School improvement in Haringey: a case study

Technical Annex

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School improvement in Haringey: a case study

Introduction

In this case study we consider the possible factors that may have been important in supporting improvement in performance in Haringey secondary schools. Analysis of GCSE results data for English Local Authorities (LAs) from 2010 to 2014 revealed that Haringey was one of the top three LAs that had made the greatest rate of improvement of the proportion of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C including English and maths.[1]

This case study is based on interviews with:

- Haringey Council,
- The head teacher of Hornsey School for Girls
- The head teacher of Gladesmore Community School.
- The head teacher of Highgate Wood Secondary School who is also the chair of the Haringey Secondary Head teachers Group.

We are very grateful to them for giving their time, thoughts and insights.

Background

The borough of Haringey is situated in the north of London, with a population of around 260,000 in 2014. [2] Almost two-thirds of the population, (65.3%) are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with over 100 languages spoken in the borough. This composition is higher than London (55.1%) and England and Wales (19.5%), with Haringey's top three ethnic groups being 'Other White' (23%)[3], 'Black African' (9%) and 'Black Caribbean' (7.1%).[4]

Haringey is the 13th most deprived borough in the country and the fourth most deprived in London.[4] Haringey is considered the most unequal borough in London in terms of the spread of this deprivation. [5] For example, of its 19 wards, four are in the richest 10% and five are in the poorest 10%. This 'split' appears to take the form of an east/west divide,

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[1] For more information see footnote 3 of the Valuing Educational Progress in England: The economic benefits of the progress made in GCSE performance

[2] Office for National Statistics, 'Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2013' Published June 26th 2013.

[3] This category covers all those who classify themselves as white but not white: British, white: Irish or white: Gypsy or Irish Traveller. For example, white polish would fit into this category.

[4] Office for National Statistics, '2011 Census, Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales' Published December 11th 2011.
Full population breakdown by ethnicity for England, London and Haringey can be seen in appendix 1.

[5] London Poverty Indicator: 'Haringey'. Accessed 19 September 2014

with social indicators such as life expectancy much higher in the west of the borough than in the east.

Haringey secondary schools

There are 11 secondary schools in Haringey; five converter academies, five community schools and one voluntary aided school. All Haringey secondary schools have 'good' (six schools) or 'outstanding' (five schools) as their latest Ofsted rating.

The improvement in performance occurred at a time when recorded levels of disadvantage within Haringey's secondary schools were increasing. Between 2010 and 2014 the proportion of disadvantaged[6] key stage 4 pupils in Haringey secondary schools increased by around 1 percentage point (from 50.3% to 51.2%), At a school level, ethnicity is more diverse than the overall population of Haringey[7] and the majority of schools have a greater proportion of pupils recorded as having English as an additional language than the average for England and London.

The remainder of the case study outlines the factors which interview participants identified as most important in delivering the improvements in school performance.

Key findings

Factors identified as contributing to school improvement in Haringey

1   Leadership – high quality, stable leadership which drives ambitious expectations for staff and pupils.

2   Collaboration and competition – between all schools and staff at all levels, driven by schools and facilitated by the LA.

3   Use of data - to monitor and respond to changes in overall and pupil level performance, to identify when and how to intervene and to set targets.

4   Teacher Quality – helped by improvements in the schools' performance, but also driven by robust performance monitoring of teachers and CPD. The hard work of all staff is important in the continued improvement.
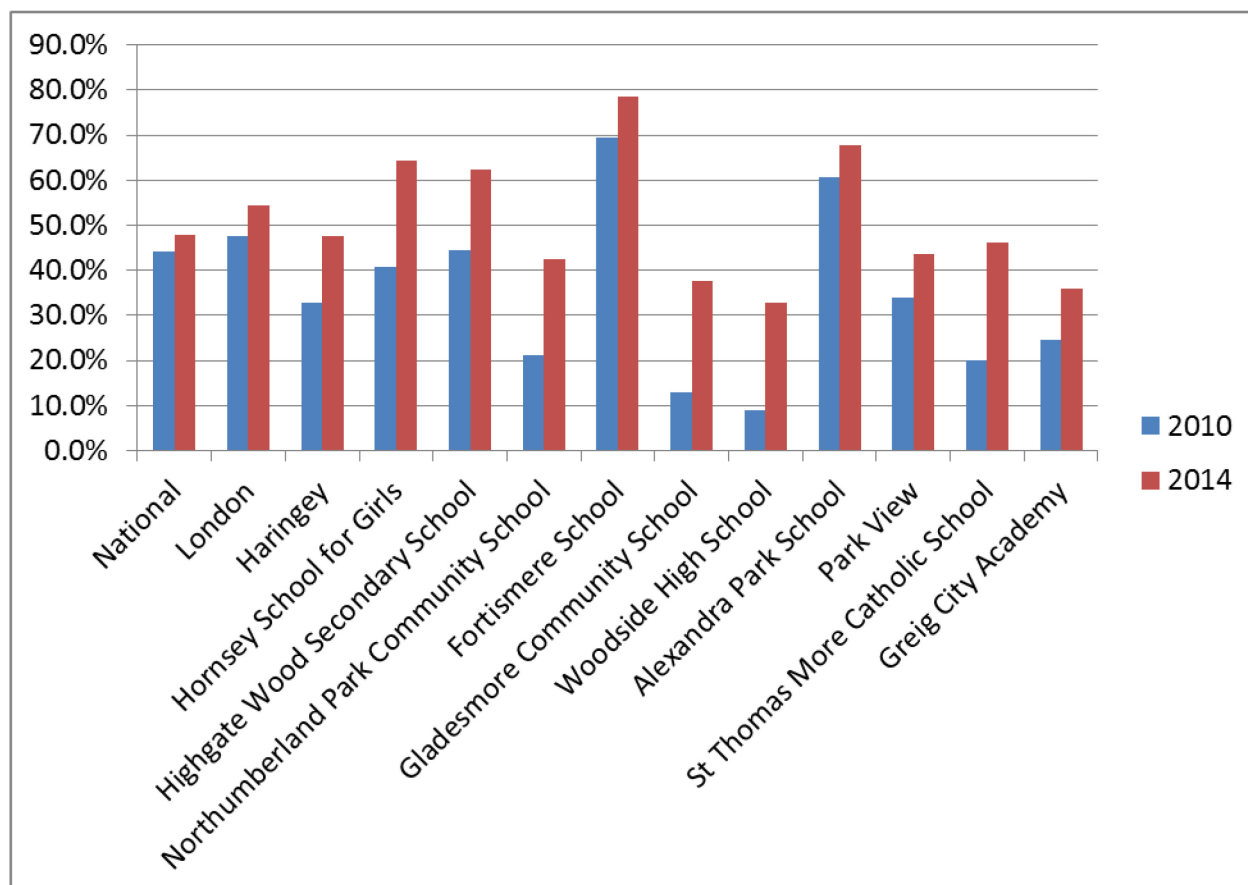
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[6] Disadvantage was determined based on the ever6 FSM measure. This indicates whether a pupil has been been recorded as eligible for free school meals in any spring census in the last 6 years, This measure is used to identify pupils who are elible for free school meals.
[7] School census data shows the most common ethnic origin of school pupils to be 'White Other' (29.2%), followed by White British (18.7%), Black African (16.6.%) and Black Caribbean (9.2.%);

Improvement

In the period between 2010 and 2014 the proportion of pupils in Haringey who achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C (including English and maths) increased from 32.7% to 47.5%; an absolute increase of 14.9% and a relative increase of 45.5%. The chart below shows the performance for Haringey, Haringey schools and the England and London rates[8]:

Figure 1: Proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C (including English and maths)

Leadership

Despite schools having very different leadership structures and styles, the impact of leadership on improvement in Haringey's secondary schools was a common theme. In particular the strength, quality and stability of leadership over recent years. Common to all the schools interviewed, and also described by the LA representative, is the importance of having high expectations for staff and pupils; everyone being ambitious

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[8] Full data tables can be seen in Appendix 1. The chart only shows data for 10 schools because Heartlands High is a new school and has not yet posted GCSE results.

enough on behalf of the pupils, in order for them to achieve their best. It is also important that this expectation was clearly communicated to the pupils.

The ability of leaders to inspire all staff to be committed to improvement is also viewed as important, including the willingness for all staff to be bolder and to take risks to identify what works for their school and pupils. At Highgate Wood Secondary School the leadership attitude changed in response to poor exam results in 2010. The school leadership introduced a 'no excuses' culture, underpinned by a belief that all students were capable of achieving. Interviewees stressed the importance of instilling self-confidence and belief in their pupils; if staff believe the pupils can do it then the pupils believe in themselves too. The LA representative felt that the level of ambition and expectation in secondary schools was showing a ripple effect into primary schools.

At Hornsey School for Girls a staffing restructure led to heads of faculties being appointed to an extented senior leadership team. The senior team undertake annual training with school governors which enables leaders to articulate a shared strategic direction for the school.

Good leadership is seen as important to create a sense of community and a shared ethos within the school. The head of Gladesmore Community School felt that the positive ethos, combined with a family atmosphere and strong links with the community, allowed staff to really challenge pupils on their performance without damaging self-confidence. Pupils are given opportunities to offer candid feedback on their experiences in the school enabling them to feel an active part of the improvement process. At Hornsey School for Girls, inclusivity is felt to be very important, ensuring that all pupils can access all the opportunities the school offers.

The school improvement strategy at LA level supports this ethos, and is designed to enable the system to improve itself rather than being driven by the LA which has more of a facilitating role.

Collaboration and competition

A strong theme is the importance of collaboration and competition between secondary schools in Haringey. The schools compete with each other in terms of progress and outcomes for their pupils; however they also closely collaborate in order to drive improvement. The schools willingly share performance data, and meet to discuss their performance, share experiences and learn from each other. The staff within the Haringey schools are generous with their time and are open to supporting the spread of good

practice. All schools interviewed said that across the LA schools had bought into the PiXL principles and methodologies for improvement[9].

It is felt that much of the competition and collaboration was originally driven by schools as they noticed other schools doing better than them. However, in recent years and particularly since the appointment of the new Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, the LA has played an increasing role as a facilitator, including sharing data and brokering relationships. There was clear agreement across the interviewees that the collaboration between schools that was experienced in Haringey far outstripped the collaboration that they had seen in other LAs. Some thought that this may have been helped by close geographic locations of the schools.

In 2012 Haringey Council set up the 'Outstanding for All' initiative, to make recommendations on the future direction of education in the borough. This had three key themes: 'achieving excellence for all', 'empowering parents and guardians' and 'a changing network'. The commission consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and published their findings and recommendations in February 2013.[10] The LA representative said that the fact that the leader of the council commissioned this report showed the LAs commitment to school improvement, especially through supporting the collaborative and competitive culture. The head teachers interviewed did not directly refer to this report or the process of producing it as a factor in school improvement; however the timing of the commission and consultation does coincide with the change in the LA's approach to improvement.

Use of data

All schools stressed the extent to which they use data to monitor performance at a school, year group or subject level, and also for individual pupils. All schools have staff dedicated to producing and analysing data. Progress and performance is regularly monitored and reported to senior leaders and governors, and also directly to pupils and parents.

Data is used in various intricate ways to identify pupils in need of intervention, to plan a programme of intervention across subjects and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions used. The schools all reported having timely access to pupil data which allowed them to identify changes in pupil performance and introduce early interventions to prevent issues becoming embedded. At Hornsey School for Girls individual level data is used to determine the GCSE pathways that pupils follow and to provide targeted

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[9] The PiXL Club is a not for profit collaboration of school leaders that focuses on supporting and developing GCSE and A Level results and Key Stage 2 outcomes across England.

[10] Haringey Education Commission – Outstanding for All

intervention for specific groups of pupils. At Gladesmore year group league tables encourage some competitiveness between pupils as an incentive to improve. At Highgate Wood, data is used to construct bespoke intervention programmes for students who are in danger of not making the progress expected.

There is agreement among interviewees that the improvement in use of data is not unique to Haringey, but that it is an important factor in the improvement in performance in recent years, particularly when combined with the cross borough challenge and collaboration described above. In essence, the data is key to highlighting patterns and posing important questions of leadership. However, the key to improvement is about being brave enough and swift enough to make big (and sometimes difficult) decisions in the best interests of the students to improve performance. Accountability at all levels is key. Schools are comfortable enough to seek challenge from each other on their data.

The LA also makes use of school data in order to support continued improvement in a 'critical friend' role. The individual targets set by schools are considered and challenged by the LA to ensure they are ambitious enough. Data is also used by the LA to identify where more targeted intervention is needed, and to identify where support can best be provided; however at the moment much of that support is focussed on primary schools due to the improvement seen in secondary schools.

Teacher quality

Teacher quality is seen to be key to the continued improvement of schools in Haringey, although this is also intrinsically linked to prior improvement – as schools improved then their ability to recruit and retain higher quality staff also improved. Head teachers were very clear that improvement is also very much driven by the dedication and hard work of all their staff without which improvement would not have happened.

In addition to being more able to recruit high quality teachers the schools interviewed also use a range of approaches to improve the quality of teaching. At Highgate Wood Secondary monitoring and challenge of staff was increased at the same time as an overall change of attitude in expectations and ambitions, as described above. More recently a greater emphasis has been given to deploying the best teachers in the school as coaches to develop others. Gladesmore has a culture of developing and promoting from within, in order to retain skills and quality staff. Most of the current leadership joined as trainee or newly qualified teachers. The head of Gladesmore also described a system whereby pupils are able to offer feedback on the teaching they receive. He felt that this is very helpful in improving teaching practice, once staff had overcome their pride.

At Hornsey School for Girls the Head and senior team set up a coaching system, led by former Advanced Skills Teachers, later called coaching leaders, who ensured that CPD was central to all teaching, thereby making sure there was consistent improvement for all staff. This was supported by improved monitoring of quality.

Quality has also been supported by a strong CPD programme offered by the LA.

Conclusion

Whilst it is not possible in research such as this to establish definitively what actions have delivered any observed change, our work in Haringey identified 4 key themes which interview participants thought were important in supporting the improvement in GCSE performance achieved between 2010 and 2014. Education providers and Local Authorities should consider their performance in these thematic areas and whether they can learn lessons from Haringey's experience.

Appendix 1 – data tables

Table 1 - GCSE performance for England, London and Haringey

		% with 5+ GCSEs A*-C inc English and Maths[+]	Relative change 2010 - 2014	Absolute change 2010-2014	% of disadvantaged pupils with 5+ GCSEs A*-C inc English and Maths[+]	Relative change 2010 - 2014	Absolute change 2010-2014	% of disadvantaged KS4 pupils	% with EAL
National	2010	44.1%			27.5%			23.3%	9.2%
	2014	47.8%	8.5%	3.8%	32.9%	19.8%	5.4%	25.9%	8.4%
London	2010	47.5%			47.5%			36.3%	22.9%
	2014	54.5%	14.7%	7.0%	54.5%	14.7%	7.0%	38.1%	23.9%
Haringey	2010	32.7%			22.7%			50.3%	43.1%
	2014	47.5%	45.5%	14.9%	39.4%	73.4%	16.7%	51.2%	48.6%
Hornsey School for Girls	2010	40.7%			33.6%			56.7%	66.3%
	2014	64.4%	58.2%	23.7%	57.3%	70.5%	23.7%	53.4%	70.4%
Highgate Wood Secondary School	2010	44.4%			18.5%			38.5%	16.2%
	2014	62.4%	40.8%	18.1%	46.8%	153.3%	28.3%	38.4%	23.1%

		% with 5+ GCSEs A*-C inc English and Maths[+]	Relative change 2010 - 2013	Absolute change 2010-2013	% of disadvantaged pupils with 5+ GCSEs A*-C inc English and Maths[+]	Relative change 2010 - 2013	Absolute change 2010-2013	% of disadvantaged KS4 pupils	% with EAL
Northumberland Park Community School	2010	21.1%			19.6%			71.8%	62.4%
	2014	42.5%	101.3%	21.4%	47.1%	140.0%	27.5%	69.2%	60.4%
Fortismere School	2010	69.4%			54.1%			15.1%	11.5%
	2014	78.6%	13.2%	9.2%	38.5%	-28.8%	-15.6%	15.5%	10.7%
Gladesmore Community School	2010	13.0%			12.9%			71.9%	58.2%
	2014	37.5%	189.7%	24.6%	33.1%	157.1%	20.2%	63.6%	56.9%
Woodside High School	2010	8.9%			7.3%			65.3%	57.9%
	2014	32.7%	265.2%	23.7%	27.3%	275.8%	20.0%	71.9%	63.7%
Alexandra Park School	2010	60.6%			48.7%			36.6%	37.0%
	2014	67.7%	11.8%	7.1%	54.5%	12.0%	5.8%	29.6%	37.3%
Park View	2010	33.9%			24.6%			56.3%	71.5%
	2014	43.6%	28.8%	9.8%	43.5%	76.6%	18.9%	55.5%	69.7%

	Year								
St Thomas Moore Catholic School	2010	19.9%			12.5%			42.1%	47.1%
	2014	46.2%	132.5%	26.3%	51.4%	310.8%	38.9%	62.3%	59.3%
Greig City Academy	2010	24.5%			18.2%			53.8%	37.5%
	2014	35.9%	46.7%	11.4%	34.0%	87.2%	15.9%	72.3%	49.7%

[+] This measure is based on all Full GCSEs (including double awards where appropriate and excluding short GCSEs)

Table 2 – Ethnicity of the population of England, London and Haringey, 2011

Ethnic group	Area Name		
	England	London	Haringey
White British	79.8	44.9	34.7
White: Irish	1.0	2.2	2.7
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1	0.1	0.1
White: Other White	4.6	12.6	23.0
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	0.8	1.5	1.9
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	0.3	0.8	1.0
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	0.6	1.2	1.5
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	0.5	1.5	2.1
Asian/Asian British: Indian	2.6	6.6	2.3
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	2.1	2.7	0.8
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.8	2.7	1.7
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0.7	1.5	1.5
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	1.5	4.9	3.2
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1.8	7.0	9.0
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	1.1	4.2	7.1
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0.5	2.1	2.6
Other ethnic group: Arab	0.4	1.3	0.9
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0.6	2.1	3.9

Source: Office for National Statistics, **'2011 Census, Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales**'.

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