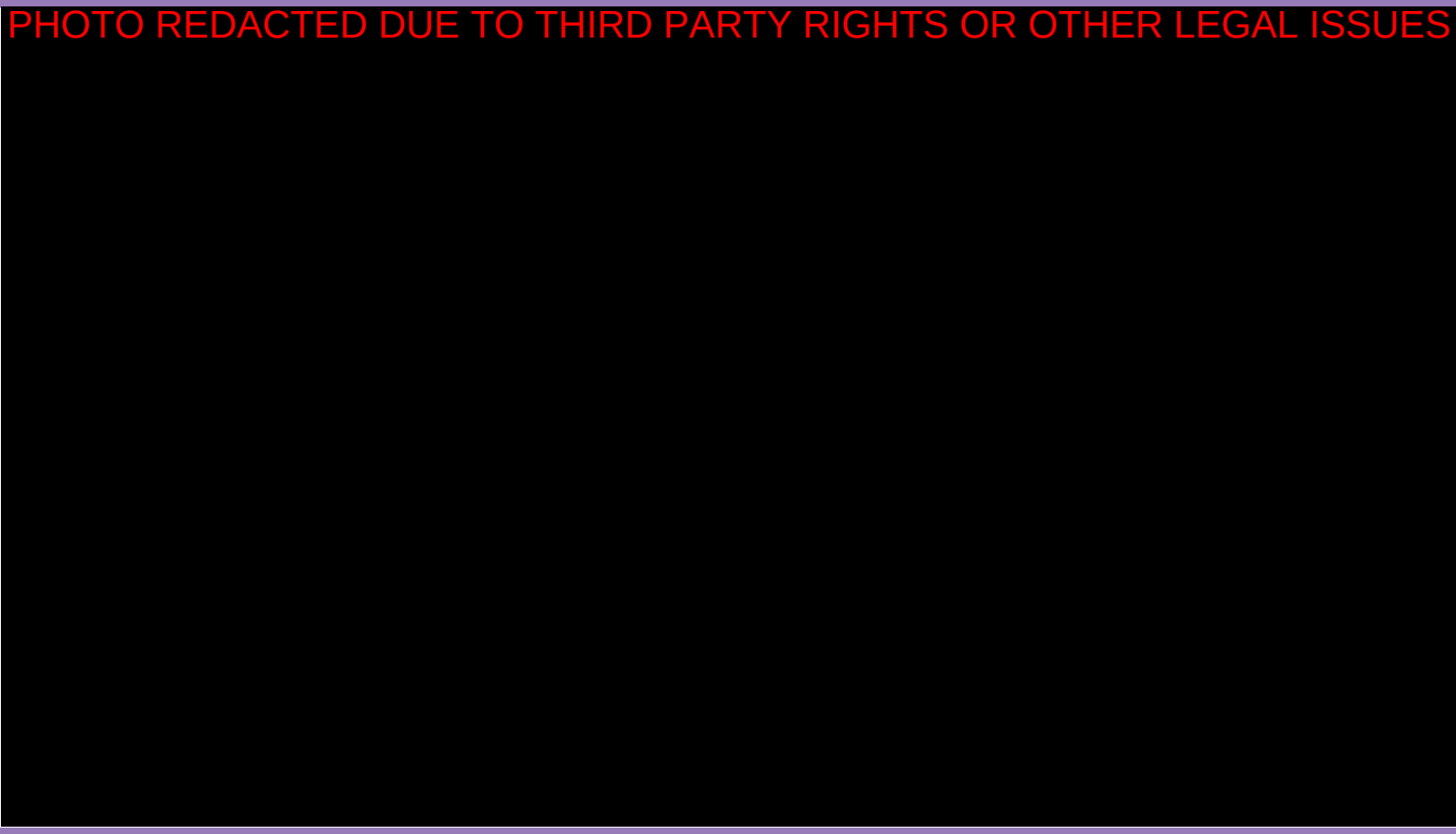
Office for Standards in Education

The education of asylum-seeker pupils



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in Education

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Introduction and evidence base

1. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES), in its publication, *Guidance on the education of asylum-seeking and refugee children* (2002), makes reference to asylum seekers as people who flee their home country and seek refugee status in another country, possibly because of war or human rights abuses, and then lodge an application for asylum with the United Kingdom (UK) government. While most asylum-seeking children arrive in the UK with one or both parents, some do not. They may arrive with friends or relatives who are not their usual carers, or they may arrive as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child as being under 18 years old and not cared for by that child's usual carers. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's care is the responsibility of the relevant social services department of the local authority, and the care of such children is covered by the provisions of the Children Act 1989.

2. Between the summer term 2001 and the spring term 2003, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted visited 37 schools in 11 local education authorities (LEAs) to evaluate the impact of the arrival of pupils from asylum-seeker families. The LEAs covered London, metropolitan authorities in the East Midlands and the North West, and three shire counties. The schools comprised one nursery, four first- and two middle-deemed secondary, 23 primary and seven secondary schools.

3. The majority of the schools were situated in areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. Eligibility for free school meals was often well above the national average, with the lowest at 8% and the highest at 75%. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils was also well above average, and ranged from less than 5% to over 90%. Figures for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) covered a similar range. Nearly half the schools had high pupil mobility, with the turnover of pupils reaching up to 27% in one year. The sample included two Beacon schools, one Fresh Start school and five schools which had, at some time, been subject to special measures or had been deemed to have serious weaknesses.

4. Since April 2000, the Home Office, through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), has operated a system of dispersing some asylum-seeker families who require accommodation to authorities around the country. It was recognised that there was a general need to disperse asylum seekers away from London and the South East because it was the local authorities in these areas that were carrying a disproportionate burden. The dispersal areas are based in towns and cities where suitable

accommodation is available, and where there is the potential to provide a link with existing multi-cultural communities and to develop the support of local voluntary and community groups. Arrangements have been made in each of the dispersal areas, through the creation of regional consortia led by local authorities, to ensure collaboration between different agencies in supporting the asylum-seeker families. At the time of dispersal, NASS, using details provided by the asylum-seeker families, informs receiving LEAs whether or not those families contain any school-age children.

5. Most of the schools visited as part of the survey were located in the dispersal authorities. A few, mainly in London, had long experience of dealing with newly arrived pupils, particularly asylum seekers. About half the schools in the dispersal areas had no experience of asylum-seeker pupils with little or no English, and had few minority ethnic pupils already on roll.

6. From September 2000 to March 2003, schools in the dispersal authorities were eligible for a one-off grant of £500 for each asylum-seeker pupil they admitted. The grant applied only to those families who were supported by NASS.

7. In the schools outside London, the percentage of asylum-seeker pupils on roll ranged from 2% to 26%. The average was around 7%. In the London schools, the proportion of asylum-seeker pupils was very much higher, with the average around 20%.

8. In each LEA, HMI met with staff who had responsibility for assisting schools with asylum-seeker pupils, and who were able to give an overview of the authority's strategy and policy of support for the newly arrived families. The one-day visits to each of the schools included discussions with the headteacher, class teachers and any LEA support staff working in the school. HMI also observed lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work and records of their progress.

Main findings

- Schools committed much time, effort and resources to integrating the asylum-seeker pupils in a positive and supportive manner. Several schools had well-established and effective arrangements for the admission and induction of the newly arrived pupils and provided good teaching support. Others were less well informed about basic procedures and guidance on the education of asylum-seeker pupils.
- Some schools in the dispersal authorities struggled initially to meet the learning needs of the pupils; class teachers, in particular, lacked expertise with pupils new to English. There were particular difficulties with providing an appropriate curriculum for unaccompanied minors in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Many schools had not had any training to enable them to identify pupils with severe psychological distress and trauma. Some teachers also lacked basic background knowledge about the linguistic, cultural and educational experiences of the pupils.
- School staff funded by the ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) generally made a vital contribution in supporting the asylum-seeker pupils and their families. They also provided valuable advice, training and teaching support for class teachers. However, there were several examples where existing school resources and staffing were diverted to meet the more immediate needs of the newly arrived pupils.
- The quality of teaching and of support for the great majority of the asylum-seeker pupils was at least satisfactory, and often good. The teaching was at its most effective where there were close collaboration, planning and support between class teachers and EMAG staff.
- Many asylum-seeker pupils made good progress in relatively short periods of time and almost all made at least satisfactory progress. The combination of their determination to succeed and the strong support of their parents provided a potent recipe for success.
- The LEAs provided at least satisfactory and, in some cases, very good support for schools receiving the pupils. Some LEAs had limited central capacity to support schools – particularly those which had no devolved EMAG funding. The most effective LEAs played a key role in the provision of advice and guidance, and in brokering the admission of pupils.
- Not all LEAs had effective mechanisms in place for co-ordinating the admissions into schools and the contributions of different agencies supporting the asylum-seeker families. Schools in less effective LEAs did not always have sufficient understanding and information about this work.

- In the dispersal areas, the information about the pupils and their families which was passed on to the LEAs by the various agencies involved, including the Home Office and NASS, was variable in quality and quantity. As a result, the admission and induction of some pupils took longer than necessary.
- The impact on LEAs and schools of the location of the housing in the dispersal areas was rarely thought through fully by the various agencies.

Points for action

9. To build on the findings of this survey:

those with national responsibility should:

- improve the co-ordination and accuracy of the information about the asylum-seeker pupils and families before it is passed to LEAs and schools
- consider more carefully the educational impact of decisions about the allocation of housing in the dispersal areas.

LEAs should:

- provide schools with better advice and guidance on how to support asylum-seeker pupils experiencing psychological problems and trauma
- ensure greater sharing of effective practice about meeting the needs of newly arrived pupils, particularly those in the later stages of secondary education
- prioritise support for those schools which have the least expertise in meeting the needs of the new arrivals
- ensure all schools are better informed about the work of national, regional and local agencies and resources for supporting the newly arrived pupils and their families.

schools should:

- ensure all staff are up to date with their knowledge and understanding of the linguistic, educational and cultural needs of the asylum-seeker pupils
- review frequently the effectiveness of their admission and induction arrangements for the pupils and their families.

Welcome, admission and induction

10. Almost all the asylum-seeker pupils arrived outside the schools' standard admission times. All spoke little or no English. Schools generally handled their enrolment in a positive and supportive way. In one or two cases, there was some initial but temporary resentment at what was seen as an imposition of the pupils on the school. However, these rare situations only arose when there had been a lack of communication between the school and the LEA over admission arrangements. For very many schools, particularly in the dispersal authorities, the arrival of the asylum-seeker pupils proved to be the beginning of a positive experience and relationship

between staff, pupils and the asylum-seeker families. The comments of one headteacher of a school with few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds encapsulated the positive impact of the newly arrived pupils on his school. For himself, his staff and the established pupils, the arrival of 26 asylum-seeker pupils in a school with 100 on roll 'had been better than a training video on inclusion'. For this school and many others, the admission and integration of the newly arrived pupils proved to be a very good litmus test of how well the principles of inclusion and race equality were applied in practice. It also helped to deepen the staff's understanding of how well the school was placed to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all its pupils.

11. Schools varied in the effectiveness of their initial response to meeting the needs of the asylum-seeker pupils. Those schools, mainly in inner-city areas serving diverse communities, accustomed to managing significant pupil mobility and with staff that had experience and expertise in teaching pupils with EAL, were more proficient in managing the admission of the asylum-seeker pupils. In contrast, schools with little of this background took some time to adjust admission procedures to the new arrivals, so delaying the integration of the pupils.

12. Nevertheless, the schools in the dispersal areas and in the shire authorities quickly learned to adapt and improve their procedures for admission. This became urgent as increasing numbers of pupils were being admitted. For example, some schools decided to designate particular days for admissions, which coincided with the times when EMAG support staff were present in the school. One school introduced this procedure to allow its part-time Somali-speaking teaching assistant to be present to help with communicating with the families, to put them at ease and to explain school routines and organisation. This small change made a large contribution to the positive and trusting relationship that was forged with the newly arrived families. In another school, the weekly designated time for admissions allowed administrative staff to devote their time and effort to helping the families, as well as enabling the school's EMAG co-ordinator to brief the class teachers with information about the asylum-seeker pupils' linguistic, educational and cultural backgrounds.

13. Several authorities had produced clear and valuable guidelines on admission procedures for asylum seekers. This guidance often formed an important cornerstone of a school's approach. The most effective guidance included information about educational entitlements of asylum seekers, the support available for schools from the central EMAG service, background information on difficulties facing asylum seekers, key elements in the admission and induction process and strategies for support in the classroom. In a few of the dispersal areas, there was initial uncertainty and

ignorance in the schools about the handling of admissions. Often the LEA, with little experience of asylum seekers, had few procedures and structures in place to support schools. Basic systems of information and guidance had to be set up quickly. In one authority in the Midlands, the central admissions officer provided leaflets to schools in a number of different languages about asylum seekers' basic entitlements to education. By the end of the period during which the inspections took place, the co-ordination of information between schools and the LEA, particularly the admissions department, had much improved in the dispersal areas.

14. Where an authority was able to provide the schools with background information about the pupils before they were admitted, schools handled the admissions with greater ease. Staff were able to take careful account of this information in deciding where to place the pupils. In the most effective examples, the information provided to schools by the LEA covered the linguistic, educational and cultural background of the families. However, in the dispersal areas, the information received by the LEA about the families who came via the NASS route varied in quality and accuracy. In several cases, there was uncertainty over the pupils' date of birth. This caused particular problems in the placement of pupils in appropriate classes and, at secondary level, suitable examination courses.

15. Not all asylum-seeker pupils arrived in schools with detailed background information provided by the LEA. Some pupils came with agents of the housing arranged through NASS; others who had not come through the NASS route arrived at the school with no warning. Interpreters were not always present during these initial meetings between school and families. Their presence was particularly important when neither the school nor the EMAG service had anybody who could speak the language of the families. Many schools, especially in the dispersal areas, found it frustrating trying to communicate with the families when there was no immediate access to interpreters through the LEA or through their own EMAG staff. The cost of using the interpreters when eventually located was, for some schools, too high. However, some schools were particularly enterprising in finding interpreters from the local community, including staff and students from local hospitals and colleges, as well as using their network of contacts with established asylum-seeker families in the area. One shire authority had appointed linguistic and cultural mediators, mostly drawn from local refugee communities; their brief extended beyond basic interpreting to include facilitating links between schools, agencies and asylum-seeker families. A number of schools in the LEA had made good use of the mediators, particularly to establish positive relationships with the families and in helping to explain to the parents unfamiliar aspects of their children's education.

16. In two of the dispersal authorities, a number of schools had also admitted newly arrived pupils from the European Union (EU). These families, classified as habitual residents, had been granted refugee status outside the UK. These pupils did not qualify for the £500 grant from the DfES. It was a combination of additional funding, in some cases very limited, from the LEA and the schools' own budget which was used to meet the learning needs of these pupils. In an extreme case, one primary school had admitted in a two-year period 300 such pupils, of whom 200 were still in the school at the time of the HMI visit. The school managed with difficulty to integrate the pupils successfully, but not without drawing significantly upon its budget reserve.

17. Just over half of the schools used the LEA's central EMAG team to carry out an initial assessment of the pupils' language needs. The remainder used their own EMAG staff. In some cases, the school undertook the assessment where the LEA could not meet the target deadline set for its completion because the small central EMAG team was overstretched. The assessment by LEAs and schools almost always provided a sound basis for planning the support programme for the newly arrived pupils. In one LEA, the assessment carried out by the central EMAG team prioritised the support needed and this enabled the school to focus its resources as efficiently as possible. At best, the assessment included not just the language-acquisition stage of the newly arrived pupils but also their competence in their home language and previous education experience.

18. Based on the information provided by the initial assessment, schools generally gave careful consideration to the placement of the newly arrived pupils into the most appropriate year group and class. This included phasing admission from a part- to a full-time basis, and deciding whether it would be in the best interests of the pupils if placement in classes should be based on age, language or sibling considerations. One first school, for example, decided that a Year 1 pupil, with little previous experience of education prior to arrival in the UK, should during the first few weeks in the school spend some time in the reception class to experience learning through play. The situation was handled with sensitivity by the school and enabled the pupil to adapt more quickly and happily to school life and routines.

19. Several schools placed great importance on ensuring that the parents were an integral part of the welcome and induction. They gave careful attention to informing the parents not just about the education of their children and their entitlements, such as free school meals, but also about facilities in the local community. One school, for example, had produced a very attractive series of folders detailing aspects of school life and of services in the local community. The folders, which consisted mainly of photographs and simple

sentences in English and Albanian, provided an important part of the school's discussion with parents and children. The school had worked with a bilingual instructor from the LEA's EMAG service to make the folders, mainly because of the frustration of not being able to communicate with the first Albanian-speaking families who had arrived at the school. The reaction and response from the families, who felt that their first language was being valued and appreciated by the school, were extremely positive.

20. There were several other good examples of initiatives taken by schools which helped the newly arrived parents to become more easily integrated into the community. One school ran a computer club for newly arrived families where they could access newspapers in their home language and catch up on news about their country. Several schools also had community rooms which acted as drop-in centres for parents seeking advice and help. One school in the Midlands, on its own initiative, arranged for a local forum of residents, asylum seekers, councillors, voluntary agencies, police and church representatives to meet in the school. This forum, which also had a school representative, tackled concerns and worries affecting all parties. It was instrumental in overcoming initial hostility and antagonism, particularly between local residents and the asylum-seeker families.

21. The EMAG staff of schools generally played an effective role in the welcome and induction of the asylum-seeker pupils and their families. There were other key support staff that also played an important part in this crucial initial phase. In one authority, and with the agreement of the schools, part of the £500 grant had been retained to allow the central recruitment and training of bilingual support workers who spoke languages of several of the recently arrived families. This was a well-targeted use of the funds, enabling these staff to support schools during the admission period. In addition, the workers provided valuable assistance in the classroom, as well as helping out with explanations of everyday school procedures. In one school, they had set up a notice board for the families, with leaflets and information in the home language. Home-school liaison officers were also important in some schools in maintaining effective lines of communication with the parents; often these workers were able to draw extensively on their contacts within the local community to support the newly arrived families.

School ethos and curriculum provision

22. Many of the schools visited, drawing from diverse communities, already provided a good range of opportunities through the curriculum to promote and celebrate the different cultures, languages and backgrounds of their pupils. Often in these schools, there was a strong commitment to race equality in both policy and practice. The arrival of the asylum-seeker

pupils and their families frequently provided a positive affirmation of the school's commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils, irrespective of background and circumstances. Only in a few cases was the response of the school limited in the opportunities it took to affirm the language and culture of the asylum-seeker pupils. Often this was because teachers lacked the confidence or background knowledge to promote the different cultures and backgrounds of the pupils.

23. Schools frequently used assemblies, religious and cultural festivals, and the creative arts to enhance awareness and promote different cultures and community backgrounds. Displays in the schools also drew attention to different home languages spoken by the pupils, and they were often placed in prominent areas of the school. Teachers ensured that the pupils' home languages were also an integral part of their everyday teaching. Such approaches sent very powerful messages about how language was valued. It was not always the case that teachers had expertise in the different languages, but their willingness to show appreciation of its importance more than compensated for the lack of knowledge.

> *In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, a Punjabi-speaking EMAG teacher had an asylum-seeker pupil from the Czech Republic recently admitted into his group. The latter spoke little English. The mathematics lesson was on telling the time. Prior to the lesson, the teacher had used a Czech bilingual dictionary to identify a number of key 'time' words to be used in the lesson. The words in Czech and English were listed in the classroom. The teacher asked the pupil to say the words in his own language and share these with the rest of the class. The pupil helped the teacher to pronounce the words in Czech. The boy's subsequent level of interest and concentration in the lesson was a reflection of the teacher's determination, despite only having a rudimentary understanding of Czech, to value the boy's home language.*

24. Several schools made good use of events such as International Refugee Week to consider the experiences and plight of asylum seekers and refugees. In one school, the week's events included an exhibition of art-work and writing produced by parents and pupils, an international food festival and a performance from each year group of dance, drama and music from around the world. The events deepened the awareness and understanding of all members of the school community about the difficulties and challenges faced by asylum-seeker pupils and their families. One LEA had sponsored and supported a project on world songs, and in one infant school which had participated in the project, pupils from the Somali home language club had made presentations at a variety of conferences and exhibitions in the authority.

25. Where there was good practice, schools often provided excellent opportunities for parents to be involved in school work and to participate in extra-curricular activities. One school in the Midlands involved parents in a wide range of activities including family literacy groups, adult English classes and various out-of-school events. For example, it had recently held at a weekend a family story-telling festival during which large tents had been erected in many parts of the school. In each tent, story tellers paid for by the school told stories in the different community languages represented in the school and local community. The response from pupils, parents and visitors was excellent because the headteacher and staff clearly demonstrated their unequivocal commitment to celebrating and affirming the rich and diverse cultural backgrounds of all pupils, including those from asylum-seeker families.

26. In the most effective schools, key events such as International Refugee Week were seen as high-profile occasions in a curriculum which, for all pupils, reinforced daily the values and aspirations of the school. The school referred to earlier, which had participated in the celebration of International Refugee Week, had reviewed the curriculum to incorporate the cultures and needs of specific groups. This led, for example, to work in citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE), a black history month and writing sessions to motivate pupils to write stories of courage under difficult political and personal circumstances. Schemes of work incorporated advice and guidance to teachers about pupils' linguistic needs and the promotion of diversity in teaching and learning.

27. In the same schools, extra-curricular activities were an integral part of the overall provision for the pupils. There were often also mother-tongue classes, which provided good opportunities for the children to build their confidence and self-esteem, develop their sense of worth and use their home language. One school ran mother-tongue classes for pupils, including a Somali class for all pupils and a French class for gifted and talented pupils from Year 6, as well as other French-speaking pupils from Key Stage 2. In another school in the same authority, a Somali bilingual assistant ran the weekly home language club for children from nursery to Year 6. The assistant came to this country as an asylum seeker and had been granted refugee status. The work of the language club provided not just a positive affirmation for the pupils but also for the leader who had been recruited by the school to work in the nursery and reception classes.

Meeting pupils' learning needs

28. The contribution of the headteacher and senior staff was crucial in ensuring the rapid and successful integration of the pupils. In the majority of schools, the quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior staff was at least satisfactory, and often good. There were some very good examples of effective leadership in schools which had long experience of taking asylum-seeker pupils and refugees. In one of the most successful schools in London, the headteacher gave particular emphasis to setting and reinforcing staff expectations and the school ethos. At the heart of the school's effectiveness was the monitoring of the impact of initiatives and policies on standards, coupled with staff training, the deployment of resources based on careful analysis, the raising of funds for new initiatives, and establishing networks of support and multi-agency links. Such effective leadership worked well for all pupils, including the asylum-seeker pupils. The school had obtained funding from the single regeneration budget and had appointed two full-time home–school link officers. As well as acting as interpreters and translators, they provided support with various classes for parents, running the breakfast clubs and one of the mother-tongue classes. This effective practice had been built up over a number of years.

29. For the headteacher of an infants school in the Midlands, whose population of newly arrived pupils had risen from 10% to 34% in a little over two years, successful integration of the pupils had been achieved through the effective part he and senior staff had played in:

- overcoming the uncertainties of staff, whose questions included, 'Who are these children, and how are we going to cope with these numbers?'
- being positive about the arrival of the families by not seeing them as a problem and emphasising the good attitudes of the pupils and families towards learning and education
- working with the children themselves, for example by helping to set boundaries for behaviour in the classroom and the playground when some of the newly arrived pupils behaved aggressively
- sending out clear messages to parents that the school was 'not letting anything go' where there were racial tensions between a predominantly white indigenous population and the asylum-seeker families. This direct, hands-on approach had been successful in dealing with the relatively few racial incidents between the two communities
- appointing a bilingual assistant who spoke the language of the newly arrived families to ensure that there was effective communication between staff, children and parents.

30. In this school, the role of the head had been decisive in ensuring that the school had a welcoming and positive approach to the new arrivals, and set a clear example for all by not tolerating racist behaviour. He also ensured that teaching and pastoral support were more finely tuned to meeting the social and linguistic needs of pupils and families through the appointment of the bilingual assistant.

31. In the dispersal authorities, there was also effective practice in schools where the headteacher and senior staff were committed to reviewing and improving the school's response to meeting the needs of the newly arrived pupils. For example, one school had drawn from national and local guidance on meeting the needs of the pupils. It had picked out the important practical issues for managing successfully the induction and integration of the pupils. However, not all schools were aware of the guidance for supporting asylum-seeker pupils and their families. For example, very few schools knew about the DfES document on the education of asylum-seeker and refugee children. Similarly, not all schools were making use of the extensive information and advice from agencies such as the Refugee Council.

32. In the small minority of schools where the range and quality of the response to the asylum-seeker pupils had been limited, there were a number of contributory factors. These included:

- staff who did not feel confident in their own abilities to respond effectively to meeting the needs of the asylum-seeker pupils
- schools, often with very few EAL learners and ethnic-minority pupils, that received no devolved EMAG funding because their number of qualifying pupils was too low
- the fact that a central EMAG team, despite commendable efforts, was limited in its capacity to support the school because the vast majority of EMAG funding had been devolved to schools. In these schools, the management of the school's response and provision was not given sufficient status and priority. In one school, the part-time learning mentor, appointed through the Excellence in Cities initiative, had too much responsibility for the co-ordination of support for the asylum-seeker pupils. As a result, there was little effective contact between class teachers and the EAL teacher from the central EMAG team who came once a week to support the asylum-seeker pupils. Consequently, co-ordination of the efforts of the different strands of support was weak. This limited the rate of progress made by the asylum-seeker pupils to unsatisfactory.

33. In nearly three out of four schools, the support provided by the school's EMAG staff was good – and in some instances excellent. Apart from one school where it was weak, the remainder of the support was satisfactory. The support was often wide ranging, comprehensive and, in some schools, frequently extending beyond the school. The most effective EMAG staff were influential at the admission stage in working with class teachers to provide teaching support, in liaising with the families, and advising and training staff.

34. Some schools ran very effective induction programmes alongside the main classroom teaching. In one primary school, the EMAG co-ordinator devised and taught an induction programme for new arrivals in Key Stage 2 who were in the early stages of English. This was an eight-week course of two lessons a week to support the new arrivals. The programme, covering basic skills, was aimed at supplementing rather than replacing in-class EMAG support, and ensured that the pupils were able to access the full curriculum as soon as possible. An induction programme for new arrivals, similar in range and content, operated in a secondary school but was more intensive, being held daily because of the students' stage of English. The programme also helped the students familiarise themselves with the education system and the organisation of the school.

> *In one induction lesson for nine recently arrived pupils, aged from 13 to 15 and from seven different countries including Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the teaching focused very effectively on familiarising the students with the names of continents and countries, on encouraging them to ask questions about each other and helping them to undertake research in the school library. The lesson contained a variety of tasks and opportunities for oral work and discussion. Pupils were confident to have a go despite the challenging subject matter. They were not unduly worried about making mistakes and were willing to learn from one another. The teacher provided very positive encouragement and praise but maintained a climate of high expectations of achievement and behaviour. The lesson made an effective contribution to developing the students' skills in undertaking research work as part of their classroom studies.*

35. Class teachers varied in their confidence and competence in dealing with the linguistic, cultural, pastoral and academic needs of the newly arrived pupils. In those schools which had EMAG staff who worked in close co-operation with mainstream teachers, the response of class teachers was more assured and effective in ensuring that the newly arrived pupils were quickly integrated and accessing the full curriculum. Some of the schools in the dispersal areas struggled to teach the pupils initially. Class teachers

without any expertise in teaching EAL learners relied on generic skills to meet their linguistic needs; often there was no-one on the staff who had any significant experience in teaching EAL learners. As one class teacher said, 'I just threw everything at them and saw what did or did not work.'

36. This trial-and-error approach contrasted sharply with a secondary school where the EMAG manager gave regular advice during weekly staff briefing sessions, such as suggesting strategies to introduce new words and texts. The information proved helpful to class teachers. Form teachers subsequently followed up the guidance during tutorial sessions and by setting up displays around the school which reinforced the learning. In some cases, schools used their budget to train their teaching assistants in supporting EAL learners. EMAG staff in several schools had access to centrally organised courses and training which sometimes included references to meeting the needs of asylum-seeker pupils. Some schools had effective procedures for EMAG staff to share the outcomes of these courses with class teachers.

LEA support

37. The quality of the support provided by LEAs ranged from satisfactory to very good. The most effective authorities, predominantly in London, gave crucial guidance and support on effective procedures for the admission and teaching support of the asylum-seeker pupils; they also played crucial roles both in brokering the admission of the pupils into school and in helping to co-ordinate the work of various voluntary and statutory agencies. Often in these authorities there were key personnel to whom schools could refer for advice or help. In some authorities these personnel were part of the EMAG central support service. In one northern LEA, a co-ordinator for the education of refugee children managed a small team of peripatetic EAL teachers who worked with refugees and asylum seekers new to English in schools without EMAG funding. The organisation of the central support in some of the authorities in the dispersal areas took some time to put in place. Often they were only one step ahead of the schools in their ability to respond to the needs of the newly arrived families and children. The location of the housing for the asylum-seeker families in the dispersal authorities often brought additional pressures and difficulties for the LEAs. In some cases, the housing was in areas of the authority where the population was predominantly white; in other instances, particular schools with spare places admitted the newly arrived pupils. As a result, a few schools felt that they were receiving more than their fair share of the families. The consequence for LEAs and schools of the location of the housing for the families was rarely thought through by the national agencies.

38. Many schools appreciated the help given by the central support team with making the initial assessments of the pupils and the compilation of basic information and background details of the families. However, it was not always possible to align the arrival, admission and assessment. A few schools expressed concern at the slow response of the LEA to requests for an initial assessment. For example, a request could take a minimum of three weeks and, even then, the availability of an interpreter was not guaranteed. In these cases, the schools made their own arrangements despite the communication difficulties posed by the lack of an appropriate and reliable translation and interpreting service.

39. A key role played by a number of authorities was the co-ordination of the work and support of various agencies, including health, social services and voluntary agencies. One authority issued schools with a directory of agencies working with refugee families, which gave a good overview of the range of contacts and their work. Often there was good work at local levels which played a decisive role in co-ordinating efforts. In one seaside area which had received a number of families, the work of a member of the EMAG service was vital in helping with the liaison with families, contacting voluntary agencies and serving as an education representative on the local forum for asylum-seeker families. However, the co-ordination and dissemination of information about the role, responsibilities and contributions of all the different agencies were not always clear or well communicated to schools. Consequently, several schools were frustrated by the lack of information and spending time unnecessarily on finding out the appropriate agency or person to contact.

40. Some well-conceived, imaginative work was undertaken by authorities to support the work of schools. These initiatives included funding to support the admission, induction and integration of asylum seekers. In one authority, much of this funding was used to support home language clubs which were run for both pupils and their families. Their impact was positive because they affirmed strongly the status, culturally and linguistically, of the families and their background.

41. The excellent practice in one authority demonstrated many of the characteristics of an effective framework of support and help for schools. These included:

    - giving priority to enabling access to education for the newly arrived pupils and young people
    - ensuring that staff at the centre dealing with families enquiring about enrolment offer appropriate advice, with translation and interpretation where necessary

- providing training for front-line staff in schools on the information parents need, the cultural backgrounds of the local communities and the services to which parents and children are entitled
- at primary level, managing a team offering support to pupils, and advice, training and resources to teachers and teaching assistants
- at secondary level, supporting the schools to make the best possible use of the devolved funding, such as using a consultant to work with a group of schools to train staff and to set up systems for assessment
- using school-based projects to promote understanding of the difficulties and challenges of being an asylum seeker, such as using a development worker to focus time and resources on socially excluded pupils
- providing training opportunities for suitably qualified staff from refugee communities, such as Somali teachers who needed a familiarisation course to facilitate their entry to teacher training
- ensuring that provision for asylum seekers and refugees is an integral part of the authority's education development plan and race equality work
- having a clearly designated post which oversees support for the pupils
- promoting effective inter-agency links with, for example, social services and housing for collecting and co-ordinating information about families that have arrived in the community
- organising a co-ordinating group or forum in education to look at issues in providing for the pupils.

42. Not all authorities operated on such a scale. But even where the central team was smaller and there was not such a large asylum-seeker/refugee population, the authority could make a difference in facilitating and supporting the key areas of admissions, induction and co-ordination.

43. The quality of co-ordination and dissemination of information between agencies and schools was generally satisfactory and, in a few cases, poor. In a minority of LEAs it was very good. LEAs, for their part, did not always receive sufficiently detailed information about the families and their backgrounds. This made the initial assessments more difficult to carry out – and more protracted. Not all asylum-seeker pupils and families arrived at the schools via the NASS route; some arrived unannounced from another area of the UK. Consequently some schools, especially in the dispersal areas, did not always have a good overview of the different but interconnecting parts of the complex network of support for asylum-seeker pupils and their families.

Teaching provision and pupils' progress

44. In almost all the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and, in just over half, it was good or better. In the majority of lessons, the class teacher had some additional support either from a teaching assistant or a member of the school's EMAG staff. There were a few sessions observed which involved staff from the LEA's central support team, whether a bilingual assistant or a teacher.

45. Where the teaching was most effective, it was characterised by:

- teachers who had a good knowledge and understanding of the language needs of pupils both new to English, and those who were more advanced learners
- a well-considered range of teaching strategies and resources to support the asylum-seeker pupils' understanding
- careful planning with support staff and teaching assistants of how best to deploy their expertise in lessons
- clear guidance, help and support from the school's EMAG co-ordinator
- effective policies, induction and training for staff to ensure newly arrived pupils made the best possible start.

The following lessons incorporated a number of the above features:

In a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson about symmetry of different shapes, there were four asylum-seeker pupils, one of whom had arrived the term before with no previous schooling. The class teacher was working with two teaching assistants, one of whom was for SEN support. In the lesson, the class teacher made very effective use of dual-language labelling (Somali and English) for the names of shapes with the most recently arrived pupil. During group activities, all four pupils were identified clearly for support by the class teacher and teaching assistants, who clarified and explained to good effect how to fold and mark the number of lines of symmetry on different two-dimensional shapes. The class teacher, appointed to the school less than 12 months ago, and with little experience of teaching EAL pupils, had received training from the school's EMAG co-ordinator on meeting the needs of asylum-seeker/refugee pupils as part of the induction programme for all new staff.

In a Year 4 English lesson, the teacher used the layout of a graphics organiser to model how she would plan her writing. She recorded the key words while she talked the pupils through why her chosen pet, a parrot, would make a good pet; why she wanted it for a pet; what it looked like; and how she would care for it. Pupils talked in pairs telling each other which pet they wanted to choose and why. Pupils discussed each other's choices and reasons, and moved on to plan their story on the graphic organiser. The asylum-seeker pupils participated with enthusiasm and were helped to write and spell using visual prompts of pictures and captions. The very effective way in which the teacher modelled the planning and rehearsed orally what was to be written played a key role in supporting the asylum seekers' learning of English.

46. In the more effective lessons, the teachers paid careful attention to the use and teaching of vocabulary, particularly in mathematics. The teachers in these lessons also used peer support to good effect by ensuring that the newly arrived pupils worked with fluent speakers of English. They encouraged the asylum-seeker pupils to use their home languages to support explanations and understanding. Group work was planned carefully with EMAG support staff to provide targeted support for the asylum-seeker pupils, as well as opportunities for them to work collaboratively with other pupils to improve their English.

47. The EMAG staff and teaching assistants generally provided good quality support to targeted pupils, including those newly arrived. For example, in one class, the EMAG teacher sat close to the asylum-seeker pupils, quietly ensuring that they were fully engaged by providing explanations of words and concepts used by the teacher. The teaching assistant sat at the back of the group, noting the responses of the pupils and using an assessment sheet based on key learning objectives and targets of the week. One high school used some of its EMAG funds to buy in a small amount of additional support from the central service. This support was effectively used to target two asylum seekers in Year 11 who were taking General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) later in the year. The support teacher in a withdrawal session worked with the students on developing their skills in skimming and scanning texts. Key activities included pronunciation, language construction and checking of meanings, using dictionaries. The excellent rapport between the support teacher and the three students ensured that the time was well used to meet their language needs and the requirements of the examination.

48. In some schools, the asylum-seeker pupils benefited from the existing good range of teaching support put in place to meet the wide range of pupils' needs in the school. This might, for example, include home language groups, nurture sessions for underachieving pupils in particular classes, and one-to-one intensive sessions. One middle school ran nurture or intensive support sessions in literacy three times a week. These sessions focused on improving basic literacy skills, particularly writing. The small number of pupils in these short-term withdrawal groups benefited from one-to-one support from the teacher, who ensured the work was carefully aligned with what was being covered in class. The asylum-seeker pupils responded positively in this secure atmosphere. They appreciated the guidance and support provided by the teacher and made good progress.

49. There were a few examples of teachers placing asylum-seeker pupils in inappropriate ability groups or sets. Where this occurred, it resulted in a poor match between pupils' ability and the demands of the learning task. For example, one school was misguided in placing the newly arrived pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register and the subsequent teaching strategies and resources were predominantly modelled on the teaching of pupils with SEN. This resulted in teaching that did not provide well-matched cognitive challenge, and the asylum-seeker pupils made slow progress.

50. In all the lessons observed, the response of the asylum-seeker pupils to learning was at least satisfactory and often very good. In some cases, the pupils demonstrated a hunger for learning which startled some of the more established members of the class. Most had settled in well and were responding positively to the structured school environment and general class routines. They were attentive, well motivated and interacted well with their peers. One teaching assistant said that 'the asylum-seeker pupils had proved good role models for the other pupils in terms of their application and desire for learning.' Often their parents showed the same positive attitudes. In some cases, they combined to demonstrate a powerful commitment to making the most of the learning opportunities provided by the school.

51. The following example provides a powerful illustration of how significant progress can be made, given effective support and help by the staff, pupils, LEA and other agencies.

The student arrived as an unaccompanied minor at the age of 15 in November 2000. He had left the Balkans as a result of the conflict in the region. His education in his own country had been severely disrupted because of the unrest. On arrival at the school, he spoke no English and had no news of his parents, who were presumed to have died in the conflict. He lived initially with an older cousin and was supported by social services. At the time of the HMI visit, the student was in Year 11 and due to sit six GCSEs including English, mathematics, double-award science, design technology, photography and religious education. His teachers predicted that he would gain at least two grade Cs and possibly better. Irrespective of the grades he gained, the school had made a special application on his behalf to the governing body for his entry into the sixth form because of the effort and application put into his remarkable progress and achievement to date.

As part of his welcome to the school, the student's tutor group had been briefed in advance and a 'buddy' was assigned. The group made a poster welcoming him in English and his home language, and two weeks later his form tutor made him a birthday cake with candles for his 15th birthday. The student had also expressed a wish to attend the local Catholic church on Sundays; the headteacher, who was a member of the church, initially accompanied him. The student, now in his third year at the school, provides help and support for other newly arrived pupils from his country. For example, he helped the social worker with interpreting at an options evening for a Year 9 student who, like himself, was an unaccompanied minor. The school's EAL co-ordinator maintains regular contact with the social worker, who receives reports on progress and attends consultation meetings. The LEA provides a small amount of support for the student each week, alongside some additional teaching provided by the school in withdrawal groups. All the different people played an effective part in ensuring that the student settled in quickly and felt secure. The student, in turn, demonstrated remarkable resilience and a positive attitude to school and the opportunities provided.

52. The above student's initial worries were quickly overcome, as his following comments make clear:

How was I going to cope without knowing the language and being in a different school with different people who I never met? I was told that the people here are not friendly, so I was scary because I had some friends who had been in schools here and they said people beat you up and they don't show you respect and they are racist and they hate people who are foreign especially those people who don't speak any English. When I went to the head master's office it was a sign of welcoming. The school looked very big and I was very confused because of the school which I used to go to back in my own country; it had 100 people compared with here where there are 1,600. I thought I was not going to be safe in this school because there were so many people in the school. In the form room, the students were all welcoming me. They make a big poster and it had written in it in Albanian and also in English things like 'don't be shy' and 'welcome', which was quite kind.

53. Not all pupils adjusted easily to the routines, rules and procedures of school life. There were several who did not settle well in school – often older pupils in Key Stage 2 who had little experience of formal education in their own country, and pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 who had difficulty in fitting into the school's curriculum and examination pathways. A number of schools also reported cases of pupils who exhibited symptoms of trauma and distress in their behaviour and relations with adults and other pupils. Schools felt they did not have sufficient training and guidance in coping with this behaviour. A few of the authorities in the dispersal areas did provide some assistance through, for example, art therapy and visits from the education psychology service. The following two examples illustrate some of the difficulties and challenges faced by the schools receiving pupils who had experienced significant trauma and loss as well as major interruptions to their education.

54. A first school in one of the shire counties, with less than 5% minority ethnic pupils, admitted a boy into reception class who spoke no English. From the beginning, he exhibited significant and disturbing patterns of behaviour; including rocking, banging his head against the wall and grabbing onto adults without any warning. The school was able to get art therapy support from the LEA's behaviour support team and this helped to a degree with the disturbing behaviour. However, the boy's uncle refused further assessment and a term-and-a-half after admission the boy was suddenly removed from the school without any notice. The school had devoted considerable time and effort to supporting the boy, particularly through allowing opportunities for him to experience a wide variety of play activities. It was also assisted by the behaviour support team and by a member of the central EMAG team, who helped with home visiting and

accompanied the boy on an educational visit. All of this amounted to a substantial programme of support which, for the relatively short period he was there, had begun to have a positive impact on the boy's attitude and behaviour.

55. In another example, the many efforts of one secondary school working with a number of other agencies of the LEA met with frustration in trying to meet the needs of an unaccompanied minor who arrived towards the end of the autumn term in Year 9. Despite numerous case conferences involving school staff, social services, a community support worker, the co-ordinator for unaccompanied minors and a youth and community worker, little headway was made in engaging the student with any kind of education programme. The school offered a more flexible curriculum designed to help him to integrate into school life and to develop his competence in spoken English, which was extremely limited on arrival. In spite of these efforts, the student only attended for 22 sessions out of a possible 182 in his first year at the school. At the time of the HMI visit, the student was not in school. Again, as in the primary school case, the many efforts of the various parties had met with no immediate success. A number of secondary schools reported that, where they had a limited EMAG budget, any additional support it provided for the newly arrived pupils often had to come from other budgets, such as SEN, with a consequent reduction of support for SEN. The same schools found it difficult to integrate students in Years 9, 10 and 11 if their schooling had been disrupted and literacy in their own language was limited.

56. Notwithstanding the above examples, the evidence from lesson observations and schools' records showed the progress made by asylum-seeker pupils was, in the majority of cases, at least satisfactory, and often good. There were many cases, in almost all the schools, of pupils making remarkable progress over a relatively short period of time. Progress was often more marked in primary schools than in secondary schools and better in mathematics than English. Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 made less obvious progress because it was harder to fit them into existing programmes of work, particularly for students with little or no English. Nevertheless, there were exceptions: for example, one student arriving half way through Year 10 gained grade C in GCSE English and is currently in Year 13 studying three Advanced Levels for admission to university. The key factors in the good progress were:

- teachers who were skilled and knowledgeable in meeting the needs of pupils new to English
- flexibility in the curriculum provided for the students
- well-targeted support from the school's EMAG team

- a school committed to high standards for all pupils
- a fierce commitment from parents to using all opportunities for advancement for their children.

Case studies

57. The following case studies illustrate examples of effective practice in managing the integration and educational provision of asylum-seeker pupils. The examples cover a range of practice in schools and LEAs whose experience of meeting the needs of these newly arrived pupils varies considerably.

CASE STUDY 1 – WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO PUPILS' INTEGRATION AND SUCCESS: PRIMARY PHASE

58. The primary school, located near a major rail terminus in London, is situated in an area of high deprivation. There are over 400 pupils on roll – 91% have EAL. Just over one in four of the pupils are from asylum-seeking and refugee families. There is a high pupil turnover of around 20%, which has, on occasion, reached double that figure. A significant number of pupils are admitted into all year groups, particularly in Key Stage 2. In 2001, only 17% of the Year 6 cohort had attended in Key Stage 1.

59. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very poor. Many pupils have weak speaking and listening skills in their home language and very poor social skills. In Key Stage 1, the 2001 national test results were below the national average in reading and writing; 75% of pupils achieved Level 2 and above in reading and 78% in writing. In comparison with the average for similar schools, the results were close to the average in both reading and writing. In comparison with the LEA results, reading was in line with the LEA average, but writing was below.

60. In Key Stage 2, the 2001 results were well above the national average in English and mathematics, and above average in science; 91% of the pupils achieved Level 4 and above in English and 48% achieved Level 5. The Level 5 results were above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the results were in the top 5% in the country for English and mathematics.

61. The most recent Ofsted inspection report stated that the school strives to ensure that the standards are raised even higher. Currently, its targets for the end of Key Stage 2 are very much higher than the LEA requires. The school analyses its results comprehensively to check the relative attainment of boys and girls and different minority ethnic groups. These show that the school is successful in securing very high levels of

attainment for each of its ethnic groups. In 2001, the black African pupils did particularly well, with eight of the nine pupils achieving Level 4. Most of these pupils were refugees and had a history of disrupted schooling. The school is particularly successful in minimising the effects of other factors.

62. At the end of the visit, HMI judged that the school was very successful in promoting a whole-school approach to ensuring the asylum-seeker pupils' integration and success. The key features of the school's effective practice were:

- the very positive and welcoming ethos
- the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and EMAG team
- the very clear procedures for the admission and induction of asylum-seeker and refugee pupils
- the school's commitment to helping the parents of these children understand the system of education in the school
- carefully targeted support on the part of the EMAG team for the newly arrived pupils
- good support by additional staff such as the home–school link officers and the mother-tongue assistants in the early years unit
- the helpful curriculum guidance and schemes of work, especially for English
- the smooth-running induction arrangements and training given to new staff
- the after-school clubs for pupils, including heritage language classes
- the classes for parents, especially for family numeracy.

CASE STUDY 2 – SUPPORT FOR PUPILS AND FAMILIES, AND LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

63. The primary school, located near the centre of a Midlands city, has 491 pupils on roll, with 34% eligible for free school meals and just over three-quarters speaking EAL. At the time of the HMI visit, the families with pupils at the school represented 32 languages. There were also 24 pupils on roll who were from asylum-seeker families and, in addition, 61 children of EU habitual residents, predominantly Somali speakers from the Netherlands or Sweden.

64. The school makes excellent provision for the care and support of its pupils, their parents and the community. During the induction of the

newly arrived pupils, the school makes an assessment of parental needs to facilitate their integration into the community and obtain a profile of their skills, talents and abilities. During the induction, parents are provided with access to local doctors, dentists, clinics and legal services. They are also invited to the parents' drop-in centre at the school and the community centre with its regular English lessons and crèche facilities. Children and parents who have been subject to trauma and the effects of torture are provided with access to co-ordinated medical services with expert doctor and psychological support. These services are a result of the school's involvement in a school-based refugee mental health project known as Action for Children in Conflict.

65. On the day of the HMI visit, a Somali mother was in the drop-in centre being counselled by one of the two EMAG workers, both of whom work in the centre in the early part of the morning. This mother had been the victim of torture, with gunshot wounds to both hips and a stab wound in the back that had caused spinal problems. She had seen her husband shot in front of her and three of her children taken away. She had managed to escape after torture and had come to the country as an asylum seeker. In discussion, she said that if it had not been for the support of the school, she would not have survived.

66. The school also had an extensive range of initiatives and support for the families and pupils. These included breakfast clubs, a 'buddy' system of adults including governors and staff working with the pupils, family literacy and adult English classes. There were share classes targeting Somali mothers to help them support their children with their learning.

67. The school was resolutely committed to ensuring a shared responsibility for the integration of all pupils, including asylum seekers. All the staff had a very good understanding of the pupils' language, ethnic backgrounds, learning needs and immigration status. The headteacher was planning to visit the Netherlands later in the year to look at provision and support for the recently arrived pupils in that country in order to learn from the work.

CASE STUDY 3 – SCHOOL RESPONSE TO MEETING PUPILS' LEARNING NEEDS

68. There were some schools that had few minority ethnic pupils and little experience of working with newly arrived pupils, including asylum seekers. Nevertheless, their response was positive and effective for the pupils and their families.

69. A first school with 214 pupils on roll received its first asylum-seeker pupils towards the end of 1999. The three pupils arrived without prior warning

on a staff training day at the beginning of the autumn term. The staff had virtually no experience of dealing with pupils new to English. There were few children from minority ethnic backgrounds in the school. They had little or no information about the children's previous educational experiences or the circumstances surrounding their arrival in the country and the locality. None of the three children or their parents spoke English. Everybody relied on gesture, use of pictures and facial expressions to communicate in the most basic way. The LEA provided a basic pack of information about supporting children newly arrived and new to English. The school took the decision to provide one hour of withdrawal every week during the children's first term for help with basic skills, including survival vocabulary, numeracy and literacy. One of the school's learning support assistants (LSAs) undertook the work. The headteacher and staff, initially hesitant about adopting this strategy, felt it was justified by the way it helped the three children to settle in more quickly and access much more speedily the full curriculum in the classroom. The LSA who undertook the work derived much satisfaction from seeing her efforts have such a positive impact on the three children. At the time of the HMI visit, two of the pupils were in Year 4, with one expected to achieve Level 4 in reading, Level 3B for writing and spelling, and Level 3A for mathematics. The other pupil was expected to gain Level 3B in both English and mathematics. The third pupil in Year 3 was expected to gain Level 3 in both mathematics and English.

CASE STUDY 4 – WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO PUPILS' INTEGRATION AND SUCCESS: SECONDARY PHASE

70. One secondary school in the north of England provides a very good example of how the sudden arrival of a large number of asylum-seeker pupils provided a marker of the progress it had made from its origin as a Fresh Start school. At the time of the visit, there were over 700 pupils on roll, with 86% from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 60% of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school had 127 students from asylum-seeker or refugee families. The majority were from Somalia or the Yemen. Some of these pupils had no experience of formal education.

71. The most recent Ofsted inspection report in 2001 stated that it was a good school with many outstanding characteristics. It provided good learning opportunities for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. The excellent leadership provided by the senior management team inspired pupils and staff to do well. The achievement of pupils in relation to their starting point on entry to the school at age 11 is good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher gives the pupils a clear sense of purpose and direction, not least in ensuring that they are valued and encouraged to meet their aspirations. Teaching is good and often very

good. Results in GCSE examinations have improved by over 22% since the school opened, even though they remain well below the national average. The school does very well compared with similar schools.

72. One of the key features of the school's response has been the way in which it has taken the initiative in meeting the many and varied needs of the asylum-seeker pupils. Steps taken have included the appointment of a member of the school's EMAG team as co-ordinator for asylum-seeker and refugee pupils, and briefing and training for all staff run by the EMAG team, covering the teaching of EAL learners and raising achievement, the educational needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and affirming ethnic diversity and identity. Teachers are fully briefed about the background of the newly arrived pupils, including being given a document on Somalia outlining demography, history, geography, education, the position of women, cultural sensitivities and religious beliefs. The school's pastoral care and support systems ensure close attention to medical care, awareness of issues relating to child protection – for example, unaccompanied minors not known to social services – and identification of the victims of torture and trauma. The school has its own health advisor as part of its involvement in a mental health project run in conjunction with the local health authority. Class teachers and the school's EMAG team work effectively together in meeting the needs of the newly arrived pupils. The close liaison, joint planning and partnership teaching where appropriate are particularly strong. For example, class teachers have a list of what is known as the target group record for each of their classes. This provides the teacher with information from the EMAG team which details the names of pupils, the language focus that is needed for the group, their stage of English, ethnic background and the recommended strategies for meeting specific learning needs. The EMAG team play a crucial and effective role in admission, initial assessment, induction and collaborative working with class teachers. Their status and the importance of their contribution are clearly affirmed by the support of the headteacher and senior managers. The school's commitment to making its response to the arrival of the pupils as positive and inclusive as possible is demonstrated in the allocation of £40,000 of its own funds to the work.

CASE STUDY 5 – LEA STRATEGIC SUPPORT AND CO-ORDINATION OF LINKS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

73. The following instance of a northern LEA provides a good example of the strategies, procedures and policies it has put in place to meet the needs of asylum-seeker and refugee children and their families. The LEA has always received refugees from a diverse range of countries. In the early 1990s, a significant number of refugees arrived from Somalia and the Yemen. The LEA minority ethnic service provided Somali and Yemeni support staff to

help meet the pupils' educational needs. Since the government established its dispersal programme, the authority has received more than 1,300 children of school age. This represents an increase of about 11% in the total of minority ethnic pupils in the authority.

74. Asylum seekers are placed in areas of the city where there is available housing, but not always where there are sufficient surplus places in schools. There has been pressure on school places, both at primary and secondary level. The problem is particularly acute at secondary level because there are fewer schools with surplus places, and these are often schools in challenging circumstances.

75. The council has established a dedicated team to support the settlement of asylum seekers in the city. There is also an asylum-seekers strategy group which co-ordinates the different directorates of the council to ensure asylum-seeker children access education, and that schools receiving them are able to provide the required level of support. The head of EMAG represents the education department on this group of council officers. The central EMAG team is very small because over 90% of funds have been devolved to schools.

76. Although the size of the central team is small, additional funding from the city council has enabled a sound framework of support and advice to schools to be put in place. It includes:

- an education co-ordinator for asylum-seeker and refugee children
- a home–school link worker to improve the induction for asylum seekers and their families to schools
- the publication of guidelines for supporting new arrivals and refugee pupils
- initial bilingual assessment of pupils' language needs
- EAL teaching support to improve access to the National Curriculum
- in-service training on meeting the needs of asylum-seeker and refugee children
- advice and access to appropriate resources for the curriculum
- sharing and dissemination of good practice.

77. In addition, the head of the EMAG service had established good links with the two main communities and had been instrumental in setting up study-support programmes, including community language schools and homework clubs. He also set up a project to support newly arrived 14 to 16-year-old pupils, involving four secondary schools, the local college

and the Connexions service. The schools visited as part of the survey appreciated the impact of the work, particularly the setting up of central support for admissions and the publication of guidance on basic matters such as school meals, transport and clothing.

78. The LEA recognised that a good start had been made in co-ordinating and formulating a clear strategic response to the arrival of the pupils and families. Nevertheless, there was still work to be done, particularly in improving provision and support for 14 to 16 year olds.

CASE STUDY 6 – LEA CO-ORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

79. In this London LEA, there were around 4,700 asylum-seeker pupils out of a school-age population of around 43,000. Many of the pupils of refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds arrived with little or no school experience. All had had interrupted schooling. Some had had traumatic experiences before arriving in the borough. Most were learning EAL. At the same time, many were from families who would have wanted their children to have gone on to higher education in their countries of origin, had their schooling not been interrupted.

80. The education department is actively involved in the development of a council-wide strategy for working with refugees and asylum seekers. For example, the LEA has conducted an audit across the education department to identify the provision made for the pupils and to begin identifying planning priorities. Members of the education department also contribute to corporate steering and planning or policy groups which have a remit to ensure that the authority is meeting the general duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, including provision for asylum seekers. The LEA monitors access and admissions to schools. In particular, it checks casual admissions to ensure that there is no undue delay in getting school places. The Fair Funding Formula acknowledges the support needed by schools which take more casual admissions, among which refugees form a substantial cohort.

81. The LEA offers schools support in Key Stages 1 and 2 from a primary peripatetic support team for refugees and new arrivals. This is a rapid response team that is highly valued by schools, offering support to pupils, and advice, training and resources to teachers and teaching assistants. EMAG funding for provision for the refugee and newly arrived pupils in secondary schools has been devolved to schools at the request of headteachers. The LEA supports the schools in making the best possible use of the grant – for example, it uses a consultant to work with groups of schools to train staff and to set up systems for assessment of the pupils.

82. The LEA has made specific provision for some pupils arriving late at the secondary school stage. Full-time education provision for unplaced students in Year 11 is organised through an Education Business Partnership and takes place in a number of locations. The Year 11 students have access to:

- mentoring and therapeutic services, including individual counselling
- group and family work, including home and residential visits
- extended vocational courses and work experience
- identity and citizenship programmes.

83. The LEA is also involved in various projects and initiatives with other agencies including the promotion of the recruitment into teaching of members of the refugee communities who have training overseas. There is also development work with socially excluded pupils such as refugees, and outreach work in Early Years Education Centres to inform parents about education provision and help them support their children's learning.

Conclusion

84. All the schools felt that they had responded positively to the arrival of the asylum-seeker pupils and their families. For nearly half of them, dealing effectively with the admission and integration of the pupils had been a steep learning curve, particularly in adapting to their linguistic, cultural and educational needs. Many schools invested considerable time, effort and money of their own to ensure that the pupils' experience was positive and affirming. There were some remarkable examples of headteachers and staff working extremely hard to ensure that their school adopted a truly inclusive approach to pupils and their parents.

85. The arrival of the pupils also brought difficulties and challenges for the schools. In some cases, they required re-allocation of staffing and resources to meet the needs of the pupils. In one or two cases, the arrival of large numbers placed almost intolerable burdens on the school. While the £500 grant provided a measure of assistance for schools receiving pupils under the NASS dispersal scheme, several schools had to draw upon their own budget to meet costs.

86. For many LEAs in the dispersal areas, the impact of the arrival of the asylum seekers was significant in a number of ways. Often the asylum-seeker pupils were above and beyond the normal EAL new arrival intake. In one LEA, the timetables of central peripatetic staff had to be adjusted – substantially in some cases – to meet the needs of the asylum-seeker pupils. This was often at the expense of the needs of existing targeted EAL pupils who would merit continuing levels of support. The linguistic expertise within the central EMAG service very often did not match the languages spoken by the new arrivals. LEAs made every effort – not always in time to meet school requirements – to arrange for interpreters, sometimes from outside the local area, to support the induction and integration of the pupils, as well as liaison with the parents. This resulted in additional costs which included the purchase of dual-language materials for the pupils. Together with the liaison necessary with other agencies such as housing, these commitments had an impact on the proportion of time spent on other important work.

87. The schools can take much credit for their unstinting acceptance and determination to make a success of the integration of the asylum-seeker pupils. Many staff and pupils gained a great deal personally and professionally from their contact and work with the pupils and families. Almost all pupils made at least satisfactory and often good progress during their time in school. They and their parents often provided an intoxicating cocktail of motivation and determination to succeed, despite the very difficult and often traumatic circumstances of their leaving their home country.

88. The comments of a Somali mother, who came as an asylum seeker to the UK and who now works as a bilingual assistant in the school her children attend, illustrate the strength of the impact that successful programmes for asylum-seeker pupils can make:

My children have education. So many valuable opportunities are provided for them. Same for all whether boy or girl, no difference for white or black. My children are very proud.