skills package, as a means of improving learning;
- Making the secondary school curriculum more relevant and vocational;
- Strategies for improving learners' motivation, behaviour, attendance, self esteem; and
- Improved transition processes for disadvantaged learners moving between the stages of education.

13.18. The eight themes were intended to provide a response to the recommendations made by the Child Poverty Expert Group, Professor David Egan's Viewpoint article for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People's Committee, for a greater emphasis upon more holistic strategies (see boxed text), characterised by the RAISE project leader as "community focused schooling". The themes were intended to highlight areas that schools needed to consider as part of their community focus and schools were encouraged to address multiple themes.

Selected recommendations on the importance of community focused schooling

Recommendations from the Child Poverty Expert Group

“There is evidence to confirm that in supporting children’s educational experience the home/school relationship is important but the critical driver is the home learning environment including parental experience and confidence in supporting learning in the home. The Welsh Assembly Government should explore what further action could be taken to support these relationships, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged families. This should include stronger support for parenting programmes, for family and community learning in a venue appropriate for the participants.”

“The Welsh Assembly Government should introduce greater flexibility into the school system in Wales so that the needs of pupils are placed at the centre. This should entail greater joint working and co-operation between secondary and primary schools and other education and community organisations. Funding streams should be created to support this. “

“Schools have a major part to play in overcoming the relationship between child poverty and low educational attainment but they can not do it alone. Multiple aspects of disadvantaged children’s well-being must be addressed. It is only through the joining up of policies that real success in overcoming the association between poverty and low educational attainment can be achieved and sustained.”

“The Welsh Assembly Government should seek to significantly increase its investment in the Community Focused Schools programme in recognition of its potential role in tackling child poverty. This additional funding should be focused upon our most disadvantaged areas, with the intention of placing all secondary

schools at the heart of their communities in providing 24/7 opportunities for community and family learning and access to a range of integrated services. The opportunities provided through Convergence and Competitiveness Programmes should be maximised in this respect.”

**Recommendations from The Children and Young People’s Committee:
Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education?**

“The Welsh Assembly Government enable the establishment of more appropriately funded, well planned and community focused schools, starting with areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.”

**Recommendations from Combating child poverty in Wales: are
effective education strategies in place?**

“Much greater integration of current education policies that impact upon the effects of child poverty. This should be based upon research and evaluation of the discrete effect they may be having individually and collectively. The role of the learner voice should have greater significance within this.”

“Action in the major areas identified by the JRF studies, particularly the development of the Community School programme within disadvantaged areas, as a way of offering a greater range of education opportunities and support to young people experiencing poverty.”

Sources: CPEG, 2008; NafW, 2008; Egan, 2007

13.19. The evaluation was asked to consider if, taken together, they “presented an appropriate agenda for development” (pers. Comm., Paul Morgan). In order to do this each theme first was evaluated individually, and then collectively and finally

in the context of other Welsh Government Policies and initiatives, most notably the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales.

13.20. **Individual assessment:** In order to assess the appropriateness of each of the eight themes, three criteria were selected:

- Whether there was evidence of a *prima facie* need to encourage, support and enable schools to develop and or sustain work in this area because it had not been adequately addressed by the first three years of RAISE funding. For example, if RAISE funded work to address an issue (or theme) such as multi agency working had been established and embedded in the work of schools in the first three years, and could be expected to continue after RAISE funding ended, there would be no need to support further work in this area. We discuss the expected legacy of RAISE funded work in section 10 and in this section we focus upon the evidence of RAISE funded activity.⁸⁰
- Whether there was evidence from research and evaluation that would support the theme; and
- Whether there was evidence from the evaluation of the first three years of RAISE that supported this theme.

A fourth criteria, consistency with the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (WAG, 2008b), was considered, but rejected, because the year four themes were intended to be consistent with the SEF.

13.21. The results of this analysis are summarised in table 13.1 and show that the themes were appropriate, although the evidence for the need for some of the themes was stronger than others.

⁸⁰ This was based upon an analysis of schools proposals for the use of RAISE funding in year 1. The measure is imperfect, because it does not capture changes in the proportions of schools undertaking different types of work over the lifetime of RAISE, but provides the best available data there is.

Table 13.1. Evaluation of year 4 themes			
Year 4 theme	Was there a <i>prima facie</i> need to strengthen work in this area?	Is there research evidence to support this theme?	Is there evidence from the evaluation of the first three years of RAISE to support this theme?
Multi-agency approaches to support the progress of disadvantaged learners	Yes: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested that, initially, very few schools planned to focus upon multi-agency approaches (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix). Therefore, there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.	Yes and no: Research suggests that there is no single factor associated with socioeconomic disadvantage that contributes to low levels of attainment. Research also suggests that holistic strategies that apply systems thinking are more effective (see paragraphs 8.9 to 8.12). However, there is little clear evidence available on the impact of multi-agency approaches (Holtom & Sims, 2009).	Yes: multi-agency approaches were identified as a characteristic of some of the schools that had made the most effective use of RAISE funding (see paragraphs 8.6). Moreover, the failure of schools to engage other partners was identified as a weakness of much RAISE funded work (see paragraphs 9.17, 17.22) and the need to work with others in a coordinated way is a key conclusion of this evaluation (see paragraph 17.6-17.7)

<p>Greater involvement of the wider community in the life and work of schools</p>	<p>Yes: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested that very few schools focused upon community engagement, as distinct from engaging parents, which we discuss below. For example, less than 1% of expenditure in the first year of RAISE related to community activities (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix). Therefore there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.</p>	<p>Yes: The community focus of schools has been identified as a key characteristic of schools that have made progress in narrowing the gap (see paragraph 3.12).</p>	<p>Yes: Community involvement was identified by the evaluation as a characteristic of many of the schools that had made the most effective use of RAISE funding (see paragraph 8.6.). In part, this may be because schools which understand their community are better placed to understand the needs of their pupils (see boxed text, page 72).</p>
<p>Increased efforts to engage parents in the learning of their children;</p>	<p>Yes: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested that initially, around a quarter of primary schools, 15% of secondary schools and just under 40% of special schools focused upon strengthening home school links (Holtom,</p>	<p>Yes: Research suggests that the "home learning environment" is one of, if not the, most important influence upon children's educational attainment (see paragraph 3.7). There is also evidence that interventions to engage parents in their</p>	<p>Yes: Engaging parents in their children's learning is a good example of 'systems thinking', that helps ensure that, for example, work in school is supported by parents (see paragraph 8.9). The evaluation found examples of good practice</p>

	2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix). Therefore there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.	children's learning can raise attainment (see boxed text, p. 69).	but also noted that many of schools had found it difficult to engage parents and carers, indicating a need to develop work in this area (see paragraph 9.3.).
The adoption of nurture approaches to supplement the impact of the home on pupils' learning;	Yes: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested that, initially, relatively few schools made explicit reference to nurture groups (around 7% of primary and special schools and 13% of secondary schools). Although larger numbers aimed to focus upon social and emotional skills, with around a quarter of primary and secondary and around half of special schools identifying it as an expected outcome of their work (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the	Yes: Research suggests poor social and emotional skills can contribute to lower levels of attainment (see paragraph 3.10). There is also evidence that some nurture programmes can be effective (see boxed text, p. 69).	Yes: Schools using nurturing approaches reported positive impacts.

	appendix). Therefore there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.		
Broader approaches to language development that are set in the context of a holistic skills package, as a means of improving learning;	Maybe: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested over 90% of primary schools, 97% of secondary schools and just under half of special schools planned to develop activities to enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix). However, this data cannot tell how broad such approaches were and there would only be a <i>prima facie</i> need to strengthen work in this area in year 4, if schools had taken too narrow an approach to this type of activity and/or it had	Yes: Poor basic skills are associated with lower levels of attainment (see paragraph 3.6) and there is evidence that interventions to improve basic skills can be effective (see boxed text, p. 69). Moreover, there is evidence that when these interventions are integrated into more holistic strategies, they are even more effective (see paragraph 8.9).	Yes: the evaluation found that the failure to integrate interventions, such as literacy support, into more holistic programmes was a serious weakness of many schools' work (see paragraphs 8.6- 8.11, 9.17).

	not been integrated into more holistic programmes. ⁸¹		
Making the secondary school curriculum more relevant and vocational;	Maybe: A review of schools' first year proposals suggested 80% of secondary schools and special schools planned to develop activities to enhance the curriculum (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix). Therefore, there was some scope for expanding work in this area.	Maybe: The curriculum did not emerge as a key "influence" of achievement in the literature reviewed for this study (see Duckworth, et al, 2009, summarised in paragraph 3.8). Nevertheless, it is possible that even if the curriculum is not a major factor in relation to attainment, it still influences other important aspects of education in its broadest sense. ⁸² For example, there is research that suggests it is a factor that influences educational disengagement (see, for example the literature	Yes: secondary schools generally reported positive impacts following changes to their curriculum.

⁸¹ The evaluation as whole, which was able to draw upon others sources of evidence, and whose findings are summarised in the third column, found that many schools took a narrow approach.

⁸² The apparent contradiction may be because attainment depends more upon a pupil's capability and the quality of education, than upon a pupils' interest in a particular subject.

		reviewed by Lloyd-Jones, et al, 2010).	
Strategies for improving learners' motivation, behaviour, attendance, self esteem;	Yes: A review of schools first year proposals suggested that initially, around 17% of primary schools, 27% of secondary schools and 23% of special schools identified increases in well-being and or self-esteem ⁸³ as expected outcomes of their work; and 20% of primary schools, 55% of secondary schools and 20% of special schools, identified improved behaviour as an expected outcome of their work (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix).	Yes and no: Research suggests that motivation, behaviour and attendance are all associated with attainment (see paragraph 3.6.). There is also evidence that interventions to improve attendance and behaviour can be effective (see boxed text, p. 69). However, the evidence of the efficacy of interventions to raise self-esteem, one aspect of this theme, as a means of raising attainment is contested and as one meta review (a review of other research reviews)	Yes: schools generally reported positively on the impact of strategies to improve learners' motivation, behaviour, attendance and self esteem. In some cases, schools reported that improvements in motivation and/or behaviour also benefited non RAISE pupils.

⁸³ "Self-esteem" and "Well-being" are contested, concepts, but are usually considered distinct, albeit related. For example "self esteem" relates to self-worth or the sum of judgments about one's value, worthiness, and competence (Emler, 2001), whilst well-being encompass both subjective dimensions, such feelings of happiness, which may rest in part upon feelings of self-esteem, but which also depend upon other factors, and objective dimensions, such as the conditions, such as good health, that enable people to feel happy (OECD, 2009). However, because some schools appeared to use the two concepts interchangeably, they were grouped together for the purpose of analysis.

	Therefore, there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.	concluded, the case for a causal link between low self-esteem and educational under-attainment was “not proven” ⁸⁴ (Emler, 2001).	
Improved transition processes for disadvantaged learners moving between the stages of education.	Yes: A review of schools first year proposals suggested that initially, around 4% of primary schools, 24% of secondary schools and 17% of special schools identified improving transition from primary to secondary schools as a focus of their work. Only eight school proposals explicitly referred to strengthening transitions between other key stages (Holtom, 2008; see also tables 20.1 and 20.2 in the appendix).	Yes: Transition <i>per se</i> did not emerge as a key “influence” of achievement in the literature reviewed for this study. However, pupils’ basic and social and emotional skills, which influence their capacity to cope with the challenges of transition, were highlighted (see Duckworth, et al, 2009, summarised in paragraph 3.8).	Yes: failures to plan for the transition RAISE pupils would make from primary to secondary school was identified as serious weakness (see paragraph 17.23).

⁸⁴ They note that “Over many years of research, a consistent pattern is apparent. Self-esteem and educational attainment are related. But they are not strongly related. The strength of the association varies with age; with the educational outcome considered; with the sex, ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the individuals concerned; and with the measures of self-esteem used.” Moreover, longitudinal studies suggest the association is because attainment contributes to increases in self-esteem, rather than self-esteem contributing to higher levels of attainment (p. 27, Emler, 2001).

	Therefore, there was considerable scope to develop work in this area.		
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13.22. **Collective assessment:** taken together the eight themes cover most of the aspects of ‘community focused schooling’ recommended by the Child Poverty Expert Group, the Children and Young People’s Committee and Professor David Egan’s Viewport article, which could be taken forward by schools⁸⁵. However, there are omissions including the lack of reference to:

- The establishment of “school liaison officer for young carers, responsible for proactively identifying and engaging with young carers and support workers, and liaising internally with other teaching staff” (NAfW, 2008);
- Action to tackle the costs of education, such as the costs of school uniforms and extracurricular activities (ibid.);
- support and training for school governors on the issue of child poverty (ibid.);
- ensuring the adequate provision of “pastoral care offering sensitivity to the needs of pupils in poverty, or who are experiencing other barriers to learning” and where needed, support (ibid);
- the need to “recruit the highest quality staff” and to “support and challenge teachers to develop their professional knowledge and pedagogy” (CPEG, 2007) ;
- and
- the role and importance of the “learners voice” (Egan, 2007).

13.23. It is perhaps inevitable that there will be omissions, because of the range of factors linking social-economic disadvantage and poor educational achievement and the range of possible policy responses. Therefore, a similar comparison with, for example, the recommendations from the Narrowing the Gap Studies (see boxed text, pages 24-25 for details) (WAG & WLGA, 2002, 2005), would illustrate both areas of commonality with the RAISE year 4 themes, such as the

⁸⁵ In each of the three reports, the recommendations were addressed to the Welsh Assembly Government, but include things that schools could take forward. For example a recommendation that “The Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance to schools on training and establishing a member of staff as a school liaison officer for young carers, responsible for proactively identifying and engaging with young carers and support workers, and liaising internally with other teaching staff”, could be addressed by a school, by appointing a school liaison officer for young carers, whether guidance was in place or not.

focus upon literacy, behaviour, attendance and transition, but also differences, such as the emphasis upon the importance of “key personnel in a position to drive school improvement”, the “monitoring of teaching and learning” and the use of “analysis/use of assessment data in the Narrowing the Gap Studies (p. 35. WAG & WLGA, 2002).

- 13.24. Given the perhaps inevitable omissions, rather than focusing upon the detail - whether an individual recommendation, such as establishing school liaison officers for young carers, is covered - it is more important to consider whether the issues a recommendation addresses – such as the issues school liaison officer for young carers might be expected to address - are covered by one or more of the eight themes. However, even if this sort of broader assessment is taken, a comparison of the eight themes with the recommendations from the Child Poverty Expert Group, the Children and Young People’s Committee and Professor David Egan’s Viewport article, suggest the themes do not adequately address some important issues. In particular, there is only limited reference to enhancing pedagogy and school leadership (including the role of school governors) in the themes; both of which are highlighted by the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (SEF, 2008c) and by research as important determinants of pupil performance (Day, et al, 2009; McKinsey, 2007; WAG & WLGA, 2002).
- 13.25. **Contextual assessment:** the eight themes should not be considered in isolation; they should be considered within the context of the other policies and initiatives, most notably the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales, which the themes are intended to complement. As noted, the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales covers a broader set of issues than the eight themes, including for example the role of leadership and pedagogy. Within this broader context, the eight RAISE themes provide a useful starting point to help schools identify possible areas of action, which as outlined in table 13.1. are supported by evidence. Critically, it is only by situating these eight themes within this

broader context, that it is possible to apply systems thinking and develop a holistic strategic to meeting the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people. For example, successfully developing multi-agency approaches to meeting needs (one of the RAISE year 4 themes) may depend upon changes in the leadership practice of schools and their partners and the development of new networks of professional practice (which are both key elements of the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales). Similarly, approaches to language development and changes to the curriculum, are likely to require leadership to drive through changes and changes in pedagogy.

The planning, development and communication of RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities

13.26. In contrast to RAISE funding for schools, RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities went directly to Local Authorities and was explicitly focused upon raising attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Local Authorities welcomed the additional funding and did not feel sidelined. Nevertheless, the decision to focus the funding upon raising attainment at Key Stage 4 (unlike RAISE funding for schools⁸⁶) was unpopular amongst some Local Authorities, who feared that this might mean that interventions came too late for some children looked after by Local Authorities. This probably reflected a political aspiration, to raise attainment at Key Stage 4, and impact upon the 'headline' Graphs. The evidence to support this narrow focus was at best mixed and the subsequent decision in 2008 to extend the grant's scope was taken as a direct result of self evaluations and a move towards a more pro-activate (rather than reactive) approach to raising the attainment of young people in care in Key Stage 4. It enabled Local Authorities to provide intervention at an earlier age and was welcomed by Local Authorities.

13.27. The appointment of an Education Policy Officer for children looked after by Local Authorities in 2007 enhanced the capacity of the Support for Learners Division to engage with Local Authorities. Regular meetings bringing together Local

⁸⁶ Schools were actively discouraged from focusing too much upon the end of each key stage.

Authority RAISE Looked After Children’s Education Coordinators have been held to discuss developments. This has improved dialogue, but the monitoring requirements placed upon Local Authorities have proved an ongoing source of tension. These meetings are complemented by bilateral discussions with individual Local Authorities, which has enabled more direct support and where appropriate challenge, to take place. In addition, the Education for Looked After Children’s stakeholder group, has helped provide a link to the voluntary and academic sectors.

The alignment of both RAISE programmes with Welsh Government objectives

13.28. RAISE’s objective of narrowing the educational attainment gap between pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and those from more advantaged backgrounds is clearly aligned with Welsh Government objectives outlined in the *Learning Country: Vision into Action* (Wag, n.d.). RAISE is explicitly identified as contributing to the objectives:

- “Promote inclusion in education and learning” (p. 6, WAG, n.d);
- “Tackle poverty of educational opportunity and raise standards in schools (p.10, *ibid*); and
- with regards RAISE funding for Children looked after by Local Authorities, the objective “Improve services and protection for children and young people” (p. 29, *ibid.*).

Moreover, the importance of narrowing the gap as a Welsh Government objective has grown since RAISE was launched in 2006, and it is a key goal of the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (WAG, 2008b) and is a key objective of the draft child poverty strategy which is currently out for consultation.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/poverty/?lang=en>

13.29. In contrast, at a strategic and operational level, RAISE as a programme of activity (as distinct from a set of objectives), has been far less well aligned with Welsh Government policies and initiatives intended to support these strategic objectives. In the rush to develop the programme, there was relatively little dialogue across the then Department For Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, about the links between RAISE and other key initiative such as Learning Pathways 14-19 and the Foundation Phase. Equally, those involved in RAISE's development were certainly aware of these programmes and the menu of eligible activities for schools encouraged schools to make links with these policy areas, although this was not required. Some schools have linked their work to these initiatives and RAISE is judged to have, for example, helped move elements of Learning Pathways 14-19, such as Learning Coaches, forward more swiftly than would otherwise have been possible. Nevertheless, this happened in a piecemeal way and was dependent upon the initiative of individual schools. More broadly, links to other key policies such as the Basic Skills Strategy, the Child Poverty Strategy and the Communities First initiative were initially not made. In effect, there was limited 'systems thinking' (see section 7) and opportunities to generate synergies between RAISE and other strategies and avoid unnecessary duplication and potential tensions between different strategies were missed. The efforts of the RAISE programme leader to address this weakness were widely praised though.

14. THE ROLE OF REGIONAL CONSORTIA AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

14.1. As outlined in the preceding section, plans for a RAISE school improvement team were abandoned in favour of a regional strategy, which enhanced the role Local Authorities were expected to play. In this section we discuss Local Authorities' role supporting schools and the development of regional approaches, and in particular, the role played by RAISE Regional Coordinators.

Local Authorities role in the development of RAISE

14.2. Once RAISE was launched, Local Authorities first major role was to advise, support and where appropriate challenge schools' developing their proposals for the first year of RAISE funding. Although some Local Authorities were able to provide effective support, in the initially rancorous atmosphere, not all Local Authorities fully engaged in this task. Some argued that because the grant was allocated by the Welsh Government directly to schools they lacked the resources and capacity to provide the support that schools needed. On the other hand, the Welsh Government argued that RAISE was simply another grant that should be addressed under Local Authorities' general duty to support and challenge schools. Crucially though, irrespective of the cause, in many areas, Local Authorities potential to act as a 'critical friend', advising, bringing new ideas, playing devil's advocate, testing out school's proposals and if necessary, challenging them, was not realised. This is likely to have seriously weakened RAISE funded work in schools.

14.3. Estyn found that Local Authorities support remained patchy:

Just over half the schools receive support and guidance of good quality from Local Authorities. There are shortcomings in the support offered by Local Authorities on the remaining RAISE schools, including about one in ten schools where the support and guidance are inadequate. There is consistently

good support and guidance in only Wrexham and Flintshire out of the eight Local Authorities visited as part of the survey. (pp. 17-18, Estyn, 2010)

Local Authority Leadership

- 14.4. Once the initial dispute about the proposed RAISE school improvement professionals and the funding for Local Authorities had been settled, some Local Authorities took a proactive role in relation to RAISE, leading and clearly defining the role of the RAISE Regional Coordinators, whose role we discuss below, and of Local Authority advisers. In the North and swamwac⁸⁸ regions, a strong Local Authority network was established, each led by an influential chair and Regional Coordinators were given a strong and clear remit by the consortium, and Local Authority advisers and Regional Coordinators have worked closely together, informing each others' work. In both swamwac and North Wales, the role of strong leadership by a senior Local Authority officer was crucial. In contrast, in Central South, although the Local Authorities have been less pro-active, ESIS⁸⁹ provided a strong pre-existing cross county structure⁹⁰ and the Regional Coordinator has built upon this to help co-ordinate work in the region, to inform Local Authority advisers of progress and developments and develop RAISE as a programme. In South East Wales, the Network was initially much weaker and, there was no strong leadership from a Local Authority. Regional Co-coordinators struggled to engage Local Authorities, and, initially, most of their work was with schools rather than with LEA advisers.
- 14.5. Although initially RAISE was seen as a centrally led initiative, which Local Authorities responded to, in three regions, the North, Central South and swamwac, there have been notable efforts to develop RAISE as a programme. However, it is only in the North Wales and swamwac consortiums that RAISE has provided the impetus to develop a strategic response to socioeconomic disadvantage that went beyond RAISE. For example, in Wrexham, RAISE

⁸⁸ The name adopted by the consortium covering South West and mid Wales.

⁸⁹ ESIS is a joint Education and School Improvement Service that serves Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

⁹⁰ Because the Vale of Glamorgan was not part of ESIS, it was necessary to build links. The RAISE Local Authority Adviser of the Vale reported that this was working reasonably well.

contributed to the development of child poverty strategy which was shared and discussed across the consortia and in swamwac, RAISE has informed work around the School Effectiveness Framework.

Regional Co-ordinators

- 14.6. In order to oversee the development of RAISE in their regions and report to the Consortia, RAISE regional coordinators were appointed. North Wales and Central South Consortia each appointed one Regional Coordinator, whilst the South East Wales and swamwac, split the post, each employing two Coordinators. The time given to the coordinators role varied from one to five days a week. All six Regional Coordinators came from an education background. Three were former head teachers, one was a former HMI, another worked as an adviser for ESIS, a regional school improvement service, and became a full time coordinator for RAISE, and another was formerly a senior officer within an Local Authority.
- 14.7. The delays in establishing the role of Regional Coordinators meant that they were not involved in informing schools' proposals and their focus has therefore been upon coordinating a response to the programme and helping to capture what was being learned. There have been marked commonalities and differences in the ways in which they have taken this forward, so that initially some Coordinators were involved visiting schools, for example, but others were not, working instead through and with Local Authority officers, who monitored work in schools. In particular, although Regional Coordinators work for Local Authority consortia, as outlined above, they have had differing levels of direction and support from the Local Authorities in their consortia, contributing to differences in the way each has worked.
- 14.8. In order to inform and develop RAISE funded work with schools, all of the Regional Coordinators have established processes and events to share good practice within and between schools and Local Authorities. Their success has

depended in a large part upon the response of the Local Authorities in their areas, which we discuss further below. Where consortia were well developed it was possible to adopt a strategic or developmental role, for example working closely with Local Authority school advisers, informing and being informed by their work. For example, one of the members of a regional consortium highlighted the value of having a structure that meant that Local Authorities met regularly with a clear agenda and looked at RAISE and beyond it, linking it to the wider school improvement agenda. This is reported to have helped ensure that schools received a consistent message and support from both Regional Coordinators and Local Authority school advisers. Another consortium area identified how RAISE had informed consortium working, with the Coordinator working with Local Authority officers in a quality assurance role. The work was described as being subsumed into a process for regional working, feeding into the development of SEF. Where the consortium was less developed, the role was likely to focus more on working directly with schools with only limited involvement from Local Authorities. In the South East, for example, the appointment of two retired Head Teachers to visit and support schools suggests a very different expectation of the role to that of swamwac, where the role was seen far more within the context of strategic consortium development.

- 14.9. Regional Coordinators sometimes reported reluctance on the part of some schools to take up the support they offered through their programme of visits to schools and there was some evidence from our school visits that the coordinator role was sometimes seen as another layer of monitoring, rather than support. The research team did hear comments from schools about how RAISE was the “most evaluated programme I have ever been involved in. We have had visits from the Local Authority, the coordinator, Estyn and the external evaluators.” Feedback from schools we visited on the effectiveness of Regional Coordinators has been mixed. As may be expected, given the different roles adopted, many schools had not had much contact with a coordinator. Some of those that had were very positive about the support offered, others more sceptical about its

value. In part this appeared to reflect the work of Regional Coordinators, and the skills, experience and time they were able to bring to the role and in part the needs of the school. For example, some self-confident schools felt they did not need additional support.

14.10. However, Estyn found a more negative picture amongst the schools they visited:

There is considerable variation between consortia in the working arrangements of regional co-ordinators. However, even taking this into account, there are important shortcomings in the work of the regional co-ordinators. Only in less than a third of schools has the regional co-ordinator had a positive and beneficial impact. There are shortcomings in all other schools, including in just under a third where the support and guidance are inadequate. In the schools visited for the survey in two regions, support and guidance is at least adequate and generally good in one of them. In the other two regions, support and guidance from the regional co-ordinator are adequate at best and there are very few examples of good support and guidance (p. 18. Estyn, 2010).

14.11. This assessment was strongly contested by Regional Coordinators who felt that Estyn may have misunderstood their role, which did not require them to visit every school or to take the role of an adviser. Coordinators were involved in running local events to bring schools together and these were seen as valuable by the schools we visited. They also focused on developing links between Local Authorities to share the learning from RAISE and build capacity to develop this and on informing schools about issues of social disadvantage. For example, in Central South the Coordinator convened two development groups, each involving six schools, to explore specific themes and develop a publication. Work with advisers included briefing them on questions to ask schools, bringing them together to discuss issues around disadvantage and accompanying them on school visits. However, there were variations both in what was done and its effect both across and within consortia. Coordinators described how they were able to

work more effectively with some Local Authorities than with others throughout the three years of the programme. In particular, some Local Authorities were much more receptive than others, keen to both lead RAISE funded work and to learn from it. During the third year of the programme the Coordinators were involved in developing proposals for the fourth year of funding, although again the extent of their involvement varied between consortia.

14.12. The role of Regional Coordinators in relation to RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities has been limited. The guidance from the Welsh Government on Regional Consortia's role made explicit reference to RAISE funding for schools but not RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities. As a consequence, initially, Regional Coordinators focused almost exclusively upon RAISE funded work in schools. This was reflected in their visits and the agendas of regional and national meetings. This changed over the course of the first year, and the issue was raised and discussed at the National Steering Group and Regional Coordinators meetings.⁹¹ However, this tended to involve information sharing rather than engagement in policy in relation to children looked after by Local Authorities. Moreover, Regional Coordinators' understanding of, and ability to support and evaluate, RAISE funded work in schools in their region remained far stronger than their capacity to do the same for RAISE funded work for LAC.

14.13. Our visits to schools largely confirmed Estyn's judgment that "There has been little attempt to relate RAISE-funded work to the broader Local Authority work on social justice or tackling child poverty." (p. 18, Estyn, 2010). A number of factors weakened alignment of RAISE funded activities with local policies. These included:

⁹¹ For example, Hillary Hill, The newly seconded RAISE LAC Coordinator, gave a presentation to the RAISE national Steering Group meeting on the 25th September 2007 and a Regional Coordinators meeting on the 13th November.

- the structure of RAISE funding for schools, which devolved money directly to schools;
- The initial failures of some consortia and many Local Authorities to take a leadership role in relation to RAISE (outlined above);
- the nature of the relationship between Local Authorities and schools which can be characterised by a range of feelings including, antagonism, dismissal or indifference, and which is not therefore always conducive to collaborative working on policy development;
- the often limited integration of education policy with other policies to support children and young people, in Children and Young People's Plans; and
- the lack of time schools had to prepare their first year proposals and the often limited input from Local Authorities (which we discuss in section 14).

14.14. *School level planning:* As one interviewee from local government put it, it is "important that responsibility [for developing proposals to address the link between disadvantage and poor educational attainment] is devolved to the most effective level; that's probably not school level". Crucially, the natural level for strategically joining up many of the agencies required to address the links between disadvantage and poor educational attainment is that of the Local Authority, each of which has a Children and Young People's Partnership and plan.

14.15. *Weaknesses in Children and Young People's Plans:* The structural problems caused by planning at a school level were compounded by weaknesses in the Children and Young People's Partnership plans themselves, which as one interviewee put it, were often "education light", an assessment confirmed by a systematic review of plans undertaken in 2008 and by the, often, low levels of awareness amongst schools we visited about the content and relevance of the Children and Young People's Plan for them, which we discuss further in the following section.

14.16. In contrast, RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities went directly to Local Authorities and, should, therefore, have been better aligned with local policies to support children looked after by Local Authorities. Nevertheless, RAISE funded activities often represented additions to existing services, a 'bolt on' extra, as opposed to developing an integral part of Local Authority plans to support the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities. Moreover, alignment with Children and Young People's plans was weak. The People and Work Unit's review of Children and Young People's plans showed that whilst most included high level objectives they contained very little operational detail.⁹² Moreover, where plans refer to RAISE funding, very few specifically refer to RAISE funding to support children looked after by Local Authorities. As at national level, at a Local Authority level there has been a marked failure to link RAISE funded work in schools with RAISE funded work with children looked after by Local Authorities. Although RAISE covers both, as outlined in section 13.1. the two elements of the programmes have in effect operated as separate programmes, with the focus of one firmly at a school level and the focus of the other at a Local Authority level, with the work often located within social services rather education.

The contribution of RAISE to long-term capacity building in school improvement

14.17. The weakness in Local Authorities' engagement with RAISE, outlined above, mean that RAISE's contribution, to date, to long term capacity building in school improvement has been limited. It has helped raise the profile of the educational

⁹² Some briefly outline existing work to support children looked after by Local Authorities, such as advocacy services and a commitment to joint working and some discuss the need to maintain and develop the ways in which LAC are supported, most commonly referring to additional personal and academic support or the need to maintain placement stability. Nevertheless, overall, there is very little operational detail supporting this and outlining how they will achieve their aims for looked after children and how they will fund the work.

attainment gap and many Local Authorities valued the additional funding but, particularly with the threat of budget cuts, have questioned how it can be sustained once the funding is withdrawn. More positively, in the third year, there has been a strong rhetorical commitment to ensuring that the lessons of RAISE inform the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (SEF) and the fourth year of RAISE, which is not covered by this evaluation, includes a strong commitment to this.

15. THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

The planning and development of RAISE funded activity

15.1. As outlined in the previous section, many schools had relatively little time to plan their initial RAISE proposals and little support and few consulted widely (Estyn, 2007). This contributed to weaknesses in proposals, which were often narrowly focused. This weakness was identified and, as the programme developed, schools were encouraged to adopt more holistic strategies⁹³. In their second and third years, schools had more time and support and the quality of proposals improved. Nevertheless, a number of interviewees expressed the opinion that schools often had low levels of awareness about the content and relevance of CYPPs. Our visits to schools broadly supported this assessment.

The monitoring and evaluation of RAISE funded activity

15.2. Most schools have collected data on RAISE pupils. In many cases this has been generated by the monitoring processes built into interventions such as Catch-up, as well as standard measures like NFER reading scores. However, as we outline in section 7, both our and Estyn's visits to schools (see Estyn, 2010) suggest that this data is not available on pupils who have not benefited from these interventions, and schools have rarely linked this data with other sources of data, such as teacher assessments at Key Stages 1 to 3. Schools have however used a range of other types of data including attendance, exclusions, numbers of qualifications gained, in order to assess the wider impact of RAISE upon pupil achievement. Schools have found it more challenging to systematically evaluate other types of outcome, such as increases in pupils' social and emotional skills and dispositions. They have used proxies, such as attendance data, anecdotal evidence and in some cases, commercial tools such as PASS.⁹⁴

⁹³ This concern also informed proposals for year 4 of RAISE funding (see paragraphs 13-17-13.19).

⁹⁴“ PASS is the 'Pupil Attitude to Self and School' electronic rating scale which provides a profile of the learner's self-regard, perceived capabilities, perseverance, motivation, general work ethic, attitudes to teachers, their school and attendance, preparedness for learning and response to the curriculum. “(p. 16. Estyn, 2010a)

- 15.3. The quality of monitoring and evaluation is variable. We identified examples of excellent practice in our school visits, including innovative examples in a small number of schools, which, for example, involved pupils, not only as subjects of evaluation, but as active participants or which were using the lesson from RAISE to inform changes in teaching, the curriculum and learning throughout the school. However, we also identified examples where it was weaker, where for example judgments were based upon a narrow evidential base and often remained somewhat descriptive, rather than analytical.
- 15.4. The assessments of Regional Coordinators and Estyn About the quality of monitoring and evaluation are somewhat at odds with each other. On the one hand, Regional Coordinators suggest it is generally good (Davies Jones, 2009; George, 2009; Snowball, 2009).⁹⁵ On the other, Estyn found that although nearly all schools used the format recommended by the Local Authority or consortium, in around two fifths of the schools it visited there were “important shortcomings in schools’ evaluations”. This was because, for example, “the evaluation involves anecdotal or descriptive accounts of the work, even when the school has quantitative evidence to call on...[or]... the evaluation activity did not lead to conclusions or discernible improvements. (p. 16. Estyn, 2010a). The apparent inconsistency in judgements appears to reflect distinctions between monitoring, the collection of data, which most schools are doing, and evaluation, the judgments reached about what the data means, which is often much weaker and its use, which again is much weaker.

⁹⁵ “the majority of schools have good procedures for monitoring and evaluating their RAISE funded work” (Snowball, 2009); “the vast majority of schools have robust, appropriate procedures for evaluating the impact of their programmes” (p.6., George, 2009).; and “The close monitoring of RAISE pupils in terms of the progress they show, both academically and socially, has now been established in the vast majority of schools” (p 19. Davies Jones, 2009).

16. THE VALUE FOR MONEY OF RAISE

Introduction

- 16.1. An assessment of the value for money of RAISE requires an assessment of: outcomes (or impact); the value of outcomes; and the cost of generating those outcomes. We assessed the outcomes of RAISE in section 6 and we now focus upon the value of those outcomes and the costs of generating them.
- 16.2. This type of analysis can be complemented by a cost effectiveness analysis, an analysis of whether the outcomes could have been achieved more efficiently, and a cost-benefit analysis, an analysis of the other types of benefits (or outcomes) that could have been achieved given the resources available. For the purposes of this evaluation, we compare the costs and outcomes of RAISE with those of four other comparable initiatives in England: Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zones, The City and National Challenges.

The economic value of RAISE outcomes

- 16.3. As outlined in above, while RAISE has had a measurable impact upon factors that contribute to achievement, such as the acquisition and development of basic skills and social and emotional skills and dispositions, the evidence of a measurable impact of this upon attainment is much weaker. This creates significant challenges in terms of assessing its value. In particular, although there is a strong body of evidence demonstrating the economic value of qualifications (i.e. attainment)⁹⁶, it is more difficult to measure the value of other types of impacts in a systematic way; unlike qualifications, they are not systematically measured and recorded, meaning that there is less data available to analyse and consequently, there is far less evidence of their economic value.

⁹⁶ For example, Gregg & Machin (1999) use data from the 1958 and 1970 British Cohort Studies, in order to assess impacts upon outcomes at ages 16, 23 and 33 and find that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher hourly wages, and higher levels of employment. Similarly, Kenway et al (2005) find that those aged 25 to 50 with no qualifications face a 25 per cent chance of economic inactivity, an 8 per cent chance of unemployment and a 60 per cent chance of low pay (below £6.50 an hour).

- 16.4. A number of studies have assessed the importance of social and emotional skills and dispositions in determining outcomes. For example, Feinstein & Duckworth (2008) analysed data from the 1970 British Cohort Study and found that at age 5, certain problematic behaviours such as withdrawal, anxiety and aggression, associated with poorer social and emotional skills, were strongly predictive of poor outcomes such as lower standardised test scores in reading and maths at age 10 and lower average income at age 30. There are also a wide range of studies and reports that assert the importance of social and emotional skills in influencing outcomes throughout a person's life course (see e.g. Goleman, 1995; Jones, 2005) and the value of learning more broadly (see e.g. Schuller, et al, 2004).
- 16.5. These positive outcomes, such as success in employment, better health and a lower incidence of offending behaviour, have a considerable economic value to both individuals and society. Some can be quantified. For example, in 2002, the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) calculated that the direct financial costs of unemployment to the state were approximately £9,000 p.a. in benefits and taxes forgone. The costs escalate alarmingly for those involved in criminal activity. For example, the Home Office estimates that each individual offence leading to conviction costs the criminal justice system £13,000, whilst the non criminal justice costs range from an average of £2,300 for burglary and £4,700 for vehicle theft to £19,000 in cases of violence against the person. The costs of detention increase this further. For example, a year's detention in a young offender Institution costs approximately £50,000 p.a.
- 16.6. The problem for the purposes of this evaluation, are that it is impossible to assess what the likely impact of RAISE upon wages, employment or a lower incidence of offending are.

The economic cost of RAISE

- 16.7. Of the overall annual budget of 16.25 million, around £14.5m has been allocated directly to eligible schools⁹⁷, £1 million has been allocated directly to Local Authorities to support the attainment of children looked after by Local Authorities and the remainder, around £0.75m, equivalent to 5%, has been allocated to the administration of the grant, centrally organised events and activities, evaluation and the work of regional consortia. Other indirect costs include the cost of Estyn's reviews and costs for Local Authorities in supporting and administering the grant.
- 16.8. The allocation of funding to schools ranged from between £11,000 and £30,000 for primary schools, between £16,000 and £22,000 for special schools and £47,000 and £220,000 for secondary schools. Whilst seen as a valuable grant and enough money to make a difference, the funding provided a small percentage of a school's annual income.
- 16.9. Interviewees' assessments of the level of bureaucracy involved in the central administration of RAISE suggest that the economic costs of its administration and evaluation were not excessive. Indeed, as outlined above, there is some evidence that the effectiveness of RAISE was weakened by the limited capacity of the Welsh Government RAISE Team at critical points. Nevertheless, as outlined in chapter 4, there were initial concerns that RAISE would be "over-evaluated", with some schools complaining that 'layers' of monitoring by the external evaluators, Estyn, Local Authorities and Regional Coordinators has been onerous. Despite these layers of monitoring and evaluation it is not possible to identify clear measures for determining whether the programme has provided value for money.
- 16.10. Whilst a major investment in Welsh education, the investment in RAISE is overshadowed by the scale of investment in comparable programmes in England. Although in part the differences in magnitude reflect the relative sizes of the two countries - England's population is over 17 times larger than Wales' -

⁹⁷ 14.6 million was allocated in 2006/07 and 14.4 million in 2007/08

levels of expenditure and investment have been higher in England than they have been in Wales. For example:

- The **National Challenge** programme, which aims to create sustainable academic improvement, targets all maintained and secondary schools in England where less than 30% of pupils attain 5 A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English (638 schools in 2008), has a budget of £400m⁹⁸, spread over 4 years (2008-2011);
- The **City Challenge** programme, which aims to raise educational attainment in city schools in London, the Black Country and Greater Manchester⁹⁹, and which provides “Intensive support for underperforming schools”¹⁰⁰; a “city-wide leadership strategy”; “A tailored package of support for disadvantaged students”¹⁰¹; “A data-rich approach to solving local issues and shared learning”; “Families of Schools’ publication, to allow schools to share best-practice”; “Local solutions to local issues” and a “A strategy to secure choice and diversity of education for families and modern learning environments fit for the 21st century”¹⁰², with a budget over three years of £120m for London’s 1820 primary schools, 420 secondary schools and 50 colleges, with funding targeted in particular at the seventy “Key to Success schools” and five Local Authorities facing the most challenging circumstances; £28m for the Black Country and £50m for Greater Manchester;

⁹⁸ This includes £20m for National Challenge Advisers; £20m for the National Leaders of Education and other leadership support; £100m for Teaching, learning and study support; £195m for Academies and £65m for Children’s Trusts.

⁹⁹ The aims are to: Allow all children at age 5 the chance to enjoy an effective start to their education; Cut by half the gaps in attainment between children in these cities and their peers; Reduce the number of primary schools where less than 65% of pupils attain the national expectation (Level 4 in Maths and English); Reduce to zero the number of secondary schools in which less than 30% attain 5 A*-C GCSEs (from 28 in 2008); Increase the number of schools where 90% plus attain above national average; and Improve the mobilisation of resources, allowing for underperforming schools to access the means available within their city.

¹⁰⁰ Schools have access to expert advisor; Tailored packages for sustained improvements; and Multi-school contracts with providers of certain subjects, particularly EAL

¹⁰¹ Involving further teacher training, and mentoring schemes

¹⁰² I.e. Rebuilding schools, making use of Academies and Trusts

- **Excellence in Cities**, which aims to create whole school change, engaging and working with parents, rather than focusing upon individual pupils. It supported a wide range of activities including learning mentors, learning support units, city centre learning centres providing ICT equipment/training, EiC Action Zones to link small clusters with parents and businesses and special programmes to offer opportunities to gifted/talented pupils. The ambitious programme was rolled out in three phases, Phase 1 began in September 1999, with 25 Local Authorities and over 400 secondary schools, Phase 2 began in September 2000 with a further 23 Local Authorities and some 300 secondary schools and Phase 3 began in September 2001 with a further 10 Local Authorities and over 150 secondary schools, with funding of between £200m and £300m a year; and
- **Education Action Zones**, which aim to raise standards in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, by improving the quality of teaching and learning, promoting Social inclusion, strengthening family and pupil support and working with business and other organisations. A zone is made up of two or three secondary schools with their feeder primaries, in partnership with parents, businesses and their Local Authority. There are 73 Education Action Zones, and each receive up to £750,000 annually from the DCSF (for up to three years), and in addition each Zone is required to raise £250,000 from the private sector (Watkins, 2010).

16.11. Although there has not yet been a systematic national review of the City Challenge programme, OfSTED's (2006) study, 'Improvements in London Schools 2000-06', identifies "dramatic" improvements in London schools, including faster progress in narrowing the gap between disadvantaged and more advantaged pupils than schools in other areas, linking this to the London Challenge programme (although not directly attributing the improvements solely to the programme).

16.12. There have not yet been reviews of the Greater Manchester or Black Country Challenge programmes. Regional evaluations have been encouraging, but are not yet conclusive. For example, regarding academic attainment, results are

inconclusive. In Blackpool there was no impact upon attainment in its five National Challenge schools in 2008, but in 2009 there was an improvement of 4.7% in the proportion of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C, including Maths and English, across the borough.

16.13. A review of Education Action Zones by OfSTED (2003) found that in secondary schools initiatives had had a greater impact upon inclusion and behaviour than they had had upon attainment. In contrast, in primary schools, there was some evidence of a positive impact upon English and Maths scores. They found that, initially, many Zone's plans were too diffuse or ambitious. Their evaluation of Excellence in Cities was more positive.

Conclusions

16.14. It is not possible to quantify the value for money of RAISE. In part this is because there was no prescription on how many children should be supported, how often or for how long. This makes it extremely difficult to even calculate the cost per child supported. In part it is because the financial value of the measurable outcomes, which schools, Estyn and Regional Coordinator's have identified, such as increases in pupils basic skills, and social and emotional skills and dispositions, are not quantifiable. The outcomes that are quantifiable (i.e. attainment at the end of each Key Stage) are low and to assess the economic value solely through these, because they can be measured, would be to miss the impact of the funding.

16.15. A qualitative assessment of the value for money of RAISE suggests that whilst RAISE offered a reasonably efficient way of disbursing funding, the impact (or benefit/value) of this funding was not as great as it could have been due to the weaknesses outlined in this report, including weaknesses in targeting and in integrating RAISE funded interventions with other interventions to support pupils.

16.16. A comparison with some programmes in England, such as the City Challenge, suggests that whilst the net effect, was much greater, the overall level of funding

was also much greater, providing much more intensive support to individual schools. The impact has not been uniform though, and the impact of other programmes, such as Education Action Zones upon attainment, has been disappointing. This suggests that while increasing the level of funding can increase the impact, this is far from certain. Increasing the level of funding can increase the scope for systems thinking though, in which school based interventions are supported and integrated with interventions outside of the school. This in turn suggests the potential to reach a tipping point, at which each marginal increase in funding creates a disproportionately large impact upon attainment, because the aggregate impact becomes greater than the individual parts.

17. CONCLUSIONS

Overview

- 17.1. RAISE aimed to target disadvantaged pupils and increase their attainment. Whilst targeting of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds was often by default, and disproportionately focused on those with the lowest achievement, the net effect was to increase support for these pupils. However, to date the measurable impact upon headline indicators has been limited to Key Stage 2, and even here the evidence is not conclusive. More positively, there is good evidence from both RAISE funding for schools and RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities that the programme has had a positive impact upon pupils' basic, social and emotional skills and dispositions at all four Key Stages. Moreover, there is evidence that RAISE has raised the profile of the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage upon educational attainment, increased schools understanding of the issues, and their capacity to address them in the future.

- 17.2. RAISE gave schools the freedom to identify their own strategies for how they would, within the constraints of the funding available, improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. It is not surprising that the most effective schools used the funding most effectively. The research team has seen evidence of high quality, innovative and strategic interventions developed by schools with strong leadership, which know their pupils and families well and understand what they as a school can do and how they can work with others to tackle the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor educational attainment. We have also seen how schools that are less effective, which have a less holistic analysis of need and a narrower view of their role, used the funding opportunity less effectively. This means the impact varied in different schools and that overall, the value for money of RAISE's investment was not as great as it potentially could have been.

- 17.3. Given the nature of much RAISE funded work in schools, which was often narrowly focused and restricted to schools, the overall impact of RAISE is arguably unsurprising. The evidence is clear: there are schools serving disadvantaged communities whose pupils do far better than would be expected given their socioeconomic background - that is to say, the schools add considerable value (WAG & WLGA, 2004, 2002). Crucially they are effective not simply because these schools fund additional interventions focused upon literacy and numeracy - although this is often a key part of their strategies - it is because these types of compensatory interventions are an integral part of a much wider whole school approach and strategy. The importance of these more holistic strategies was identified during the first three years of RAISE and schools were encouraged to adopt more holistic strategies and this was reflected in the year four themes discussed in paragraphs 13.17-13.19.
- 17.4. Additional funding can help schools become more effective, and as we outline there are examples of how RAISE has helped schools 'put out fires' and helped them become more effective, but is not of itself sufficient. RAISE demonstrates that what a school does is more important than how much it spends. Moreover, although there is large body of evidence and fairly broad consensus on what schools can do to narrow the educational and experiential gaps between more and less socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, additional funding is not necessarily sufficient to enable schools to implement and apply this knowledge. Crucially, a programme such as RAISE that devolves money directly to schools, with patchy support, at least initially, is heavily dependent on the capacity of a school to make good use of their additional funding, and those schools which are already effective, are in many ways best placed to make the best use of that funding.
- 17.5. The challenge, is that while there is good evidence, and a broad consensus, on what constitutes an effective school - a school which 'adds value' helping pupils 'buck the trend' - summarised, for example, in the School Effectiveness

Framework for Wales' "themes" and "elements", and reflected in the recommendations of the Child Poverty Expert Group and the Narrowing the Gap Studies, there is much less consensus on how a school applies and implements this knowledge and becomes more effective. Moreover, there is evidence that schools serving disadvantaged communities face a range of challenges that can make it harder for them to become an effective school. This is one of the central challenges facing the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (WAG, 2008b) and therefore schools, Local Authorities and the Welsh Government.

- 17.6. Effective schools are only part of the solution. Whilst schools make a difference to pupil outcomes with, for example, secondary schools accounting for approximately 15% of the differences in pupil attainment and potentially more when pupils contexts and individual characteristics are particularly weak, there is inevitably a limit to the difference a school alone can make to pupil attainment (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007; Duckworth, et al, 2009). Therefore, a series of major reviews of child poverty, including those sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Egan, 2007; Hirsch, 2007), the Child Poverty Expert Group (2008); The Children Committee for Children and Young People (NAfW, 2008) and the Narrowing the Gap studies (NAfW, 2002; WAG & WLGA, 2006) have all concluded that schools cannot do it alone.
- 17.7. Working with others is a characteristic of effective schools, but without effective partners, there will be limits to what schools can achieve. Some RAISE schools cited weaknesses in their partners' effectiveness or willingness to work with them as a barrier to their work. Research suggests support services for children, young people and their families are not perfect and therefore there is also a need to enhance the effectiveness and reach of a range of these other support services and a need to ensure that this support is aligned and integrated with that provided by schools. That is to say, there is a need for 'systems thinking'.
- 17.8. Similar conclusions apply to RAISE funding for children looked after by Local Authorities. The most effective Local Authorities achieve good outcomes not

simply because they provide additional support in years 10 and 11 – although this is often a key part of their strategies - but because these types of compensatory interventions are an integral part of a much wider strategy covering all aspects of a child's care and education. The challenge is that developing this type of systems wide approach is much more complex, much longer term and initially a much more expensive strategy - although arguably in the long-term, there should be financial savings - than providing additional compensatory support.

The strengths of RAISE

17.9. The evaluation highlights a number of key strengths of RAISE and a range of factors that supported RAISE, which we list and then discuss in detail below:

- The devolution of funding directly to schools;
- Addressing the 'double whammy';
- Not spreading resources too thinly;
- Wider benefits to non RAISE pupils; and
- The stimulus RAISE provide for consortium working in some areas.

17.10. ***The devolution of funding directly to schools:*** RAISE's devolved structure meant that the quality of work depended to a considerable degree upon schools, albeit with the support and, where appropriate, challenge from Local Authorities and Regional Coordinators. This structure had a number of strengths. All schools we visited welcomed the structure and the considerable flexibility it gave them. This is reported to have helped foster enthusiasm and commitment amongst school staff, and in some schools it has enabled the development of innovative approaches to targeting and raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

17.11. There was also evidence from our school visits that the quality of work improved over time as schools developed their RAISE funded projects. This conclusion is broadly supported by Regional Coordinators' reports (Davies Jones, 2009;

George, 2009; Snowball, 2009) and by Estyn (2010). This is partly because schools, Local Authorities and Regional Coordinators had time to reflect upon and develop their approaches, meaning that they became better able to exploit the opportunities offered by RAISE's devolved structure.

17.12. Moreover, it was clear that RAISE had fostered considerable energy, interest and enthusiasm and often passion amongst those school leaders, teachers and support staff who were involved in RAISE funded activities. This, in turn, had increased their motivation, improving the quality and quantity of RAISE funded work in schools and contributed to their desire to try to sustain the work when RAISE funding ceased. This was attributed in part to the autonomy and freedom the devolved structure gave schools. Schools compared their experiences with RAISE, where they had the scope to build programmes of work and timetables around their targeted interventions, with some externally developed programmes which they were required to find slots for and which frequently operated in parallel to, rather than as part of, their core programmes.

17.13. **Additional funding:** The evaluation found a strong case for providing additional funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and RAISE has helped address this need. This conclusion is supported by other research in Wales. For example, the *Narrowing the Gap* Studies highlighted the value of “long-term targeted and secure funding” (p. 33, NAFW, 2002) and a Rapid Evidence Assessment of research in this area found a “small positive association between “per-pupil expenditure and attainment”¹⁰³ (p.7. Matrix Evidence, 2009). Moreover, although the current school funding formula includes a weighting for disadvantage, this has been judged as insufficient to meet need (Bramley & Watkins, 2008).

17.14. By targeting funding at schools with more than 20% of their pupils eligible for FSMs, scarce resources are directed at those pupils who are at risk of being

¹⁰³ The association is small because of the range of factors that influence attainment, such as those discussed in section three of this report (Matrix Evidence, 2009).

disadvantaged by both their family background and the school they attend. As we outline above, the high proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs can create additional challenges and costs for the school, making it more difficult for the school to meet additional learning needs linked to disadvantage. (Lupton, 2005). RAISE schools we visited reported that these additional costs are not covered by the current weighting in pupil funding for deprivation and that RAISE helped to meet these additional costs.

17.15. In effect, RAISE helped address the “double jeopardy” facing pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend schools with a large proportion of other disadvantaged pupils: not only do they tend to have a higher incidence of additional learning needs than pupils from more advantaged backgrounds, but the schools they attend are likely to find it more difficult to meet those needs than schools with smaller proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD, 2003; see also Lupton, 2005). Therefore, although the requirement that at least 20% of schools’ pupils must be eligible for FSMs excludes a large number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in other schools, it ensures that scarce resources are targeted at those pupils who are likely to be the most disadvantaged by their backgrounds. In contrast, if all pupils who were eligible for FSMs were targeted through, for example, a pupil premium¹⁰⁴, more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds would benefit, but resources would be spread more thinly and less effectively targeted at those most in need.

17.16. **Wider benefits** In many schools, pupils who were not from disadvantaged backgrounds also benefited. For example, by withdrawing pupils with additional learning needs from classes, teachers were better able to meet the needs of the remaining pupils. More broadly, schools that adopted a whole school approach benefited pupils from both disadvantaged and more advantaged backgrounds. This was a strength of RAISE. In contrast, where pupils who were not

¹⁰⁴ This would mean that schools would receive additional funding for each individual pupils who was, for example, eligible for Free School Meals (see e.g. Marshall, 2007).

disadvantaged were directly supported, this was a serious failing of RAISE. This was primarily where schools had targeted educational rather than socioeconomic disadvantage, and therefore included small numbers of low achieving pupils from advantaged backgrounds.

17.17. ***The stimulus RAISE provided to strengthen consortium working:*** As outlined in chapter 13, in two areas, North Wales and the swamwac consortium areas, RAISE provided an important catalyst that helped strengthen partnership working between different Local Authorities and that provided the impetus to develop a strategic response to socioeconomic disadvantage. In North Wales, two consortia, had operated: in the North West, Anglesey, Conwy and Gwynedd, who shared support services through Cynnal, and in the North East, Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. The establishment of the North Wales RAISE Steering Group brought together the two consortia, helping bridge the East/West divide. In the swamwac consortia, although regional working was already more developed than the other regions, aided by a Making the Connections Grant in 2006, and there was no divide between the authorities, RAISE provided an important additional impetus to strengthen the consortium, that was then consolidated by consortium's role in developing the School Effectiveness Framework pilots.

The weakness of RAISE

17.18. The evaluation also highlights a number of weakness, and issues that have impeded the effectiveness of RAISE, which we list and then discuss in detail below:

- The devolved structure;
- The rush to develop the programme and the failures to adhere to either systems thinking or tri-level reform;
- The failure to integrate RAISE funded work with national or local policy and practice and to engage external partners

- Weakness in the integration of interventions in primary and secondary schools;
- The time limited funding; and
- The limited impact upon non-RAISE pupils.

17.19. ***The Devolved Structure:*** although, as outlined above, in many ways the devolved structure was a strength of RAISE, it also contributed to some of the weaknesses through its dependence upon the effectiveness and choices of individual schools. In particular, the flexibility meant that many schools chose not to target all disadvantaged pupils, such as those who were moderate or high achievers; they often chose approaches they understood, such as raising literacy and numeracy through small group and one to one work, rather than approaches that engaged non-school agencies; and the range and quality of the approaches they chose to use to monitor and evaluate the work have made it difficult to establish the impact of RAISE at the level of either an individual school or the programme as a whole. This has limited the knowledge generated by RAISE. It is not possible, for example, to compare the efficacy and cost effectiveness of different types of interventions and to use this to inform provision in the future. It has also contributed to a sense in some quarters that RAISE was not successful; a conclusion which is not fully supported by this evaluation and which may reduce support for initiatives such as RAISE in the future.

17.20. ***The rush to develop the programme:*** The rush to get RAISE up and running meant that two central principles underpinning the Welsh Government's current approach to education reform, systems thinking and tri-level reform were not adhered to.¹⁰⁵ In particular, as outlined above, RAISE was poorly aligned with other national and local policies and strategies and the decision to set up a team

¹⁰⁵ The Assembly Government's current approach to education reform, outlined in the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales, is underpinned by the principles of "systems thinking" and "tri-level reform". Although RAISE pre-dated the introduction of the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales, the principles represented an evolution, rather than revolution in the approach to education reform: the Assembly government had traditionally worked with the other two "levels", Local Authorities and schools in developing policies and programmes such as RAISE and has sought to 'join up' policy. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the extent to which RAISE applied the principles of tri-level reform and systems thinking.

of RAISE school improvement officers without adequately consulting Local Authorities created a perception of the Welsh Government attempting to sideline Local Authorities – the middle tier of the tri-level reform model - and engage directly with schools. This contributed to the rancour between the Welsh Government and Local Authorities that bedevilled RAISE in its initial stages and critically curtailed the capacity of those charged with supporting, and where appropriate, challenging schools when they developed their first year proposals.

17.21. The problems RAISE initially experienced highlight the importance of both consultation and preparation for devolved programmes such as RAISE. Without adequate consultation, key partners did not feel ownership of the programme and their expectations of what the project aimed to achieve and their understanding of how best it could be achieved sometimes differed from that of project managers. Without adequate preparation to ensure that the necessary structures and support are in place, it was inevitable that some of the key partners, such as schools, in a programme as wide as this would not be ready and able to exploit the freedom and flexibility that the devolved structure offers. Finally, the lack of dialogue across the Welsh Government meant that opportunities to fully integrate RAISE with other major programmes and policies were missed.

17.22. ***The limited impact on partnership working:*** As outlined in section 3, the research evidence is clear, schools alone cannot narrow the gap. However, much RAISE funded work has been school based and the impact upon work with others has been limited. Although around a quarter of RAISE schools aimed to enhance home-school links, many have reported how challenging they have found this. Very few schools planned to use RAISE funding to forge stronger links with other community partners (just 1% of schools' year 1 proposals identified this) and whilst increasing numbers have sought to do so, many have found it difficult to do so.

17.23. ***Weakness in integrating interventions in primary and secondary schools:*** Our school visits and the reviews conducted by two of the four Regional

Coordinators (Davies Jones, 2009; George, 2009) both highlighted weaknesses in planning for the transition RAISE pupils would make from primary to secondary school, and for example, how continuity of support would be ensured. As one notes, “Even in areas where many RAISE primary schools feed into a RAISE secondary school, the detailed planning which would provide a smooth transition for RAISE pupils is not apparent.” (p. 17, Davies Jones, 2009). In contrast, though, a third coordinator cites improvements and reports that “Work across schools, principally through school clusters, has improved” (p. 15, Snowball, 2009).

17.24. **Time limited funding:** Schools and Regional Coordinators consistently identified the short-term nature of RAISE funding for schools as a significant challenge.

¹⁰⁶The issue of short term time limited funding was also highlighted by the WLGA and ADEW, in their submission to the Finance Committee Inquiry into Specific Grants in Education who cited RAISE as a prime example of the problems caused by short term grant funding (WLGA & ADEW, 2009).

17.25. This is a contested issue. As we outline in our thematic paper on sustainability (Holtom, 2009), in principle there is some scope for using time limited funding to invest in sustainable change and a number of schools clearly outlined how they saw such funding as a vital tool to development. Our report outlines, for example, how RAISE funding could be used as an investment to develop each of the six elements of an effective school. In most cases, in order to sustain the changes, additional investments would be needed in subsequent years but, in most cases, the levels of investment needed to sustain these changes would also be much lower than the initial investment. Moreover, as we outline in section 9, RAISE is likely to leave a positive and significant legacy. Nevertheless, a consistent finding of the evaluation has been the additional challenges and costs that schools serving disadvantaged areas face and whilst additional funding is not of itself a

¹⁰⁶ Initially the funding to support children looked after by local Authorities was agreed annually, but in 2008-09, the then Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong learning and Skills committed to three further years of funding for the RAISE LACE element. This gave Local Authorities an improved planning opportunity.

necessary condition, RAISE has demonstrated that when used wisely, it can make a difference.

17.26. ***The limited impact upon disadvantaged pupils who did not directly benefit from RAISE funding:*** The decision to target resources on those pupils most likely to face the ‘double whammy’ of coming from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background and attending a school facing additional challenges and costs because it serves a disadvantaged areas was sensible. However, the impact upon schools that were not eligible for RAISE funding but which have pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and who could, for example, learn from and benefit from the RAISE experience was limited. This meant that approximately one third of pupils eligible for FSMs who did not attend RAISE schools did not benefit (cf. Estyn, 2010).

17.27. Moreover, although RAISE has supported large numbers of disadvantaged pupils in RAISE schools, the failure of many schools to target pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who were achieving moderately or well is a further important weakness of RAISE, as it has been implemented by schools. In effect, many schools have opted to promote equality of outcomes over equality of opportunity by targeting under-achievement rather than just socioeconomic disadvantage.

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APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEWEES

- Alan Boxford, South East Wales Consortium
- Tracey Breheny, WAG
- Graham Davies, WAG
- Keith Davies, WAG
- Prof. David Egan, University of Wales Institute Cardiff
- Brian George, ESIS/Central South Consortium
- Hillary Hill, WAG
- David Hopkins, ADEW
- Gareth Davies Jones, North Wales Consortium
- David Lloyd-Thomas, WAG
- Beverly Morgan, WAG
- Paul Morgan, WAG
- Sean O'Neil, Children in Wales
- Barry Norris, Estyn
- Marcus Hill, WAG
- Dr Chris Llewellyn, WLGA
- Prof. Gareth Rees, University of Wales Cardiff
- Eleri Thomas Save the Children Cymru
- Chris Tweedale, WAG
- Emma Williams, WAG
- Elizabeth Williams, WAG

APPENDIX 2.

ANALYSIS OF RAISE SCHOOLS FIRST YEAR PROPOSALS

Introduction

18.1. Schools eligible for RAISE funding were required to prepare a pro-forma outlining their proposed use of the grant and to then agree this with their Local Authority. In early 2007 we reviewed 626 of the 648 school proposals¹⁰⁷ (pro-formas) and recorded information on the expected outcomes of the work (e.g. improvements in literacy and numeracy, improvements in children and young people's social and emotional skills) and the means of achieving these outcomes (e.g. employing a Learning Support Assistant, establishing a nurture group). We used this to develop a database that provided an overview of RAISE funded work in schools. A summary of the results of this analysis are included in tables 20.1 and 20.2.

¹⁰⁷A small number of school proposals were either not in the files during the time of review or were inadvertently missed.

Table 20.1. Summary of desired intermediate outcomes (RAISE funded work in schools)

# of schools	All schools*	Primary	Sec	Church	Special
	622	471	67	54	30
Outcomes					
Attainment	567	437	62	51	17
Literacy and numeracy	497	388	48	47	14
Personal/ Social skills	165	124	18	9	14
Self Esteem and/or well-being	115	79	18	11	7
Improved behaviour	146	95	37	8	6
Speech and language skills	114	97	3	11	3
Changing attitudes (e.g. raising aspirations and/or motivation)	96	66	21	5	4
Study skills thinking skills, independent learning skills	91	73	12	4	2
Improving attendance	89	38	45	1	5
Confidence/Self-efficacy	31	24	3	3	1

* The school identification numbers of four schools in our database were either incomplete or incorrect and the school type (primary/secondary/special/church) could not be established.

Table 20.2. Summary of the most common RAISE funded work in schools

# of schools	All schools *	Primary	Sec	Church	Special
RAISE funded activity	622	471	67	54	30
Additional academic support (e.g. employing a LSA)	474	376	47	37	14
Staff Development (e.g. training)	337	264	33	27	10
<i>Visit to other schools to share good practice</i>	6	3	1	2	0
Enriching and developing the curriculum	283	183	53	24	23
<i>Linking to the Foundation Phase</i>	162	140	1	18	3
<i>Enriching the 7-13 curriculum, developing cross-curriculum links</i>	65	38	14	5	8
<i>Developing the 14-19 curriculum</i>	44	0	33	1	10
<i>Developing links with other schools/colleges to deliver the curriculum (not 14-19)</i>	12	5	5	0	2
Developing home-school links	163	116	25	16	6
<i>More intensive work with parents that goes beyond communication (e.g. adult literacy).</i>	67	51	10	5	3
Buying resources such as books, CDs and software	207	149	28	22	8
Small group work	165	134	15	10	6
Whole school development, such as changes to working practices and schemes of work across the school.	88	62	10	12	4
Pastoral support for pupils	72	27	37	3	5
SEN provision	78	52	10	10	6
Investing in the physical teaching environment (e.g. purchasing ICT hardware, furniture)	75	47	18	7	3
Extra Curricula activities such as after school clubs	53	29	18	1	5
<i>Breakfast clubs</i>	9	4	3	1	1
One to one work with pupils	51	38	4	4	5
Developing Individual learning plans	45	35	4	5	1
Transition between schools	42	18	16	3	5
Nurture (aim: personal support)	42	31	9	0	2
Targeted work with boys	36	24	9	3	0
Specialised academic support (e.g. by an educational psychologist)	27	15	7	2	3
Catering for different learning Styles (e.g. Visual, audio and kinaesthetic)	25	19	3	3	0
Outdoor work, experiential learning	25	17	0	5	3
Partnerships with other schools	20	12	5	0	3

Developing a 'learner centred' approach	16	11	2	2	1
Employing mentors or Learning Coaches*	15	0	15	0	0
Personalised learning	15	8	4	1	2
Work kinked to homework	14	9	4	1	0
Supporting transitions between key stages	8	5	2	0	1
Circle time	7	6	1	0	0
Improving community links	7	4	1	0	2
Attendance officers	6	1	5	0	0
Behaviour support officers	6	2	4	0	0
Peer support	5	3	2	0	0
Targeted work with ethnic minority pupils	4	3	1	0	0
Residential	4	1	2	0	1

Notes: Graphs in italics are a sub set of the total. For example 252 schools are involved in work to develop the curriculum. This includes 163 schools looking at developing links with the Foundation Phase, 66 enriching the 7-13 curriculum and 45 developing the 14-19 curriculum.

* The school identification numbers of four schools in our database were either incomplete or incorrect and the school type (primary/secondary/special/church) could not be established

APPENDIX 3. SAMPLE SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR VISITS TO SCHOOLS IN 2010

Introduction: The People and Work Unit has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to evaluate the first three years of RAISE funding (2006/07-2008/09). The evaluation will assess whether RAISE achieved its aims and objectives – to target disadvantaged pupils and raise their levels of attainment - and will evaluate the process, including its strengths and weaknesses and value for money.

The evaluation draws on a number of sources, including national data on pupil attainment, the evaluations undertaken by RAISE coordinators and Estyn and visits, like this, to RAISE schools.

The final report of the evaluation of the first three years of RAISE funding is due in March 2010 and once finalised, it is expected that it will be placed in the public domain. This report will not identify individual schools or participants by name in the body of the report, but will include a list of schools who took part in the evaluation. Are you happy with this?

The external evaluation of the 4th year of RISE, 2009/10-2010-2011 has a different focus and timescale reflecting the changes to the programme in the 4th year. Therefore, the focus of this discussion is upon the impact of the first three years of RAISE funding and what you have learnt from this. If you have received RAISE funding in the fourth year and if your experience of the first three years of funding shaped your work in this 4th year we would be interested in exploring this, but at this stage, we are not trying to evaluate the 4th year work.

Are there any questions you would like to ask?

OVERVIEW OF THE LAST THREE YEARS

1. **Could you take me back to 2006/07, and sketch out a timeline for me, outlining the key events, the key changes in your school, the key things you learned along the way, and the ways in which you changed your work in response to this, since your RAISE funding started.**

Learning could include evidence of impact, obstacles, enablers etc

Changes in the school could include changes in teaching and learning, the use of staff, work with external partners etc

2. **Can you please talk me through trends in attainment and well-being over this period?**

What are you basing this upon – what evidence do you have?

How much detail do you have about different groups of learners?

How did you target/identify pupils for RAISE support?

Evidence for Raise and non RAISE PUPILS?

Trends before RAISE?

Different groups (e.g. boys/girls, high achievers)

Sources of evidence?

3. **What were the key drivers for these changes (trends)?**

Include RAISE and non RAISE funded activity e.g. LP 14-19, CFS grant, BSF grant, staff development,

THE IMPACT OF RAISE FUNDING UPON CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE & THE SCHOOL

4. Can you please describe in detail, RAISE's contribution, that is to say, what RAISE funded work changed and how RAISE changed things, did it for example, improve pupil's literacy, if so how did RAISE funded work improve literacy? and did this increase in literacy have the impact you expected it to have upon attainment? Why?

Did it, for example, improve pupils' behaviour? and if so, did this have the impact you expected it to have upon attainment?

Social and emotional skills?

Parental involvement?

Curriculum offer?

Pastoral support?

Learning support?

etc

5. It has been suggested that developing the role of support staff has been a key impact of RAISE. Do you agree?

How has the work of support staff changed?

What impact have they had?

6. What others impacts has RAISE funding had upon the school?

THE LEGACY OF RAISE

7. What will RAISE's legacy, if any, be in this school, once the funding ends?

What will be different once the funding ends?

What will the impact, if any, have been in 5 years time? Ten years time?

What would be needed to sustain it?

Do you think the things you learned have a wider interest? Do you expect others to use and learn from your work? How?

Do you have a sense of what the legacy of the programme as a whole will be?

THE RAISE PROGRAMME

8. How effective was the support and where appropriate, challenge, of the LEA? Regional Coordinator and the WAG?

Were the monitoring visits useful?

Were the conferences useful?

Was the guidance and support material useful?

Could the support and challenge have been improved? How?

9. RAISE funding was time limited and allocated directly to schools. Do you think this was an effective approach to long term capacity building in school effectiveness?

How else could the funding have been used?

What were the main strengths of this approach?

What were the main weaknesses of this approach?

Did it represent good value for money?

10. Drawing upon your experience of RAISE, what would your recommendations for narrowing the gap be for schools, Local Authorities and the WAG?

11. Anything else?

THANK YOU