passed from Key Stage 1 (KS1) to KS2 but were not usually interrogated for information about individuals or groups, to identify for example the relative performance of boys and girls in particular components of the assessment tasks. Teachers planning the curriculum in Year 3 seldom considered the KS1 assessments to match the proposed work to the needs they revealed.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

24   The principal strength of several schools lay in the quality of their social relations and their efforts to ensure a secure and orderly working environment. **Good relations between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers characterised many schools.** Where instances of poor behaviour occurred they were most often linked to poor teaching and inappropriate curriculum, though in some schools a small number of pupils displayed very poor behaviour which presented unmanageable difficulty. **Attendance rates were usually satisfactory** although again a small number of pupils in a minority of schools were frequently absent. **In many schools the provision of a secure and welcoming environment for pupils had overshadowed the need to ensure a well-targeted, challenging curriculum which would extend their achievement.** The outcomes for many children were levels of attainment below their ability levels and which did not provide a satisfactory foundation for their experience in secondary school. Better management and leadership are required in the primary sector in order to secure improved curricular planning and assessment of progress and to match teachers' expectations to children's abilities.

25   **A consistent omission in all the schools was that of systematic monitoring and evaluation of standards and outcomes within class groups, across year cohorts and in the school overall.** Few headteachers had an accurate overview of the standards being achieved. Effective methods of planning, teaching and assessment were not the subjects of institutional policies and, although in most schools some teachers had developed good practice in aspects of their work, strategies to identify and disseminate these were not generally in place. Quality was too often a matter of individual style and expertise, with little support offered to insecure or inexperienced teachers. **School development plans were insufficiently concerned with developing realistic strategies for raising standards and rarely identified a long-term programme of improvement;** they exercised little influence on the direction and quality of teaching and learning. School development plans rarely identified success criteria by which the effectiveness of planned initiatives could be evaluated.

26 Several schools received additional funds via local financial management formulae in consideration of the needs of their catchment area but their financial circumstances varied widely. The unit cost per pupil in the schools which had general inspections ranged from £1,283 to £1,934. The amount available to spend on books, materials and equipment varied from under £30 to over £140 per pupil. **This wide variation from the median levels of primary funding in shire and metropolitan authorities reflects LEA circumstances and shows no correlation with objectively assessed needs** (see Appendix C). However, schools also managed their funds with greater or lesser efficiency and not always with due regard for curricular priorities. One school faced a deficit of £54,000 which made cuts in staffing inevitable while two others, where support for pupils was unsatisfactory, had an underspend, in one case of £109,000. In some schools the recruitment of good teachers, especially for posts of responsibility, remained an intractable problem. Levels of teacher absence contributed in some classes to a fragmented learning experience for pupils.

27 Some schools took advantage of the managerial flexibility they had to institute projects aiming to make conditions in schools more conducive to learning. In one area, for example, it was noted that children took some time to settle to work after the lunch break. Using funds from an urban aid scheme a programme of training was begun for lunchtime supervisors so as to encourage more positive play leadership and ensure 'peace in the playground'. Some schools aimed to improve teachers' management of pupil behaviour in class and drew on the assistance of LEA support teachers and educational psychologists to devise institution-wide approaches to this matter. Curricular priorities were similarly targeted for action in some schools: one LEA had a Reading Recovery project which brought specialist training to one member of staff in each school with the resulting advantage of improved teaching of reading for pupils. Schools in this area also took part in a holiday reading scheme in which parents and children were invited to undertake a number of activities that helped them to enjoy reading. In another area, a federation of schools worked together to produce a common format for the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements in National Curriculum core subjects which focused on what individuals could do and understand. The stimulus derived from collaboration with other schools and from LEA sources of expertise and advice was important in most of these projects but LEA services of this kind were contracting in all the areas of the study.

Provision in the secondary sector

INTAKE

28   Most pupils of secondary age in the target areas lived within reasonable distance of a secondary school. The secondary schools inspected drew their pupils from a wider area than those in the primary sector, sometimes from several of the surrounding electoral wards. Some were nonetheless seen primarily as 'estate' schools. In two areas the intake was affected by local population mobility: one school, for example, admitted in addition to its intake in Year 7 as many as 50 pupils (12% of the roll) to all year groups, replacing those leaving the area. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals ranged from 22% to 50%, an indicator which reflected the somewhat more mixed intake of these schools than those in the primary sector. In some areas parents exercised their preference for schools outside the immediate neighbourhood: the numbers in one school were considerably lower than planned, precipitating severe financial difficulty. One school, a secondary modern, served the age range 12-16; the others were 11-16 comprehensives. None provided sixth-form education.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

29   **Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations at 16+ was poor in all the schools.** The proportion of those gaining five or more higher grades in these examinations in 1992 was at best just over a third of the national average and at worst a twelfth; the proportion of those gaining a single grade of any kind was at best close to the national average and at worst three-quarters of it (see Figure 4 on page 22). **Four of the seven schools showed impressive gains over the results of the previous year** in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades. However, similar improvement was not achieved across the whole range of attainment or in the relative performance of girls and boys. The performance of girls was significantly weaker than that of boys in one school, and girls' overall attainment varied markedly between schools and years. Against a background of low attainment overall, there were some subjects or departments in each school which consistently assisted pupils to achieve higher grades than others in the school. In one, for example, art, drama and science accounted for 64% of all 'A' grades and 44% of all 'B' grades obtained during a four-year period.

Figure 4

**Selected GCSE grades and staying on rates:
study schools and national data 1992**

- ■ % 5+ A-C
- % 1+ A-C
- ■ % 5+ A-G
- ■ % 1+ A-G
- % 16+ participation in full-time education
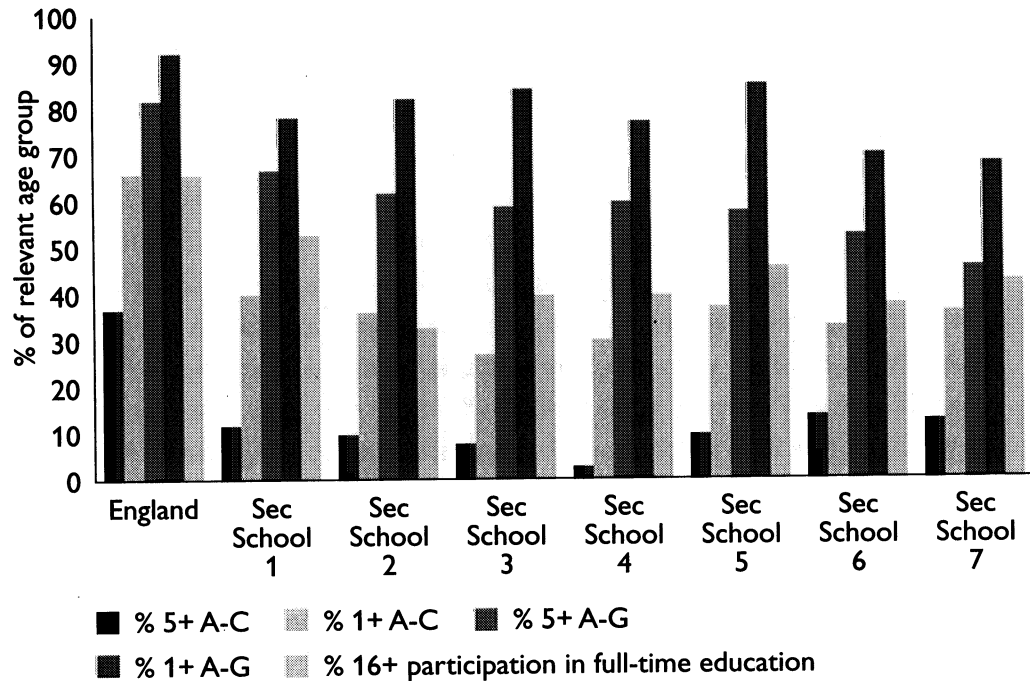
30 **In several schools a significant proportion of the Year 11 cohort was not entered for any GCSE examination.** In 1992, 4.4% of secondary pupils in England took no examination. In the sample of secondary schools which had general inspections the range was from 8.7% to 30%, with six schools exceeding 10% and three 20%. Poor rates of attendance by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and pupils' failure to complete course work were the most usually cited reasons for this.

CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

31 The secondary modern school did not recruit from the full range of ability, as grammar schools in the area took most of the children in the top quartile of attainment at age 12. The comprehensive schools also reported that the distribution of ability among their intake was skewed downwards. In the standardised tests which some schools set for pupils on entry, reading standards were found to be low: three schools established that 50% or more of the intake had reading ages two or more years below their chronological age. For many young people this low starting point for the secondary curriculum was a major hurdle. Without functional literacy and competence in number work their achievement in many subjects was constrained. A substantial number of pupils also experienced difficulties in their personal lives which adversely affected their attitude to schooling

and their readiness to participate in the work and to benefit from it; some exhibited challenging behaviour; a minority were involved from an early age in anti-social or criminal activity. However, **teachers too readily over-generalised the extent and effects of pupils' disadvantage and their poorly developed basic skills to explain poor performance and depress expectations of improvement.**

32   Schools did not take sufficient account, in their organisation of the curriculum and their teaching, of the nature of pupils' learning needs, their range of ability and their motivation. The differences in attainment highlighted in the rudimentary screening undertaken on pupils' entry to secondary education did not generally lead to grouping arrangements which took account of pupils' differing strengths and needs. Setting was attempted in some schools but not always purposefully: one school organised sets on the basis of pupils' behaviour rather than of their ability; in another the setting for mathematics determined also the groupings in other subjects. At classroom level, also, planning was often inadequate and tasks poorly targeted for pupils' ability. **Many teachers lacked detailed knowledge of the range of ability in their classes and were insufficiently skilled in recognising the particular needs of boys and girls, of children of minority ethnic heritage or of the more able pupils.** Teachers were usually aware of some pupils' low level of reading and spelling skills but rarely adjusted their teaching strategies to take account of this: many relied exclusively on paper and the written word when pupils would have benefited from the use of other media or from discussion.

33   Consequently, much of the work observed failed to tap the potential that pupils had for success. Only in very few lessons did pupils achieve what they were capable of; in only two schools was their achievement satisfactory or better for more than half the lessons seen, and even here there was some variation between subjects and year groups. Elsewhere, standards were often unsatisfactory or poor. In one school achievement in over half the lessons seen with children in lower sets was less than satisfactory; achievement in lessons with upper ability groups was good in less than a fifth of lessons and unsatisfactory in more than two-fifths. Standards of achievement were low in general and under-achievement in relation to potential was particularly acute among both the more able and the less able children, a pattern which was reflected in the examination outcomes described in paragraph 29 above. Low achievement further reduced pupils' self-esteem and motivation for school.

34   Lessons rarely focused on clear learning goals that would enable pupils

to be aware of what they were learning or the new skills they were gaining. Undemanding tasks and dull teaching failed to engage pupils' participation in lessons and their willing consent to learn. Teaching styles were insufficiently varied to sustain pupils' concentration throughout lessons of 50 minutes or more. The few who were reluctant learners were not always challenged; the many who were co-operative were frequently allowed to remain passive. High standards were not always expected of them: some lessons sacrificed pace for good-natured relationships and teachers were, on occasion, unwilling to press pupils to complete work or to improve on a first attempt. Indeed, **children rarely received the kind of feedback on their work that helped them to know what or how to improve.** Few schools had a marking policy and assessment strategies were underdeveloped and poorly co-ordinated within and between subjects. The absence of detailed assessment of attainment on pupils' entry to the schools meant that they had no baseline against which to assess progress. The outcomes of assessment were not used to determine the nature of subsequent work and pupils had little opportunity to review their overall performance and progress with staff.

ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR

35　Attendance rates varied from school to school but were mostly satisfactory in the early years of secondary education. The number of persistent non-attenders increased sharply as pupils grew older and some became subject to negative peer group pressures. Regular non-attenders from one school told local youth workers that they stayed away in order to spend time with friends. They did not feel hostile towards school although they saw no intrinsic value in education. In four schools attendance by pupils in Years 10 and 11 was unacceptably low: below 85%, with attendance by Year 11 girls in one school as low as 68%. In some schools attendance improved on previous years as a result of strategies implemented via education support grants. **Schools monitored attendance carefully although their analysis of attendance was rarely sophisticated:** it did not, for example, examine patterns of absence for girls and boys or for particular groups of young people. In particular, enquiry into the reasons for absence stopped short of examining the factors in pupils' classroom experience which increased the disaffection of some and encouraged them to stay away. Most schools received good support from education welfare officers who followed up cases of poor attendance. These officers were usually well acquainted with the family circumstances of persistent non-attenders; these included cases where a number of severe social problems combined to keep a child away from school and others where parental attitudes to education were such that absence was condoned.

36 Discipline was more often the focus for senior managers' attention than achievement. Neighbourhood problems occasionally spilled over into schools and there were instances of unruly or aggressive behaviour and of bullying. **Nevertheless, the schools were generally secure environments and orderly communities.** In well-taught lessons, with pace, variety and challenge, behaviour problems were uncommon; in others order was maintained by spending a disproportionate amount of time quelling trivial but continual disruption and talking about behaviour, often to the detriment of pupils' learning. Some schools were introducing behaviour modification programmes whose chief merit lay in the articulation of a consistent, institution-wide approach to dealing with poor behaviour. In most there remained, however, an emphasis on external control, with little expectation that pupils might develop self-discipline. In consequence, schools resorted to fixed-term exclusion of pupils with varying frequency and in relation to breaches of discipline of varying magnitude. The number of such exclusions recorded during a one-year period ranged from 16 to 98 (between 1% and 15% of the number on roll) and most related to male pupils. Permanent exclusion was rare except in one school.

37 **Schools varied in their degree of success in establishing an ethos which embraced explicit moral values. Relations among pupils, including those of different ethnic heritage, and between pupils and teachers were generally characterised by mutual respect.** In a minority of institutions positive social values and appropriate behaviour patterns held a central place in the ethos of the school, with religious and personal and social education, extra-curricular activities and various projects within subjects of the curriculum all contributing to their development. There were, for example, frequent opportunities to discuss questions of values and morals relating to issues of personal, national and international concern and great stress was laid on the importance of tolerating differences without rancour. In contrast, some schools did not make explicit the beliefs and values they sought to promote; these were not consistently reflected either in the curriculum or across the life of the institution and pupils had less chance of expressing or exploring their values in class discussions.

SCHOOL INITIATIVES

38 The preceding catalogue of under-expectation, unsatisfactory teaching and low achievement is, fortunately, not the complete picture. **In all the schools there were pockets of good work achieving high standards, some of it with the most challenging pupils.** Individual teachers, working with the same pupils who elsewhere behaved badly or completed

little, secured their involvement and promoted their learning. Where subject departments had worked together on curricular guidelines and methodology, standards were good in the subject as a whole and lessons were carefully planned to meet clearly understood targets in programmes of study. Teachers communicated these objectives to pupils, established high expectations and set appropriate tasks. They were able to vary the teaching style and pace to match the development of the topic and to organise activities that involved and motivated pupils. Sometimes the tasks included different elements to provide particular challenges for some groups in the class; in these cases, teachers were able occasionally to draw on a wide range of different learning resources which departmental teams of teachers had collaborated to compile. In most of the schools there was enough good work by some departments or some teachers to provide a platform of achievement on which to build.

39 One school was working to link its pastoral and academic systems to focus on raising pupils' achievements. Here records of achievement were being developed which had prompted subject departments to identify learning objectives and assessment criteria linked to National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Some departments took the next logical step of establishing attainment targets for individual children and using the assessment criteria to comment on their achievements. Form teachers were able to draw on these detailed records to review overall progress with pupils and to agree future action. It was intended that they would also form the basis of reports to parents. A cluster of primary and secondary schools aimed to ease children's transition between the sectors, achieving improved continuity of learning by enabling more secondary teachers to understand better the children's previous experiences. A year-long programme of linked activities included the exchange of specialist teachers and joint in-service training of teachers from both sectors. Schools in another area worked to raise pupils' aspirations through enhanced awareness of educational and career opportunities in later life. A link with some universities allowed pupils to visit in order to experience student life and also made available prizes for high achievement in school. A number of schools had established 'compacts' with groups of local employers who provided work experience as part of a contract which required pupils to commit themselves to better school attendance.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

40 The features common to successful work of all kinds, whether in the classroom or in the wider context of school or community, were clear identification of purpose, well-organised use of time

and resources and monitoring of outcomes. The managerial resources and skills needed to sustain and extend their successes were at a premium in all schools. In some, the pressures on senior staff to deal with day-to-day crises left little time either for the strategic planning required at institutional level or for setting standards for the processes of education in the school.

41 Two of the seven schools suffered from high teacher turnover; the financial difficulty arising from the falling roll of a third had led to redundancy and redeployment of staff with consequent shortages of specialist teachers in important curricular areas. In all three just ensuring that classes had teachers absorbed much of the time and energies of senior managers. One secondary school had four headteachers in seven years. **In some schools split-site operations required duplication of resources, or the effects of long-neglected maintenance of the building fabric demanded constant attention; in others vandalism of school buildings and the frequent burglary of equipment were an additional drain on time and resources.** The annual unit cost of education per pupil varied among the seven schools from just under £2,000 to around £2,750 (see Appendix D) but staffing and maintenance costs absorbed varying proportions of this depending on the context of the school. Pupil: teacher ratio ranged from 13.7 to 17.1, and the amount spent on books, materials and equipment for each pupil from £32 to £142. As with the primary sector, this variation in the resources available to schools reflected LEA circumstances and showed no direct correlation with indicators of disadvantage or levels of educational need.

42 Few headteachers were able to free themselves from operational problems in order to formulate plans and priorities for the longer term. **School development plans did not generally identify raising pupils' achievements as the central purpose of the establishments; they were seldom working documents that informed the school's organisational structure and from which departments could take a lead in setting their own objectives. Monitoring and evaluation were weak features in all schools.** They had no consistent means of assessing the progress of individual children and year cohorts, in particular subjects or overall. The outcomes of assessment, including results in public examinations, were not analysed in detail, for example by disaggregating those for particular cohorts; significant factors affecting success were not identified and nor were difficulties that required action. The absence of policies and of institution-wide approaches to essential aspects of school life such as codes of conduct, assessment and learning support meant a lack of consistency in approaches to these matters. Departments and year

groups too often worked independently of each other, and pastoral and academic systems functioned separately.

43   Conscientious and persistent effort in often trying circumstances was not lacking in any school among either teachers or managers. Their commitment to supporting pupils and to working in their best interests was high and was evidenced in small and gradual improvements which did not always register in formal performance indicators. For a large majority of pupils, however, the outcomes are not yet good enough. **Schools need to focus more sharply on raising children's achievement. To this end managers need to set standards for the planning and delivery of the curriculum and to secure more skilled teaching, more regular and systematic assessment and better support for individual learning needs.** Improving the evaluation of outcomes will give the basis for long-term planning.