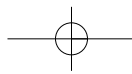
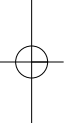
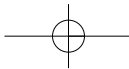


NARROWING THE GAP IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS





Audience: Local Education Authorities in Wales, Maintained Schools in Wales,
National Assembly for Wales

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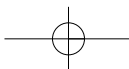
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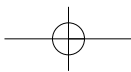
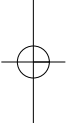
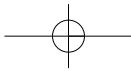
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FOREWORD

One of the aspirations shared by the National Assembly and local authorities in Wales is to offer our children true equality of opportunity in their education. We do not achieve that at present. Though standards of attainment have risen in all schools over the last 10 years, the gap between the best and the least well performing has not changed - it has not diminished or grown. In terms of the preparation school offers for adult life the prospects are much brighter for some children than for others.

We welcome this report from the joint task group drawn from the Assembly, the Welsh Local Government Association and key education organisations. It focuses on secondary schools and shows that successful outcomes can be achieved even where school circumstances are challenging.

This report identifies what is working for schools which demonstrate that deprivation does not lead to poor performance. Secondary schools which are successful in challenging circumstances:

- have key personnel who are able to drive forward school improvement;
- reflect on the ways that pupils learn; and
- make effective use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning.

There are also messages about the ways schools need to work with and within their local communities to raise the status of learning and, in some instances, to work as agents for change in the community.

A second phase of work is about to start focusing on early years and primary education but there are lessons in this report for all schools, particularly those operating in difficult circumstances.

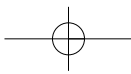
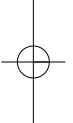
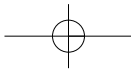
The challenge now for the Assembly, local authorities and schools is to share and spread the good practice which has been identified so that all our children have excellent opportunities and no child is disadvantaged because of where they grow up. Wales will then be truly "The Learning Country".



Jane Davidson
Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning



Councillor Jeff Jones
Welsh Local Government Association



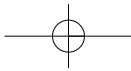
NARROWING THE GAP IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

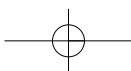
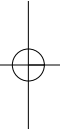
A task-and-finish group of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association was set up in October 2000 to examine the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between schools, particularly those in prosperous and deprived areas.

The major conclusions of the report are as follows:

- There is a wide variation in the performance of schools. At secondary level the gap between the highest and lowest attaining schools is not increasing or decreasing. At primary level there are signs the gap is narrowing.
- Schools differ greatly in the rate of progress made by pupils during each key stage relative to their previous performance.
- Developing the community focus of the school as a resource to be used by all ages in the community raises the profile of education and brings with it the potential for multiple benefits for learners, schools and their communities.
- There is a strong relationship in the secondary phase between levels of disadvantage and performance. This relationship is less strong in primary schools but is still statistically significant. However, pupils in a substantial minority of schools in disadvantaged areas progress at a greater rate than might be expected, demonstrating that there is no necessary link between deprivation and low attainment.
- Visits to secondary schools in deprived areas which have shown significant progress led to identification of three key factors necessary for school improvement:
 - Having key personnel in a position to drive school improvement
 - Monitoring of learning and teaching and promotion of effective practice
 - Making effective use of attainment data.
- Other areas of focus are:
 - Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition
 - Development of literacy skills
 - Behaviour management
 - Securing regular pupil attendance.



- All schools need to review their practice in light of the findings about key factors in school improvement.
- Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have a key responsibility for supporting schools in difficult circumstances through link advisers and targeted funding.
- LEAs need to review their strategies for supporting schools in disadvantaged areas.
- The Assembly Government and other national organisations need to play their part through appropriate levels of funding, creating an appropriate framework for continuing professional development of teachers, promoting the role of the school in its community, sharing good practice and celebrating success.



INTRODUCTION

1. The National Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) are concerned that though attainment has improved in all schools, the range or gap in the performance of schools has not narrowed. The Partnership Council established a task group in October 2000, to look at the range of performance of schools, with a view to making recommendations for action. This group drew its membership from the WLGA, the National Assembly, Estyn, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales, Governors Wales, the teaching unions, the Welsh Primary Schools Association, the Welsh Secondary Schools Association, the General Teaching Council for Wales, ACCAC and the National Council for Education and Training for Wales. The group was chaired jointly by Ms Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and Councillor Jeff Jones of the Welsh Local Government Association. The task group was assisted by a support group which was jointly chaired by the Head of Schools Management Division, Welsh Assembly Government and the Head of Education, Welsh Local Government Association. Membership of both groups is listed at Appendix A. The work of the group is of direct relevance to practitioners, policy makers in local and national government, and to users of our schools, particularly the pupils.

2. The remit given to the task group was to:

- identify the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between schools, particularly those in prosperous and deprived areas
- develop a definition of "good performance" which has regard to added value and overall targets for achievement under Better Wales and the Education and Training Action Plan¹
- identify schools in Wales and further afield which demonstrate consistently good performance
- identify the key factors (educational, social, and economic and in terms of resource allocation) which contribute to consistently good performance
- make recommendations as to how these key factors might be applied in all LEAs in Wales, with specific regard to the roles and responsibilities of the National Assembly, LEAs, headteachers / senior managers in schools, teachers and governors.

The group was asked to report in Spring/Summer 2002.

3. The task group has worked within the terms of the vision set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's Paving Document - The Learning Country² - with particular reference to the distinctive themes of continuing school improvement, reform of post-16 education and training, and the development of services for

¹ Both of which have been incorporated into the 'Plan for Wales 2001' which is available at www.planforwales.wales.gov.uk

² The National Assembly for Wales' consultation on its education proposals, published in August 2001 and available on www.learning.wales.gov.uk

young people under the Extending Entitlement agenda. The group has had regard to the complementary responsibilities of LEAs and schools and to provisions in the section 197 of the Education Act 2002 for partnership agreements between an LEA and each of the schools it maintains.

4. The task group used a project team, managed by the Director of Education for the City and County of Swansea on behalf of the WLGA, which surveyed and visited a number of schools. The project team members are listed at Appendix A. The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to review LEA education strategic plans and school improvement literature. All of the parties involved in the task group were involved in a review of the statistical data. A seminar was held in January 2002 at which a number of schools, LEAs and others involved in school improvement, shared their experience, focusing on the role of schools in relation to the communities they serve.

NARROWING THE GAP

CHAPTER 1: Defining the Nature of the Gap

Introduction

1.1 Statistical information relating to a variety of factors was considered in order to investigate the difference between the lowest and highest performing schools. The analysis helped to provide an initial insight into the nature of the gap and to point to factors requiring further investigation.

Individual School Performance for GCSE/GNVQ

1.2 Analysis of the average GCSE/GNVQ points scores for individual schools in Wales for the year 2000 shows scores ranging from 16 to 58, a gap of 42 points. Half of the schools lie between 32 and 44 (the inter-quartile range) a gap of 12 points (Chart 1 Annex B).

1.3 Over the period 1994 to 2000, whilst the average points scores have increased year on year, the gap has been fairly constant at 42 points between the lowest and highest performing schools and at 12 points for the inter-quartile range (Chart 2).

Individual LEA Performance for GCSE/GNVQ Examinations

1.4 Analysis of the LEA points scores for 2000 shows average examination points scores range from 28 to 48 points, a gap of 20 points. Over the period 1994 to 2000 there has been a slight increase in the range between the maximum and minimum scores but the range between the quartiles has stayed the same (Chart 3).

Performance and Expenditure by LEAs

1.5 Analysis of links between LEA expenditure and examination performance, after the incidence of deprivation has been taken into account, show that four of the five best performing LEAs are among the highest spenders. However the fifth is at the lower end of the range (Charts 18 and 19).

School Performance and The Quality of Teaching

1.6 Evidence from Estyn inspections illustrates that there are only very small variations between primary and secondary schools in terms of the proportion of teaching which is less than satisfactory. Most schools have a large proportion of classes in which teaching is at least satisfactory, that is where the teaching is judged to have sufficient good features to outweigh shortcomings (Charts 12 and 14).

1.7 Where a gap emerges it is in the proportion of teaching which is judged to be good or very good, that is where teaching is judged to have good features and no major shortcomings or there are many good features, some of them

outstanding. There are wide variations between schools in both phases (Charts 13 and 15).

Performance in Schools Using Vocational Courses

1.8 The average increase in the GCSE/GNVQ examination points score since 1996 for those schools which had introduced vocational courses was higher than for those which had not (Chart 20).

School Performance and School Size/Pupil Teacher Ratios

1.9 For the primary phase even after levels of deprivation are taken into account there appears to be no relationship between school size and examination performance. The same is true for pupil/teacher ratio (Chart 21).

1.10 At secondary level there is no statistically significant link with school size but some evidence of higher performance at Key Stage 4 with lower pupil/teacher ratios once deprivation is taken into account (Chart 22).

Experience of Teachers

1.11 Comparisons of data on levels of performance and deprivation and data supplied by the General Teaching Council for Wales on length of teaching experience indicate that there is no significant link between levels of teachers' experience, levels of performance and levels of deprivation in schools (Charts 23 and 24).

Value Added Key Stage 2 to 3

1.12 Assessment information for pupils at Key Stage 2 can be used to produce forecasts for pupils' expected performance at Key Stage 3. This prediction can be compared with the actual performance and a measure of value added to pupils' achievements identified.

1.13 Analysis of the data provided by the Fischer Family Trust³ shows a wide variation across Wales in value added at Key Stage 3. This shows that the overall rate of progress by pupils at Key Stage 3 is much greater in some schools than in others (Chart 11).

School Performance Compared to Disadvantage

1.14 There is a relationship between the levels of disadvantage (as measured by free school meal (fsm) entitlement) and performance in both primary and secondary phases although it is stronger in secondary. Broadly performance levels decrease as fsm entitlements increase. This feature remains evident whichever measure of attainment is used (Charts 16 and 17).

1.15 The Fischer Family Trust analysis (Chart 27) shows the extent of socio-economic disadvantage as measured by free school meal entitlement and applied

³ The Fischer Family Trust is an independent non-profit organisation which is mainly involved in undertaking and supporting projects addressing the development of education in the UK. This data was compiled by Mike Treadaway and underpins the information in Appendix B. Information on the Trust's work on performance data projects can be found at:
<http://www.fischertrust.org/performance.htm>

to progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The relationship is particularly evident when the fsm entitlement rises above 15%. Chart 25 also illustrates that there is an increasing gap in rates of progress made between the high fsm and low fsm schools throughout the school years. The gap appears to widen most at key stage 3 (Chart 26).

1.16 Generally pupils progress faster in schools with a low percentage of pupils entitled to fsm than those with a higher fsm entitlement.

1.17 However, further analysis of the pupil performance data by Fischer Family Trust also shows that school performance is not determined by socio-economic factors. There is a considerable variation in performance between different schools with the same fsm indicator in both phases. In the fifty secondary schools where the fsm factor was 25% or above, ten made progress significantly greater than would have been expected. In eight of these ten schools pupil progress was significantly high even without taking into account the socio-economic factor (Chart 28). It is of vital importance to identify how these schools are achieving success notwithstanding socio-economic disadvantage.

Baseline of Information

1.18 The data for the period 1996 to 2000 provides a baseline of information in relation to analysing the 'gap' which highlights that:

- (a) overall average results across Wales have improved year on year;
- (b) a gap exists between the lowest and highest performing schools and this has remained constant at both school and LEA levels;
- (c) rates of progress vary from school to school and throughout the key stages;
- (d) the gap between lowest and highest performing schools seems to widen most significantly at Key Stage 3;
- (e) pupils in schools with higher fsm entitlement progress slower on average than those in schools with low fsm entitlement; but
- (f) schools with the same fsm entitlement vary widely in their performance with many achieving especially well;
- (g) disadvantage as measured by fsm entitlement seems to be one of the most significant factors in relation to a school's performance, though not the only one;
- (h) the impact of disadvantage upon performance becomes particularly evident when the fsm entitlement rises above 15%;
- (i) whilst disadvantage does have an impact, some schools with higher than 25% fsm have been able to make progress significantly greater than expected.

Issues Requiring Further Analysis

1.19 This analysis points to the need to address a series of questions in attempting to narrow the gap:

- (a) what are the features of the schools in Wales that have achieved significant improvement in attainment?
- (b) what impact does disadvantage have on a school?
- (c) what barriers prevent or hinder schools in disadvantaged areas making improvements and raising standards especially those performing less well compared to others in similar socio-economic circumstances?
- (d) what are the features of the schools in disadvantaged areas which have made significant improvements?
- (e) how should schools in disadvantaged areas be helped to secure improvements?
- (f) what impact do wider social inclusion and community development strategies have on schools in deprived areas in raising standards?

CHAPTER 2: Addressing the Issues

2.1 As a result of analysis of the baseline information the task group agreed that there were a number of significant issues that needed to be addressed but not all of these could be covered in the limited time available. Two phases were identified as outlined below. Given that the gap seems to widen more at Key Stage 3 than at the other key stages, secondary schools were selected as the focus for the first phase and agreement reached that there needed to be a second phase concentrating on early years and primary schools.

Phase 1 2001/02

2.2 Work in phase 1 involved six different elements, as described below. The conclusions from these six elements are drawn together in this report.

A Study of Some Secondary Schools Which Have Made Significant Improvements

2.3 This study included:

- (i) A survey of all the secondary schools which according to the available school performance data appeared to have made significant improvement during the last few years.
- (ii) Visits to 12 of the surveyed schools which have free school meal factors above 20% to identify through discussions with senior staff, teachers, pupils and other people directly linked to the school:
 - a. the school situation in terms of catchment area, the nature of the pupil intake, geographical location, recent test and examination results, physical condition of the school buildings and external support;
 - b. the key factors that have helped these schools to make significant improvements and raise standards (i.e. narrow the gap); and
 - c. the key factors which placed limitations on these schools in making improvements⁴.

An LEA Survey

2.4 This study included:

- (i) A survey of the education strategic plans for the period 1999 to 2002;
- (ii) Visits to 12 of the LEAs to identify through discussions with LEA officers:
 - (a) the key factors which have helped LEAs to raise standards in schools (See Chapter 4 for more information);

⁴ See Chapter 3 and the full report which is available on www.learning.wales.gov.uk and www.wlga.gov.uk for more information

- (b) the key factors which have prevented or hindered LEAs from raising standards in schools; and
- (c) how the factors in (a) and (b) apply to schools in more deprived areas and what prevents the gap being narrowed (See Chapter 6).

The School in the Community

2.5 The focus was to consider whether current UK wide developments in relation to the place of schools within the wider community and the development of community focused schools, especially in areas of deprivation, can help as a mechanism for narrowing the gap, raising standards and driving school improvement.

Current Initiatives

2.6 The focus was to produce a summary list of current school improvement initiatives and programmes being used across Wales.

Literature on School Improvement

2.7 This study produced a summary of recent research literature on school improvement.

2.8 More detailed information on each of these is being published alongside this report on the Welsh Assembly Government Learning Wales and WLGA web sites⁵.

Phase 2 2002/03

2.9 A second phase of the study, which has been approved by the Partnership Council, will cover:

(a) **Early Years and Primary Schools**

- (i) Early years and transition to primary school;
- (ii) Narrowing the gap in the primary years;
- (iii) Transition from primary to secondary schooling;
- (iv) The place of the primary school within the wider community; and
- (v) How primary/secondary clusters and groups of primary schools can work effectively together.

(b) **Issues arising from phase 1**

- (i) Some issues arising from phase 1 could be further investigated, including the finding that schools placing greater emphasis on vocational qualification have seen a significant improvement in results at the end of Key Stage 4;

⁵ www.learning.wales.gov.uk and www.wlga.gov.uk

Working together

- (ii) Implementation of phase 1 and development of phase 2 will depend on organisations with leading roles working very closely together. It will be essential to ensure that there is proper interface with and between the work of national agencies such as GTC(W), ACCAC and Estyn and involvement of national organisations such as WLGA, ADEW, Governors Wales and the teacher unions.

CHAPTER 3: How Secondary Schools are Making Significant Progress and Narrowing the Gap

Introduction

3.1 This study was carried out in two parts:

- (i) a survey of all secondary schools which have shown significant progress over the last few years
- (ii) visits to 12 of the surveyed schools which have free school meal entitlements above 20%.

Outcomes Of The Survey Of Secondary Schools Showing Significant Progress

3.2 100 schools showing significant progress over the last few years were identified using:

- LEA recommendation;
- significant improvement in Key Stage results over time;
- value added from Key Stage 2 to 3;
- value added from Key Stage 3 to 4;
- quality of teaching good or very good for 55% of lessons or more.

3.3 Each of the schools was sent a questionnaire which asked them to identify specific factors which in their view had contributed to their progress and to rank these in order of importance. 80 schools responded.

Main issues arising from the school survey

3.4 Schools identified the following eight factors most frequently as instrumental in their agenda for school improvement - defined as aspiring to higher standards and achieving continuous improvement in educational attainment:

- deployment of motivated staff with the necessary skills to the key managerial posts;
- use of predictive data to set targets for pupils;
- use of predictive data to set targets for departments/staff;
- introduction of monitoring procedures;
- review of literacy provision;
- targeting of pupil attendance and punctuality;

- promotion of positive behaviour initiatives;
- promotion of teaching and learning initiatives.

Visits To Secondary Schools In Deprived Areas Showing Significant Progress

(a) The Nature of the Schools Visited

3.5 From the original 100, 12 schools which had a fsm factor of greater than 20% were identified for visits. The choice was made so as to be as representative as possible. The group included Welsh-medium, English-medium, church and single sex schools. The schools were distributed across Wales and from a mix of rural, urban and valley locations.

3.6 The schools visited were distributed as below in relation to the fsm factor:

Fsm factor	Number of schools
20% to 29%	7
30% to 39%	3
40% to 50%	2

3.7 Pre-visit research was carried out using the most recent inspection report, value added information from the Fischer Family Trust and information provided by the school. Each visit lasted a day and involved a focus on the issues which had emerged from the survey. Discussions were held between the member of the project team and the headteacher, senior staff, teachers, support staff and pupils.

3.8 All of the schools visited were in areas of high social deprivation or had groups of pupils coming from deprived communities but outside the immediate community in which the school was situated. In the schools visited there was nearly always a lack of parental support, low status for education in the community, few role models, low pupil self-esteem and poor motivation. There was therefore a clear 'gap' on entry in year 7.

3.9 Sometimes the school also had a poor image leading to migration of pupils away from the school to more popular schools, an increasing number of pupils with special needs and a worsening pupil ability profile on entry. These schools felt that they were constantly trying to 'catch up'.

3.10 For a number of the schools visited a combination of factors has led to reduced funding because of falling pupil numbers, staff reductions, increase in class sizes, declining level of resources, heavier workloads for staff, increasing staff sickness levels and staff recruitment problems.

(b) Outcomes of the School Visits

3.11 The visits and the survey questionnaires were welcomed by schools as providing a rare opportunity for them to give their views on what had been instrumental in their success. The schools viewed the survey and the visits as both supportive and challenging.

The Main Issues Emerging from the School Visits

3.12 The main factors that emerged from analysis of the 80 school survey questionnaires were clearly prominent across the 12 schools visited. Some were seen by the schools as an essential pre-requisite for school improvement to occur. Others varied in importance depending upon the particular circumstances of the school at that time.

3.13 An overarching and fundamental theme which emerged from the visits was a willingness to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the school and accept that change is possible. There was clear evidence of a strong belief that honest analysis within a 'no blame' culture can lead a school to improve.

3.14 From this culture school improvement was being undertaken by empowering individuals to provide leadership and vision at all levels. By accepting responsibility together with accountability, individuals become powerful agents for change and improvement. Whole school approaches, effective communication systems, high expectations of all teachers and pupils and a strong element of corporate responsibility within a 'can do' approach were clearly identified as helping the schools to progress.

3.15 Working within this overarching and fundamental culture of belief in the school and its ability to improve, the school visits pointed to three factors as essential elements for school improvement without which other initiatives had less impact:

- Key personnel in key roles;
- Monitoring learning and teaching and promoting effective practice;
- Analysis and use of assessment data.

Key Personnel in Key Roles

3.16 The importance of key personnel driving school improvement was clear in the school visits. These key personnel were in a position to influence learning and teaching and to promote school improvement.

3.17 In each school visited there was normally a 'school improvement' team but the team was not always synonymous with the senior management team. The members of this team came from all levels of management and often included members of both teaching and support staff. Having created the vision for school improvement, this team led the translation of ideas into practice and helped the schools secure the progress and improvements that had been identified.

3.18 For the schools visited, rarely was a school in the optimum position of having all the appropriate personnel in key roles. In any event, movement of staff over time had necessitated team changes. The approach normally adopted was to empower appropriate individuals to lead on particular issues and to continually work towards building a team of people who could innovate and lead on sustained school improvement.

Monitoring Learning and Teaching and Promoting Effective Practice

3.19 Promoting an ongoing and active debate about effective learning and teaching was an essential element in many of the schools visited and a key feature emerging from the survey of successful schools. An overriding aim was to enable every teacher to achieve his or her full potential to ensure that all teaching was good or very good. This was helped by a structure that promoted debate about matters concerned with learning and teaching, with a clear focus on developing an understanding of the different ways in which pupils learn. There was also constructive analysis and monitoring of teaching to promote dissemination of best practice and make changes where appropriate. This aspect was supported by an effective professional development programme for staff.

3.20 In the schools visited on-going consideration of a number of aspects of learning and teaching was fundamental to success in raising pupil achievement and all schools would find it useful to review their current practice in relation to:

- understanding how different pupils learn;
- systems for monitoring learning and teaching;
- systems for discussing and disseminating good classroom practice;
- willingness to continually evaluate and review progress;
- involvement of pupils in the learning processes.

Analysis and Use of Assessment Data

3.21 Effective use of assessment data was a key element of school improvement so that teachers could focus their teaching on the specific learning needs of individual students. The systems used gave every pupil opportunity to achieve his or her full potential by measuring current performance against expected performance. The potential of each pupil was established from baseline predictive data in Year 7 and constantly reviewed.

3.22 The school assessment systems enabled pupils' performance to be measured regularly. The analysis of data highlighted anomalies in performance leading to appropriate action whenever under-achievement was detected at individual pupil level and/or for groups of pupils. The analysis of the data, based on individual pupil results, provided a basis for appropriate targets to be set and monitored for pupils, classes, departments, the whole school and the LEA.

3.23 The school assessment process also provided important feedback for learning and teaching. The interaction between use of assessment data and promoting and monitoring learning and teaching was vital for sustained school improvement.

3.24 The main elements associated with a successful assessment system are listed in the full analysis.⁶ Few schools claimed that they had all the elements successfully in place, indicating there was scope for further improvement.

⁶ This is available on the Welsh Assembly Government's website www.learning.wales.gov.uk, and the WLGA website www.wlga.gov.uk

Further Areas of Focus

3.25 In the schools visited there were four other common areas of development:

Key Stage 2/3 transition

3.26 Most of the schools visited had satisfactory systems in place to ensure that there was a smooth transition for pupils from primary schools to secondary schools. Almost invariably this focused on the pastoral arrangements. Arrangements for transition between Key Stages 2 and 3 centred on curriculum continuity, building on subject experiences in the primary school and thus enabling pupils to "hit the ground running" when they commenced Key Stage 3, were rare.

3.27 Where arrangements existed, the aim was to have effective subject continuity, particularly in the core subjects, making a smooth transition for pupils and allowing Key Stage 3 work to build upon the key stage 2 foundations. In these schools Key Stage 2 data from partner primary schools, together with any additional predictive data such as Cognitive Ability Tests and Standardised Reading Scores were used to establish pupil potential and inform subject teaching.

3.28 Where predictive data was provided to schools by an LEA using value-added information this was welcomed although it would be more beneficial if it were provided prior to pupil transfer. The best examples of good use of Key Stage 2 pupil data were often accompanied by a sophisticated and consistent approach to Key Stage 2/3 transition.

3.29 Section 198 of the Education Act 2002 provides the National Assembly for Wales with a new power to require governing bodies of secondary schools and their feeder primary schools to draw up plans together to facilitate the transition of pupils from the one to the other.

Literacy

3.30 The schools visited believed that a key factor in raising standards was to give all pupils the competence and confidence in literacy to cope with the learning challenge across the curriculum. It was recognised that valuable work had been done in primary schools in the development of literacy skills and raising standards of achievement and that this needed to be continually built upon in the secondary phase.

3.31 In the schools visited, despite the very good work of the primary schools, there were a significant minority of pupils, mostly boys, who on entry to secondary school were unable to read material appropriate to their chronological age. They were unable to do well in a curriculum that relies a great deal on reading and writing. Poor skills in reading and writing led to frustration, inattentiveness and sometimes disruptive and anti social behaviour. There is still considerable work needed to raise the literacy levels of this minority of pupils.

3.32 The schools visited tackled poor literacy skills through a variety of strategies including:

- (i) paying particular attention to information from the primary schools;
- (ii) catch-up lessons for targeted groups, literacy workshops, drop-in centres and "buddy-reading" schemes;
- (iii) resources such as accelerated literacy programmes, successmaker, school-developed material, etc;
- (iv) use of learning support assistants trained to support pupils in dealing with literacy problems across the curriculum; and
- (v) programmes to train parents to help their children with literacy skills, not just reading but reading for understanding and oral and listening skills.

3.33 A number of the schools visited acknowledged that pupils were often not realising their full potential at the end of Key Stage 3, or even by the end of Key Stage 4 due to their low level of literacy. Strategies being developed across the curriculum to address this included:

- (i) agreement, as to the cross-curricular literacy priorities, such as spelling, the use of writing frames, research and study skills and group discussion and interaction;
- (ii) appointment of a literacy co-ordinator to support departments, share ideas and monitor development; and
- (iii) senior management team sampling of work for evidence of progress and identification of the training needs of teaching staff.

Behaviour Management

3.34 The schools visited believed that a key factor in raising standards was promotion of good classroom behaviour to maximise the time spent on productive learning. Schools reported having to deal with increased behaviour problems during the past few years following adoption of the policy of greater inclusion.

3.35 Schools visited identified two different types of behaviour problem which inhibit learning opportunities for the majority. First the problem of severely disruptive individuals, who often required individual programmes to avoid exclusion from school. In these cases, schools rightly expected support from their LEA. In some cases, an imaginative alternative curriculum for such pupils, often involving an element of off-site education, had proved very effective. However, such schemes can be costly for schools.

3.36 Second, there was the problem of low-level disruption in classrooms by a number of troublesome pupils, who displayed disaffection with their current educational diet. To combat this, schools had sought to introduce a combination of staff training in behaviour management and positive behaviour schemes for pupils. Whole school schemes promoting positive behaviour linked to rewards as well as sanctions for pupils, often succeeded in reducing problems.

3.37 The most successful schools have also linked their "behaviour programme" with a thorough review of teaching and learning, identifying the most effective ways of teaching all pupils and thus reducing classroom disaffection.

Attendance

3.38 All schools visited recognised that regular attendance was a major factor in improving pupil achievement. Some schools were using sophisticated computerised systems to monitor attendance and to identify patterns of non-attendance. Systems were used to track pupils during the school day, ameliorating the incidence of internal truancy. Early intervention strategies are an essential element of any policy to promote regular attendance and most schools provide rewards for good attendance. Most schools contacted parents on the first day of a pupil's absence.

3.39 This emphasis on the importance of regular attendance can have a significant impact on reducing levels of non-attendance but schools visited reported that successful schemes to improve pupil attendance invariably require additional funding. For instance recent Home Office funding had helped one school address a range of issues which had improved attendance and raised standards. The school had been able to employ a local person who became well known in the area, who was able to make prompt contact with pupils and families and who was also able to "greet" pupils whose attendance had caused concern on arrival at school.

CHAPTER 4: How Local Authorities are Supporting School Improvement and Helping to Narrow the Gap

Introduction

4.1 This study was carried out in two parts:

- (i) a survey by NFER of all LEAs' Education Strategic Plans for 1999 - 2002 to identify how authorities were taking forward their responsibilities and in particular the roles of challenging and supporting schools.
- (ii) visits to 12 LEAs to gather additional evidence on difficulties faced by LEAs in helping to raise standards and narrow the gap.

Background

4.2 Local authorities have a statutory responsibility under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to exercise their functions in providing education with a view to promoting high standards. This is taken forward in a number of ways including the preparation and implementation of a 3 yearly education strategic plan which has as its focus school improvement and working with schools within the framework of the Code of Practice on LEA - School Relations⁷.

4.3 The recent publication from the Welsh Local Government Association 'The Future Role of Local Authorities in Education in Wales'⁸ clearly outlines the important role that local authorities have in raising standards in education. The key themes, underpinned by a substantial body of legislation that prescribes and describes local authority activity, are to provide:

- (i) political and community leadership;
- (ii) educational leadership and partnership;
- (iii) local needs analysis and planning;
- (iv) effective resource management;
- (v) equality of opportunity;
- (vi) support and challenge to schools;
- (vii) a culture of lifelong learning.

4.4 The main aspects of the school improvement role and the wider responsibilities of local authorities for education are clearly outlined in the WLGA document and provide the context within which each local authority needs to carry out the very important work of raising standards and securing improvement in education.

⁷ Published in June 1999 and available at www.learning.wales.gov.uk

⁸ Published in October 2002 and available at www.wlga.gov.uk

Local Education Authority Structures

4.5 The 22 local authorities in Wales were established as a result of local government reorganisation in 1996. They vary in size from Merthyr Tydfil with five secondary schools and a population of 57,000, to Cardiff with 24 secondary schools and a population of 320,900. All of the authorities have had to face problems arising from prolonged economic decline, an inherited low baseline of educational achievement, and a dilution of experience and expertise as a result of the increase in the number of LEAs from 8 to 22.

4.6 LEA management structures reflect a clear focus on school improvement issues. At the time of reorganisation LEAs sought in the main to provide the full range of support services for schools; even those authorities which are particularly small. This pattern is still the norm though it has proved difficult in many cases and instances of co-operation with other LEAs to make more effective use of resources are becoming more common. However formal arrangements such as those expressed in the creation of ESIS and Cynnal (training and curriculum advisory bodies in South and North Wales respectively) are unusual.

4.7 Several LEAs now place school improvement within a wider social and educational strategy which seeks to address economic and cultural poverty. The aim is to create learning communities which address the needs of pupils and their families and the development of lifelong learning. Such approaches help to raise the status of learning in communities whose self-esteem has been damaged by economic failure and where parents' own experiences of school were poor.

LEA Strategies for School Improvement

Link Adviser

4.8 LEAs see their role as supporting and facilitating best practice, acknowledging that much of that best practice originates in and is driven by schools themselves. Most work with their schools through a system of link advisors. Link advisors monitor the school's performance - sharing relevant data with the school leadership team and helping the school governors to set performance and other targets, frame their school development plans and embed self-evaluation into the culture and practice of the school. Most secondary link advisors are former heads of secondary school departments. The majority of primary advisors are former head teachers.

4.9 LEAs also work to promote effective school leadership through national training programmes and local INSET programmes which promote continuing professional development.

Target Setting

4.10 LEAs have become much more adept at using data to monitor school performance and help schools to set targets which contribute to raising standards. In many cases schools devise their targets from consideration of individual pupil data and performance. The input of the link advisor involves seeking to ensure targets are suitably challenging. All LEAs use schools' targets to

devise LEA targets for attainment - but this is less well developed for attendance and exclusion targets. In most cases LEAs add an element of challenge to the aggregate of the schools targets. School and LEA targets are reviewed and rolled forward annually in light of outcomes for the most recent school year.

Identifying and Responding To Schools Causing Concern

4.11 All LEAs have systems for identifying schools which are in difficulty or in danger of getting into difficulty. In many instances the factors used to identify such schools are agreed with schools. All LEAs also have arrangements for giving additional support to such schools, the nature of that support being tailored to the circumstances involved. These arrangements are often less well defined.

4.12 LEAs and most schools now recognise the need for differentiated help to be provided, although notions of equal support and provision regardless of relative need have not entirely disappeared in some LEAs.

Support To Governing Bodies

4.13 The input of governing bodies to school improvement varies. Governors need to receive training on issues of school performance and improvement. Where this happens there is a direct impact on the effectiveness of the governing body.

Pupil Involvement

4.14 Where pupils are actively engaged in the decision-making activity in a school this often supports improvement and helps to facilitate personal development. Some LEAs have begun to promote the creation of school councils and others are planning to do so. In "The Learning Country" the Assembly Government has signalled its intention to require all maintained schools to establish school councils.

Special Educational Needs

4.15 All LEAs are committed to making appropriate provision for pupils with special education needs (SEN) based on an assessment of their individual requirements. They take the view that where possible, children should be educated within mainstream schools, although such arrangements can pose practical and financial difficulties. Early identification of and support for pupils with SEN is regarded as a priority. LEAs recognise the need for more effective co-operation between different agencies involved with SEN pupils though some consider that schools should accept a greater responsibility themselves for this.

Specific Issues

4.16 LEAs are seeking to address the difference in performance between boys and girls and lack of appropriate progression at Key Stage 3. Many are promoting school-based initiatives, including better pastoral and curriculum planning and transition arrangements between Key Stages 2 and 3. In particular there is an increasing emphasis on the curriculum aspects. Emphasis is also being placed on improving overall school attendance, which sometimes involves targeting

resources on areas where truancy is a problem. LEAs are refining their strategies for the inclusion of disaffected pupils. Off-site and on-site alternative curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 has been introduced in many instances. Some LEAs would like to see greater use of alternative approaches to the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3.

Professional Development for Schools

4.17 LEAs provide support to teaching staff through a professional development programme and most also provide appropriate training for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and headteachers.

4.18 The General Teaching Council for Wales' pilot Continuing Professional Development (CPD) projects focus on the individually identified professional development needs of teachers. The Welsh Assembly Government has invested £1.3 million in 2001-02 and £5.147 million in 2002-03 to pilot and evaluate these approaches. Some of the second phase pilot projects involve whole school teaching staffs and schools in Communities First areas are able to benefit particularly from this. The Assembly Government, GTC(W) and LEAs need to work closely together to ensure that there is a coherent programme to address CPD in relation to national, local, school and individual priorities.

Recruitment

4.19 A number of LEAs believe that recruitment and retention of school staff will become an increasing concern in the future especially for schools in deprived areas.

CHAPTER 5: The Impact of the Community Dimension of Schools in Narrowing the Gap

Introduction

5.1 In the analysis of the work undertaken by a number of community schools and colleges in England, Scotland and Wales, it was important to find out whether, apart from the obvious added value to the community at large of lifelong learning opportunities, there was any direct benefit for schools in terms of raising standards and narrowing the gap.

5.2 In all the examples considered, providers faced the challenge of raising educational standards in areas of severe social and economic disadvantage. Low educational attainment, poor basic skills and limited opportunities for employment had often combined to create a spiral of failure and low self-esteem for families and communities over several generations. The focus on community provision posed considerable challenges for schools and other service providers, but also potential to bring multiple benefits for learners, schools and their communities.

Building a Culture of Success

5.3 In the examples studied, encouraging adults back into learning was seen as a way of changing the culture by raising the profile of learning. Getting the entire community engaged in learning raised collective self-esteem. This, in turn, was seen as having a direct impact on pupils' attainment and in raising their aspirations and their determination to progress from school to further education, training or employment.

Supporting Learners and Their Families

5.4 Supporting the most vulnerable children and young people can be achieved most successfully when schools link with health and social services to provide targeted support for the family and bring in the youth service and relevant public, private and voluntary sector agencies to work with them. To achieve this requires the development of effective mechanisms for multi-agency working.

5.5 The linking of services is central to the aims of the Scottish New Community Schools initiative. Starting in 2000, some 60 or so projects in the most disadvantaged areas have received funding for teams of teachers and health, social and community education workers to provide integrated support for children, young people and their families. Teams have learnt much about one another's expertise through joint staff development and inter-disciplinary planning and delivery. The success of the projects owes much to the status given to the work at national level; the commitment of local steering groups on which all core services are represented at senior level; and the role of integration managers who manage and co-ordinate the work of the multi-disciplinary team.

5.6 The clear message from the projects has been the need for earlier intervention to identify the needs of young people and more flexible and

responsive mainstream provision of the curriculum to avoid the need for later compensatory programmes.

Parents and Parenting Skills

5.7 Childcare facilities are fundamental to engaging younger parents in learning. In one Scottish project, the clinic is located in the local primary school building. Antenatal classes held on site establish a first contact with the school. Then, through the involvement of the health visitor for the area, mothers of young children are recruited to a range of classes on parenting, including baby massage and aspects of childcare. Crèche facilities for toddlers and a small 'parents' room enable parents to progress to a range of other classes and to become involved in supporting the work of the school.

5.8 In Wales and elsewhere, adult literacy and numeracy programmes, and other family learning schemes attached to nurseries and primary schools, have proved their worth. Such schemes can often be the first step in re-engaging parents in learning, as well as helping them in practical ways to support their children's learning.

The Importance of Health

5.9 The physical, mental and emotional well being of learners is a precondition for effective learning. Some community focused schools are seeking new ways to work alongside health professionals, giving attention to health education and health promotion.

5.10 At the simplest level, the link between health and learning can ensure that learners start the day with a healthy breakfast eaten in calm surroundings and that they have access to water-coolers around the site to ensure adequate liquid intake. Teachers in schools that have done this are convinced of the improvement this can bring about in terms of pupils' attention span and concentration. The messages conveyed in relation to diet need to be reinforced in practice through the provision of healthy snacks and school meals. A dental clinic located at one Scottish primary school had gained the consent of 90% of parents to carry out regular check-ups and treatment. In a local youth club attached to the school, a high proportion of teenage boys were responding positively to informal teaching about sexual health.

5.11 Pupils' emotional and psychological well being is obviously fundamental if they are to benefit from school and have positive experiences of learning. In community focused schools, the expertise of professionals such as school and community nurses, health workers, psychologists, therapists, counsellors and playworkers is being used increasingly to extend, supplement and support the efforts of teachers. In the best health programmes, nurses and others work alongside teachers in the classroom, provide group sessions on aspects of sex education, alcohol and drug abuse, and provide individual services for pupils and their parents.

Tackling Disaffection

5.12 In many of the schools looked at, efforts have been directed towards pupils at risk of dropping out. Staff have been developing new approaches to attendance, including the introduction of electronic registration systems, more effective deployment of Educational Welfare Officers and the use of learning support assistants to make first day contact with parents and pupils. The schools make efforts to provide an appropriate curriculum for poor attendees involving for instance more appropriate learning styles, use of work experience and links to further education colleges.

5.13 Ways of re-engaging pupils in danger of being excluded often focus on developing personal and social skills leading to improved confidence and positive attitudes to learning. To do this, schools are working increasingly with a range of community partners such as youth workers, voluntary groups, employers, mentors from the business community and staff from local further education institutions. One valuable outcome, which needs to be further developed, is the recognition and accreditation of learning achieved by pupils outside school, for example through voluntary, leisure and outdoor activities.

Improving the Community Perception of the School

5.14 Improving relationships with partner primary schools is another area of focus. A key issue for the survival of several schools in deprived areas has been the need to restore confidence of primary school parents who were increasingly looking around for alternative secondary schools for their children.

5.15 One school sought to restore the image of the school through refurbishment of the school building. The starting point for this was the involvement of parents who volunteered to paint the school building and a programme of zero tolerance of graffiti and litter around the school grounds.

5.16 Some schools have used their links with parents to make a positive impact on wider community issues. For example, attendance at school meetings can give parents a collective voice not only on school matters but also on related issues such as health, crime prevention, safety in the locality and ways of improving the quality of the environment.

Engaging the Community in Learning

5.17 A central principle in the development of community focused schools and colleges is that they should promote the educational aspirations of the community and be a focus for lifelong learning. Two factors are crucial if community education programmes are to meet the needs of learners. First getting the curriculum right in terms of its relevance. Second, providing access to learning through flexible provision and outreach.

5.18 There should be discussion with potential learners about the knowledge and skills they need. Learning opportunities need to be available at times, in places and in ways that will attract potential learners. Where adults' own experience of school has been of a hostile or unfriendly environment, approaches to outreach need to be innovative.

5.19 The popularity of ICT-related provision in motivating learners, providing a link between children and parents and upskilling local people was identified by several providers. A feature of most community focused schools is their interest in making school facilities, particularly ICT resources, accessible to adults. Where the capacity already exists, classes for adult learners or mixed adult/pupil groups during the day are popular, especially where childcare facilities are available.

Vocational Routes into Training and Employment

5.20 One school in a socially deprived area which has suffered from a 30% drop in pupil numbers over 6 years, has worked closely with the LEA, local FE college and local church in providing an adult and vocational curriculum on the school campus. Affordable childcare has been a key ingredient since 1996. The provision of a family centre and skills centre in 1999 was designed to engage young families in developing parenting skills and provide work experience placements for students on NVQ and childcare courses.

Links with Higher Education

5.21 Higher education (HE) also has a role in raising aspirations. In "Reaching Higher - Higher Education and the Learning Country – A Strategy for higher education in Wales" the Assembly Government has said that higher education institutions must do more to reach pupils in schools and further education institutions in disadvantaged areas who could benefit from HE.

CHAPTER 6: Factors that Prevent the Gap being Narrowed

Introduction

6.1 During the visits to 12 secondary schools in deprived areas and 12 LEAs, significant factors were identified which hinder progress in narrowing the gap. These are outlined below:

The Impact of Deprivation

6.2 Ingrained social problems arising from prolonged economic decline provide a major challenge for some schools and most LEAs. There was a consensus among LEA officers visited that deprivation contributed to educational under-performance with many authorities having to address an inherited low base of educational achievement.

6.3 All of the schools visited were in areas of high social deprivation and in these schools there was nearly always a lack of parental support, low status for education in the community, few role models, low pupil self-esteem and poor motivation. Often, despite the good work of the partner primary schools, there was a clear 'gap' on entry to the secondary school in year 7.

The Combination of Falling Rolls, Poor Intake and Deprivation

6.4 LEAs reported that the tendency for parents to exercise choice and send their children to secondary schools which were not their local school, had a direct impact on school standards, particularly in urban areas. This leakage reduces pupil rolls in schools perceived to be 'less good' and often affects performance in those schools.

6.5 As indicated in paragraph 3.9 above, many of the schools visited highlighted poor image in the community, an increasing number of pupils with special needs and a worsening pupil ability profile on entry. These schools felt that they were constantly trying to 'catch up'. Schools and LEAs are also reporting increasing recruitment problems for both temporary supply and permanent staff in schools facing significant challenges and in rural communities.

6.6 In rural and semi-rural communities, some schools were experiencing problems arising from some of the factors already highlighted, and had reducing rolls but not a change in the overall pupil ability distribution. Others were experiencing problems arising from having a catchment area made up of a mix of deprived and more affluent communities.

6.7 Many LEAs are beginning to experience the overall reduction in pupil numbers which will affect the whole of Wales in the next few years. Coupled with the other factors described, some LEAs face a very difficult task of forward planning of school provision so as to secure improved educational outcomes for all learners.

6.8 As already described in Chapter 3, for a number of schools in deprived communities, especially in urban areas, the combination of all these factors has led to some or all of reduced funding, staff reductions, increase in class sizes, poorer level of resources, heavy workload for staff, increasing sickness levels and recruitment problems.

School Buildings

6.9 Although investment in schools buildings has increased significantly in the last 5 years, many of the school buildings visited were showing significant signs of disrepair due to lack of investment over a long period. Until the capital investment programme has made more significant inroads into the backlog, funding and time for school improvement is eaten into. An increasing proportion of funds have to be spent on the maintenance of buildings and senior staff often have to manage this at the expense of time spent on improving standards.

LEA Advisory Support

6.10 Many of the initiatives which promoted improvement in the schools visited were school-driven. According to the schools lack of appropriate expertise or shortage of advisors in the local authority to support the senior management team was an increasing feature.

6.11 LEAs reported that the increasing corporate workload of senior officers and advisers often reduced their ability to participate directly in school developments. LEAs indicated that recruitment of people with the required expertise to the LEA advisory service was becoming more difficult, mainly because of the reduced or negative salary differentials between experienced school staff and advisors. Many authorities would welcome an improvement in the status of advisors, for example through a new professional qualification.

Funding For Schools

6.12 Funding was a major concern in the schools visited. Local funding formulae used to derive schools' delegated budgets are mainly driven by pupil numbers with no factors to protect curriculum delivery. Little if any account is taken of deprivation and factors such as falling rolls although the Financing of Maintained Schools Regulations do allow a local education authority to take into account in their formula, as they consider appropriate, a number of factors including social deprivation. More generally schools perceive a lack of continuity of funding from year-to-year even though they need to operate their development plans over several years.

6.13 Schools saw short-term targeted funding for specific purposes as useful but unless the funding can be embedded eventually in the school budget, it provides only a short-term solution for continuing needs. Uncertainty about funding often leads to a high turn over of project staff and sometimes additional redundancy costs for the LEA.

6.14 LEAs also welcomed additional targeted funding but expressed concern about the issue of competitive bidding and excessive bureaucracy in monitoring the funding. This often makes planning difficult and places an additional burden

on LEA officers and school staff. Examples included bids for funding from the New Opportunities Fund and European Objective One.

Special Educational Needs

6.15 LEAs serving areas of high socio-economic deprivation and areas with significant transient populations gave evidence of increased need for provision to address language and communication difficulties and disruptive behaviour. LEAs anticipated that in the future schools would have to cater for an increasing proportion of pupils with more severe and complex needs. All the schools visited reported an increasing number of pupils with special educational needs and low attainment. Section 185 of the Education Act 2002 provides the basis for development of regional provision for special educational needs in Wales.

Challenging Pupil Behaviour

6.16 There is a real concern within schools about the lack of support for dealing with pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour. External intervention is often too little and too late. Schools feel inadequately equipped to handle the increasing number of pupils with psychological problems. There are good examples of successful alternative curriculum provision but this can be difficult to organise in more sparsely populated areas.

Key Stage 3

6.17 There is well-recognised concern about the slowing of pupil progression at Key Stage 3. Targeted funding and work being undertaken by Estyn and ACCAC relating to the Key Stage 3 curriculum and its delivery are starting to focus on this; and there are expectations that improvement in transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 will lead to improved outcomes at Key Stage 3. However there is some way to go before significant progress is apparent and LEAs have expressed concern about the generally slow progress in raising standards at Key Stage 3.

The School in the Wider Community

6.18 The arguments for schools developing a strong community dimension are very powerful, but the challenges are considerable.

6.19 There are concerns over the availability of resources and funding to support community initiatives. The problems sometimes have less to do with finding a source of funding, than in finding the staff with dedicated time to make applications and submissions necessary to secure the money.

6.20 The short-term nature of many projects means that there is no certainty of rolling out the work into the mainstream. Many project staff on short-term contracts are understandably looking to secure their future employment almost as soon as they start work.

6.21 A strong and sustainable community focus in a school requires staff dedicated to managing the outreach work of the school and on-going sources of funding outside the school's delegated budget. Staff from different services work in different cultures and organisational structures and report to different

managements. There is little in the way of collaborative record keeping focused on children. Area child protection arrangements offer some experience on which collaborative planning and record keeping might be based. But there are constraints imposed by data protection legislation.

6.22 There is a strong commitment to measuring outcomes. Obvious indicators relate to improved attainment, attendance of learners, take-up of formal and informal learning opportunities, reduced referrals and reductions in crime and drug abuse. There are difficulties in quantifying the impact of more qualitative areas of work, for example, those linked to health promotion and mental and emotional well being which should yield benefits in the mid to longer term. Similarly, improved progression of learners from one phase of education to the next will take several years to measure, as will the investment in parenting and other aspects of adult and community education.

CHAPTER 7: Factors that Support the Gap being Narrowed

Introduction

7.1 During the visits to the 12 schools in deprived areas and 12 LEAs significant factors were identified which were supportive of school improvement. These are outlined below:

The Local Authority and Schools Working In Partnership

Raising the Profile of the Local School

7.2 An overriding and fundamental factor in several of the schools visited is the belief that they can improve and are determined to do the very best for all their pupils. This is considerably strengthened when the LEA is working closely with the school and publicly saying the same.

7.3 Several LEAs have helped to secure a genuine comprehensive catchment area with little migration of pupils out of the area by actively pursuing '*local schools for local people*' which emphasises the importance of links between schools and the community. This action has sometimes been supported by popular schools which have indicated that they do not wish to expand further.

Targeting of Resources by the LEA

7.4 Long-term targeted and secure funding and a high profile for the school in the community as a local resource have provided some schools in deprived areas with greater opportunities to succeed.

7.5 LEAs have also provided supportive publicity based upon value added not raw attainment data; training programmes for teachers and learning support assistants; benchmarked data and training in its use; support for the use of the Basic Skills Quality Mark; bringing together families of schools for Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition; and securing external funding such as Objective 1 and New Opportunities Funds.

Knowledge of Schools by the LEA

7.6 Schools feel supported when they know the LEA has sound knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses and provides benchmarked data to enable sound comparisons to be made on spending, staffing, curriculum and achievements.

7.7 Where schools are supported by an LEA which actively tries to reduce the impact of external factors, this is seen as a significant help in bringing about improvement.

The Community Dimension of Schools

7.8 The schools in the strongest position to narrow the gap through the support of the wider community, are undoubtedly those that have built up their

own network of contacts and who have 'grown' their own community provision over time, working steadily with partners who share a common vision of the benefits of partnership working. Where it is possible, the co-location of services is an added advantage. Primary schools are almost always at the heart of their geographical catchments and provide a natural focus for community activity.

7.9 Secondary schools need to consider where it is best to provide learning opportunities, which may or may not be on site. Successful schools have appraised the potential advantages of involving play and youth workers, employers, local colleges or voluntary groups in extending the range of learning opportunities available beyond the traditional school day, school week and school year.

7.10 The most successful community focused schools listen carefully to their customers. To do this effectively requires a cultural shift. These schools and their partners have gone out into the community to talk to learners and their families about the kind of services they need. Similarly they listen to the views of children and other learners about the quality of the learning opportunities and support services being provided.

7.11 Even with policies, funding and local authority structures in place, schools are aware that it is up to the staff on the ground to evolve practical ways of working together that can succeed on a daily basis. This requires a sharp focus on the priorities to be addressed; efficient use of time; an appreciation of what all partners can bring to the task of improving opportunities for learning; and effective planning, communication and liaison.

7.12 Once budgets and time allocations for community projects and the multi-agency teams have been secured, the objectives are achieved through committed leadership and strong management at strategic and operational levels.

Social Inclusion and Community Development Programmes

7.13 Raising standards and combating low achievement in schools in deprived areas can only be addressed in the context of a broader strategy of community regeneration. Several LEAs have introduced a variety of community programmes to encourage family learning and access to other accredited courses. Many of the wider social inclusion and community initiatives have however yet to impact on many schools in deprived areas.

CHAPTER 8: Points for Action to Help Narrow the Gap

Issues for Action by Schools

8.1 Schools are making progress towards raising standards and some have made significant improvements during the last five years. On the basis of the survey however, it is recommended that schools reflect on their overall ethos and culture and the three key elements identified in Chapter 3.

8.2 In particular schools in deprived areas which are failing to make significant progress, need to address the following points, working alongside the LEA and other agencies as appropriate:

Key Personnel

- Each school needs to identify who its key personnel are and how they have the opportunity to contribute to school improvement. This includes consideration of whether the current staffing structure is appropriate or whether it could be improved and whether there is an appropriate staff development programme to produce and develop key personnel for the future. It is important that there are adequate staff to process and input data, it should not be a task for teachers.

Monitoring Teaching and Learning and Promoting Effective Practice

- Each school needs to consider whether staff are aware of the ways pupils learn and whether there are agreed strategies for good teaching. This involves checking that current practices address both learning and teaching issues, support effective assessment of learning, engender a positive environment for learning and ensure current staff deployment provides optimum support for pupils.
- Schools should evaluate how effective their systems for monitoring learning and teaching are and ensure there are arrangements in place to identify and disseminate good practice within the school.

Analysis/Use of Assessment Data

- Schools should use assessment data to evaluate learning and teaching and to monitor the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Schools need to consider whether they have agreed strategies for the formal and informal assessment of pupils' work and if current schemes of work address this.
- Schools need to focus on what the pupil performance data is saying, decide what to do and systematically monitor it.
- Where there is evidence of under-achievement or anomalies in pupil performance the school needs to check what processes it has to

remedy this. It should also ensure it has strategies covering all pupils, including high achievers and those with special needs, to ensure that they achieve their full potential.

- In relation to the data itself the school should review what base line and value added data is available and whether it has appropriate staff expertise to analyse and use it.
- The school should check whether the data is used to derive targets for individual pupils, departments and the school without creating an undue administrative burden; and that there are opportunities to share good practice.

Interaction between the three key elements

- Schools need to consider whether the appropriate key personnel are directly involved both with monitoring and promoting learning and teaching and with the use and analysis of assessment data so there is a clear interaction between these two elements.
- Where the "school improvement team" is not synonymous with the senior management team the governing body should consider the sustainability of arrangements for such a key leadership function.
- Schools need to develop a CPD programme within a clear overall performance management framework.

Areas of further focus

- In the four areas of literacy, behaviour management, attendance and Key Stage 2/3 transition schools should evaluate their strategies to see how effective they are and how they can be improved.
- They also need to consider whether there are other specific priorities that need to be addressed; and to ensure that areas selected for further focus are manageable.

Issues For Action by Local Authorities

8.3 All local authorities are making progress in raising standards in education. However they need to reflect on their role as outlined in the WLGA document 'The Future Role Of The Local Authority in Education' and in the context of their responsibilities set out in the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, The Learning Country paving document, the Education Act 2002, the Welsh Assembly Government's policy document 'Freedom and Responsibility in Local Government' and the Wales Programme for Improvement (successor to Best Value).

8.4 To help narrow the gap between the highest and lowest performing schools, local authorities should address the following issues through their political and community leadership structures:

- The case for supporting schools in deprived areas through targeted funding, in light of the outcome of consultation by the National Assembly (See paragraph 8.9), such funding to be:
 - provided through a deprivation factor
 - additional to delegated budgets
 - provided normally for 3 years or more on the basis that there are no quick fixes
 - linked to targets agreed in advance which the school would be required to meet as a condition of the funding – those targets to relate primarily to raising standards of literacy, improving attendance and supporting teachers in behaviour management but potentially also to improving the external and internal school environment and to helping the school to raise its profile in the immediate community.
- **the case for providing these schools with indicative figures for delegated budgets for 3 years⁹**
- **'local schools for local children' policies**
 - within the context of community planning, actively support such a strategy so that each secondary school is truly comprehensive.
- **linking schools with wider community developments**
 - in the context of local authority responsibilities for Community Planning, Children and Youth Partnerships, Communities First and Community Consortia for post 16 Education and Training;
 - linking to local private, public and voluntary organisations and agencies such as the police, health providers and voluntary sector bodies to address key issues impacting on children, young people and schools;
 - supporting out-of-school activities such as breakfast, ICT and homework clubs both as a means of raising standards and developing social interaction between pupils;
 - supporting the linking of families of schools with other education, training and community providers such as childcare groups, dental clinics, ante- and post-natal clinics, family counsellors, youth agencies and basic skills trainers to raise the profile of education; and
 - working with others to actively encourage adults within the community to participate in lifelong learning.

⁹ The National Assembly provides local authorities with indicative figures for years 2 and 3 in its annual budget decisions

local authority education support structures should support schools in deprived areas:

- **through key LEA staff and processes**
 - continue to maintain and strengthen the role and status of the school link advisor who should have relevant background and experience to ensure their credibility with schools;
 - target schools in most need of help so as to use expertise most productively;
 - ensure first-hand and up-to-date knowledge of each school;
 - evaluate the success of each school by comparing value added data for individual pupils so as to identify both those schools which are not making progress and those which appear to be successful but do not add value for their pupils;
 - help headteachers and governors recruit and/or develop key personnel within the school;
 - develop improved methods of identifying special needs at an early stage and securing provision to meet those needs; and
 - set up a close supportive partnership for the schools which are not making progress, using personnel who can provide support to secure the necessary improvements.
- **through a review of LEA funding mechanisms**
 - identify how funding can be better targeted through the delegated funding formula to address problems experienced by schools in deprived areas especially where falling rolls are an issue;
 - develop forums for discussing with schools funding issues in accordance with the provision for forums in section 43 of the Education Act 2002;
 - investigate the development of a range of possible approaches for delegating funding to schools including curriculum led models; and
 - provide Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils for whom the curriculum is unsuitable with an accredited alternative.
- **by encouraging schools to work together**
 - encourage the grouping of schools into families to ensure progression and continuity between phases;

- in particular foster closer teaching, curricular and pastoral links between primary and secondary schools as part of a wider strategy to address weak performance at Key Stage 3; and
 - support schools in co-operating with each other to disseminate good practice, using ICT and/or full or part-time secondments of expert staff and headteachers.
- **encouraging a voice for children and young people**
 - encourage involvement of pupils, young people and adults in decision-making, both within these schools and as part of the wider decision making processes in their local communities and across the authority. In particular support the development of school councils, as proposed in The Learning Country, pupil peer support and pupil mentoring activity in schools.

Issues For Action by the Welsh Assembly Government and national bodies working with local authorities

8.5 The Welsh Assembly Government and a number of national agencies and organisations have worked closely together over the last few years to raise standards in education and to secure improvements for children and young people in schools. However this study has helped to identify a range of issues that need to be addressed at a national level in helping to narrow the gap.

Assessment of Performance

8.6 Assessment of performance and school inspection needs to be geared to the circumstances of the school.

8.7 There needs to be a better understanding that all-Wales targets for attainment do not carry the expectation that all schools should achieve at the same absolute level in terms of pupil attainment. Schools are expected to set their attainment targets on the basis of their assessment of the likely performance of individual cohorts of pupils. Every school needs to set realistic but challenging targets appropriate to its circumstances.

8.8 Ways of changing the perception of all-Wales attainment targets include:

- celebrating the achievements of schools starting from a low base and with a difficult pupil mix which achieve significant improvement for those pupils.
- Giving greater prominence to the fact that the number of schools with less than 25% of their pupils achieving below 5 GCSE A* to C grades has reduced from 27 in 1996 to 7 in 2001 and that from 2004 outcomes will be measured against a 30% benchmark.

Funding

8.9 The National Assembly should:

- review with local authority partners and others the current requirement that 75% of delegated budgets for schools must be derived from factors based on pupil numbers in the context of the need for new regulations for the funding of schools under the Education Act 2002 provisions;
- review in the same context the adequacy of factors which can be used to protect schools in deprived areas, especially where there are falling rolls, without providing a disincentive to necessary forward planning in LEAs, which may involve rationalisation;
- in reviewing earmarked grants as set out in the Welsh Assembly Government publication 'Freedom and Responsibility in Local Government'¹⁰ have regard to the continuing importance of such funding in raising standards by addressing priorities such as professional support and training for school staff, provision for ethnic minority and traveller children, class size reduction and school improvement measures and the potential impact of the removal of grants for schools in deprived areas;
- pay close regard to the need for additional funding for activities such as improving pupil attendance and literacy to be directed to towards specific schools or groups of pupils and to be embedded in mainstream funding in the longer term;
- continue to provide enhanced funding for investment in school buildings to meet the Assembly target for 2010 of having all schools in good physical condition and properly maintained; and
- consider the case for earmarked funding for use by local authorities to support schools in deprived areas.

Continuation and Development of National Strategies

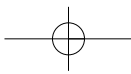
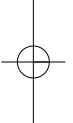
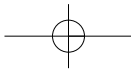
8.10 These include:

- strengthening of existing partnerships between the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities and GTC(W) in the development of a CPD framework that helps meet national, local, school and individual practitioner needs;
- creating a professional development framework for advisory staff in Wales;
- promoting the sharing of good practice across Wales;
- encouraging visits to schools that are making significant progress;

¹⁰ Published in March 2002 and available at www.wales.gov.uk/subilocalgov

- promotion of measures to highlight the success of individual schools;
- ensuring that the importance of the role of the school within its community as emphasised in The Learning Country is embedded in joined-up thinking and commitment at national and local levels within the context of wider social inclusion and community development strategies;
- developing the LEA/school partnerships provided for in the Education Act 2002;
- securing appropriate frameworks for multi-agency working as envisaged in The Learning Country, Extending Entitlement and The Children and Young People's Frameworks¹¹ so that there is greater integration of core services that provide care for children and young people and support their learning;
- reducing the number of short-term projects; and
- continuing to develop strategies to attract and retain high quality entrants to teaching, recognising the particular needs of schools in deprived areas.

¹¹ Published in October 2001 and available at www.wales.gov.uk/subichildren



APPENDIX A

TASK GROUP MEMBERS

Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Joint Chair)
Councillor Jeff Jones - Leader, Bridgend County Council (Joint Chair)

Suzanne Chisholm {until June 2001} - Head of Schools Management Division 2,
Welsh Assembly Government

Lyn Clement - General Secretary, Welsh Secondary Schools Association

Cynog Dafis AM - Chair of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, National
Assembly for Wales {until March 2002}

Elwyn Davies/Mal Davies – Members of General Teaching Council for Wales

Richard Davies - Director, Department for Training and Education – Welsh
Assembly Government

Peter Griffin - Chair, Governors Wales

Heledd Hayes - SCEW, representing teaching unions

Tom Hunter {from July 2001} - Head of Schools Management Division 2, Welsh
Assembly Government

Chris Jones - Welsh Secondary Schools Association

Dewi Jones - (ADEW) Group Director, Education and Children's Services, Rhondda
Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Selwyn Jones - Secretary, Welsh Primary Schools Association

Susan Lewis - Chief Inspector, ESTYN

Chris Llewelyn {From January 2002} - Head of Education, Welsh Local
Government Association

Steve Martin - Chief Executive, ELWa

Richard Parry – (ADEW) Director of Education, City and County of Swansea

Claire Smit - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government
(administrative support)

Lyn Summers {From November 2001} - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh
Assembly Government

Elizabeth Taylor - Head of Schools Management Division, Welsh Assembly
Government

Peter Tyndall – Head of Education, Welsh Local Government Association {until
October 2001}

John Valentine Williams - Chief Executive, ACCAC

Dafydd Whittall - (ADEW) Director of Education and Culture, Gwynedd County
Council

Councillor Shan Wilkinson - Leader, Wrexham County Council

Seimon Williams - WLGA (Administrative Support)

SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS

Elizabeth Taylor - Head of Schools Management Division, Welsh Assembly Government (Joint Chair)

Peter Tyndall {until October 2001} – Head of Education, Welsh Local Government Association (Joint Chair)

Chris Llewelyn {From January 2002} Head of Education, Welsh Local Government Association

Gary Brace - Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Wales

Suzanne Chisholm {until June 2001}- Head of Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

Lyn Clement - General Secretary, Welsh Secondary Schools Association

Tim Cox - SCEW, representing teaching unions

Mike Haines - Head of Inspection Division – Pre 16 and Early Years, ESTYN

David Hopkins – (ADEW) Director of Education and Leisure Services, Caerphilly County Borough Council

Tom Hunter {from July 2001} - Head of Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

Marian Jebb - ELWa

Selwyn Jones - Secretary, Welsh Primary Schools Association

Karl Napieralla – (ADEW) Director of Education, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Richard Parry – (ADEW) Director of Education, City and County of Swansea

Anne Robertson - Field Officer, Governors Wales

Claire Smit - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government (administrative support)

Lyn Summers {From November 2001} - Schools Management Division 2, Welsh Assembly Government

David Watcyn Jones – Assistant Chief Executive (Curriculum and Assessment 5-14), ACCAC

Seimon Williams - WLGA (administrative support)

PROJECT GROUP MEMBERS

Glyn Davies, former Headteacher of Mynyddbach Comprehensive School

Margot King, former Deputy Headteacher of Milford Haven Comprehensive School

Alan Smith, former Headteacher of Dynevor Comprehensive School

APPENDIX B

The Nature of the Gap - Statistical Summary

The Gap in Performance

Examination Performance at Key Stage 4

Chart 1: Distribution of average GCSE/GNVQ points score for maintained schools, 2000

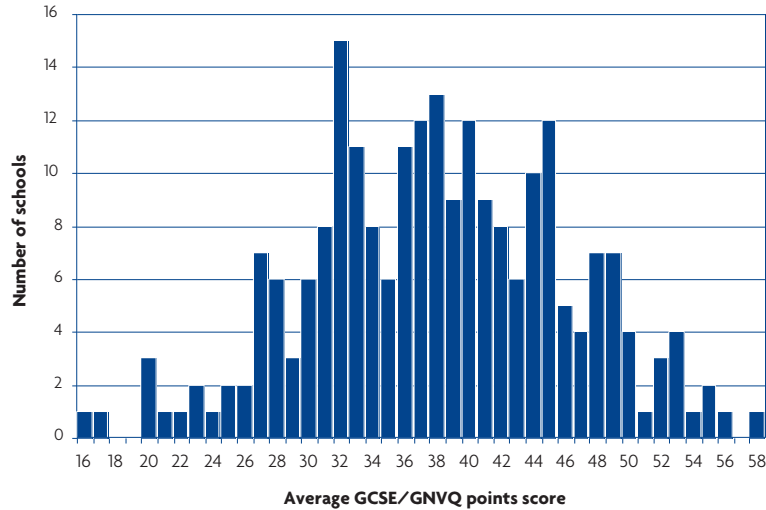


Chart 1 shows the distribution of average GCSE/GNVQ points scores for schools in Wales in 2000.

- Scores range from 16 to 58, with a median at 38.
- The quartiles(1) are at 32 points and 44 points.
- For individual LEAs, average points score varies from 28 to 48 points.

Chart 2: Change over time: schools, Key Stage 4

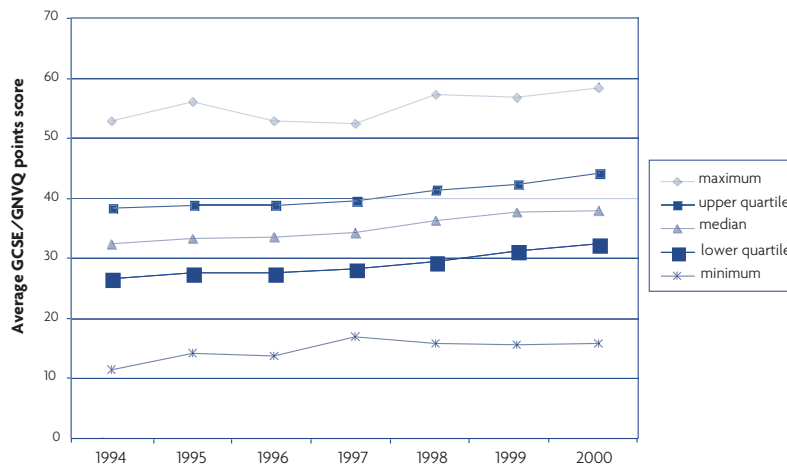


Chart 2 shows the range of average points scores for schools over the period 1994-2000. Half of all schools lie within the upper and lower quartile lines on the graph.

- Over the period 1994 to 2000, the gap appears to have remained constant, with 42 points between the maximum and minimum, and 12 points between the upper and lower quartiles.

(1) A quarter of schools lie below the lower quartile, and a quarter of schools lie above the upper quartile.

Chart 3: Change over time: LEA, Key Stage 4

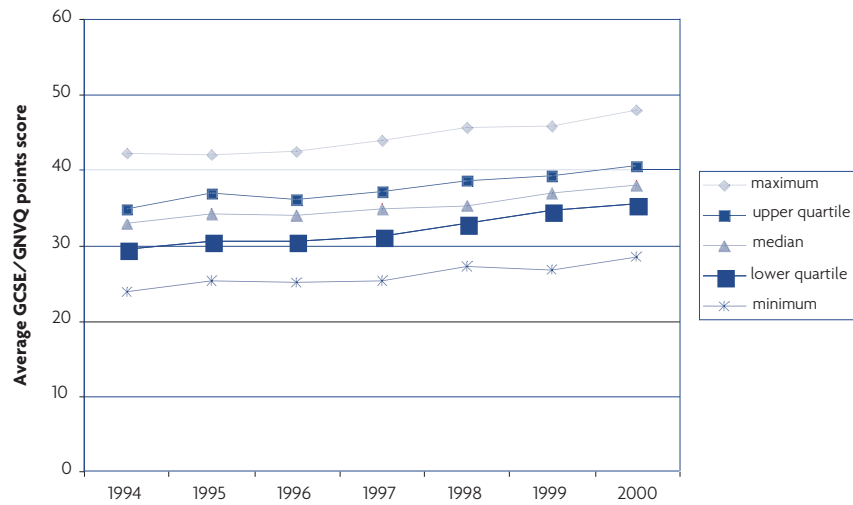


Chart 3 shows the range of average points scores for LEAs over the period 1994-2000.

- There has been a slight increase in the range between the maximum and minimum scores, but no overall change in the range between the quartiles.

Chart 4: Change over time: schools, Key Stage 3

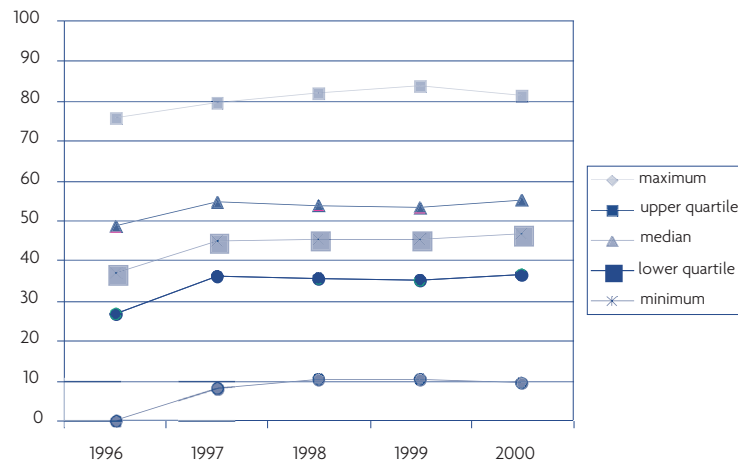
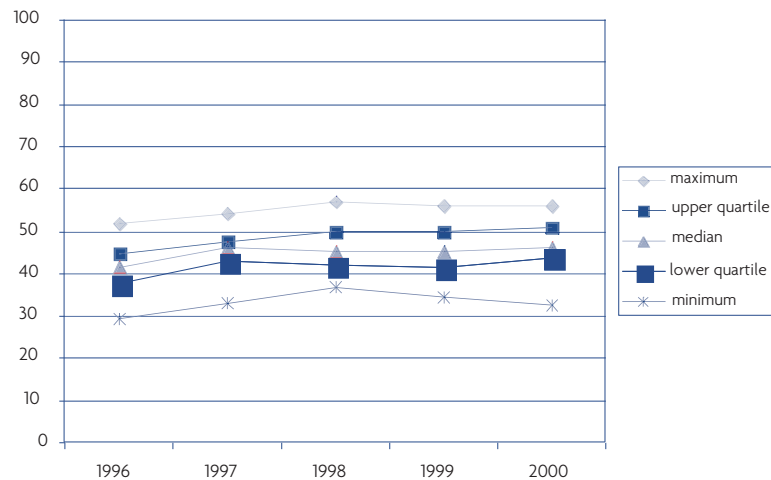


Chart 5: Change over time: LEA, Key Stage 3



Charts 4 and 5 show TASK/Test results for the core subject indicator at Key Stage 3.

At school level, the gap does not appear to be narrowing, with the range between the quartiles showing no clear trend.

At LEA level the gap between the highest and the lowest LEAs was 19 in 2000 compared with 22 in 1996, although in the years between it had narrowed to 18.

Chart 6: Change over time: schools, Key Stage 2

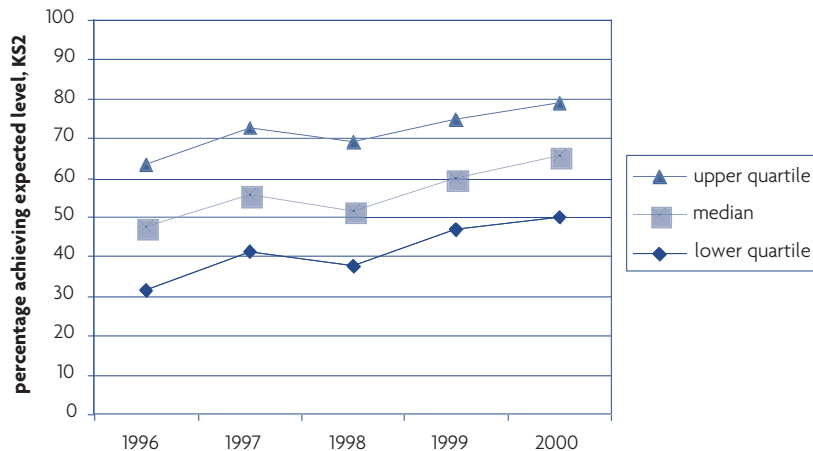
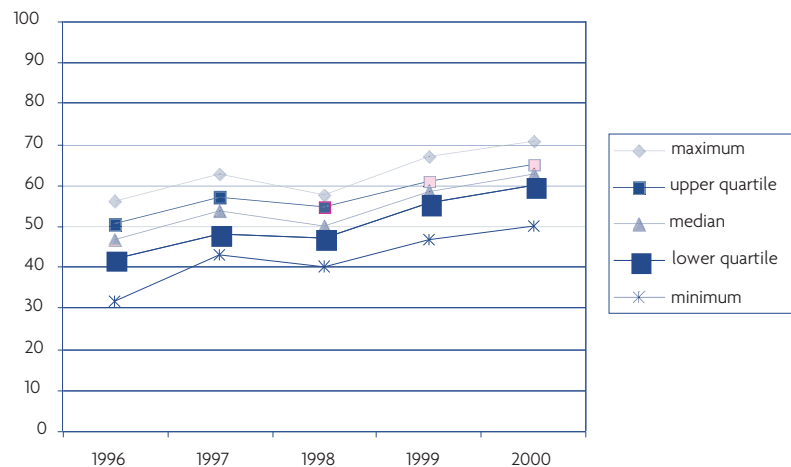


Chart 7: Change over time: LEA, Key Stage 2



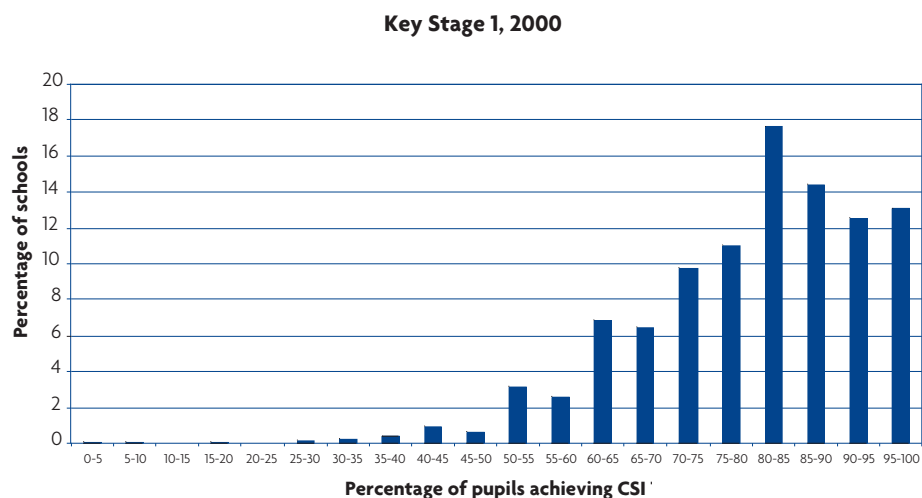
Charts 6 and 7 show TASK/Test results for the core subject indicator at Key Stage 2. Maxima and minima are not shown as there are many schools with only a few pupils in the cohort.

At school level, the gap appears to be narrowing, with the range between the quartiles reducing from 32 in 1996 to 29 in 2000.

Similarly, at LEA level the gap between the highest and the lowest LEAs has narrowed, with the range between the quartiles reducing from 9 per cent in 1996 to 5 per cent in 2000.

Core Subject Indicator for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3

Chart 8: Key Stage 1



Charts 8 to 10 show the distribution of schools for the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in the CSI in each of Key Stages 1 to 3. The Charts show the broad spread in each case. It is important to bear in mind that the apparent slippage in performance from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3 may simply be a result of the levels used for each of the indicators and does not necessarily indicate a fall in standards across the Key Stages.

Chart 8 shows the distribution of schools for each proportion of pupils achieving at least level two (the expected level) in teacher assessment for each core subject at Key Stage 1. In 2000 the median percentage was 82%, with quartiles at 71% and 90%.

Chart 9: Key Stage 2 (2)

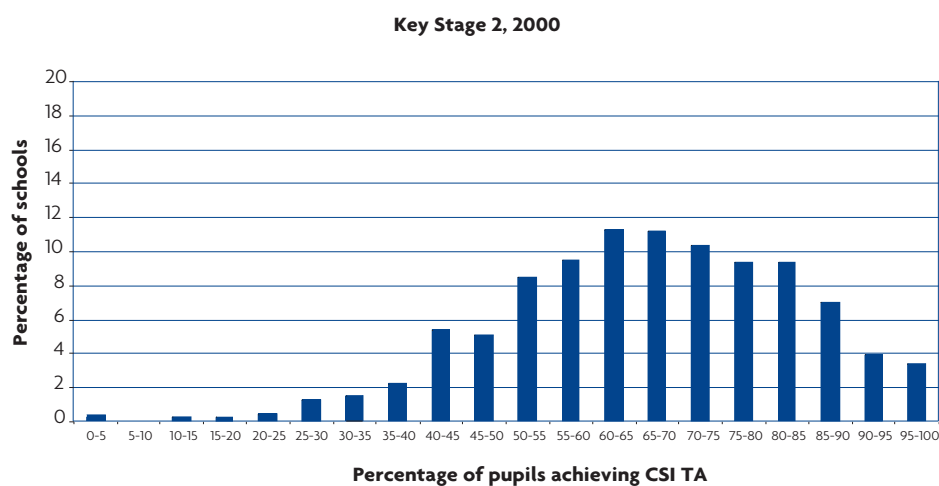


Chart 9 shows the distribution of schools for each proportion of pupils achieving at least level four (the expected level) in teacher assessment for each core subject at Key Stage 2. In 2000 the median percentage was 67%, with quartiles at 55% and 78%, a wider spread than that for Key Stage 1 or 3.

(2) A few schools did not return teacher assessment results to the WJEC, and are here recorded as zero

Chart 10: Key Stage 3

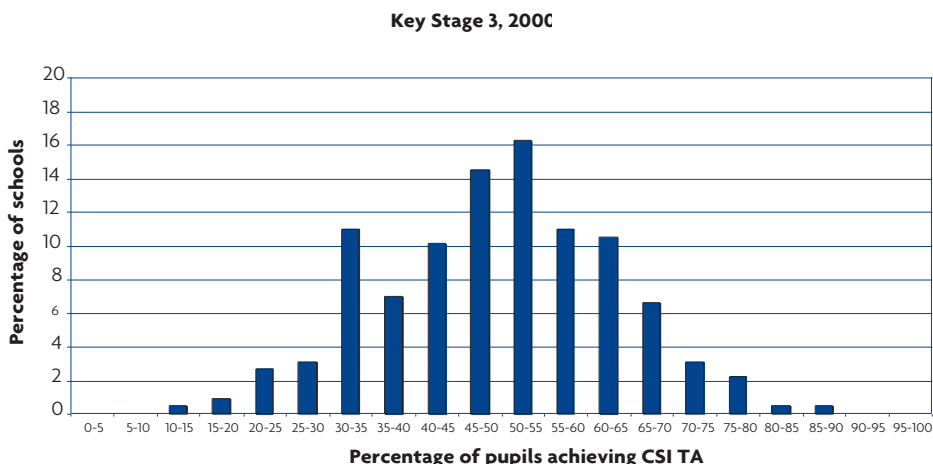
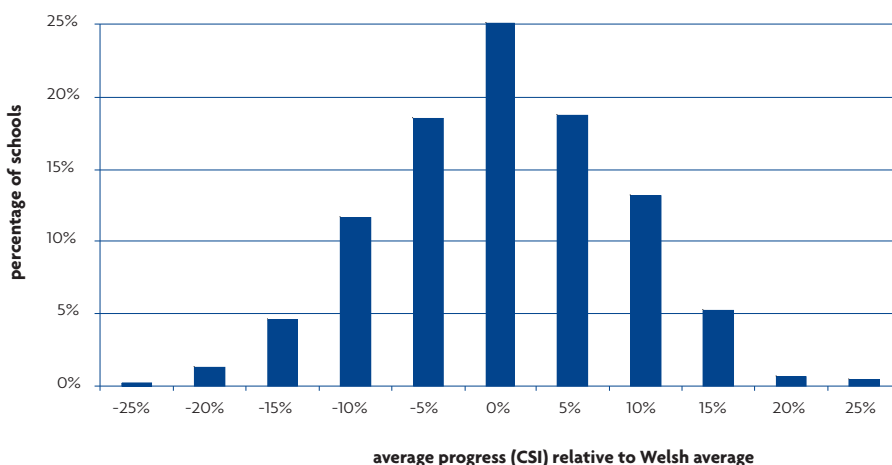


Chart 10 shows the distribution of schools for each proportion of pupils achieving at least level five (the expected level) in teacher assessment for each core subject at Key Stage 3. In 2000 the median percentage was 50%, with quartiles at 40% and 59%.

Chart 11: Progress between Key Stages 2 and 3



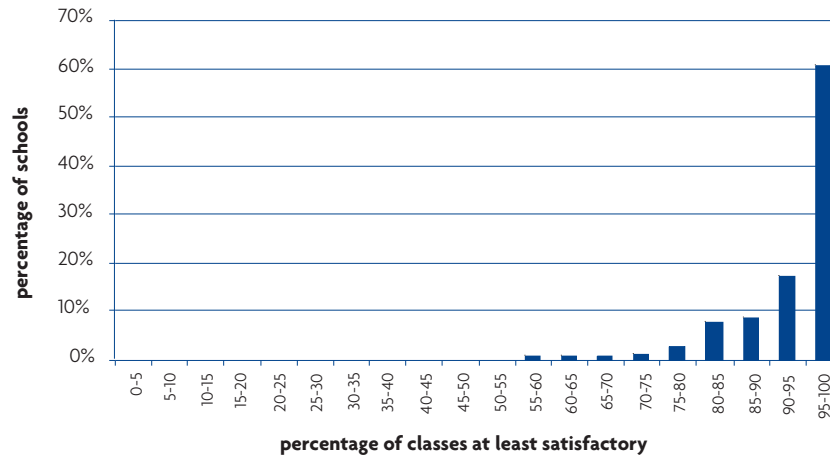
Work on value added by Fischer Family Trust has forecast the expected performance for a pupil given his/her performance at the previous Key Stage. Performance of pupils relative to the expected level can then be used to measure "value added".

Chart 11 show the distribution of schools according to the average progress achieved by pupils between Key Stages 2 and 3.

Variation in the Quality of Teaching

Primary schools ESTYN Inspections 1999/2000: Quality of teaching assessed as...

Chart 12: satisfactory or better



In well over half of the 261 primary schools inspected in 1999/2000, between 95% and 100% of classes were assessed as at least satisfactory. About one in five schools were assessed as having 10% or more of classes less than satisfactory. In over one school in eight 15% or more of classes were unsatisfactory.

Chart 13: good or very good



The distribution of the proportion of lessons assessed as good or very good was very widely spread. They ranged from zero to 100%. Over a half of primary schools had fewer than 50% of their classes assessed as good or very good.

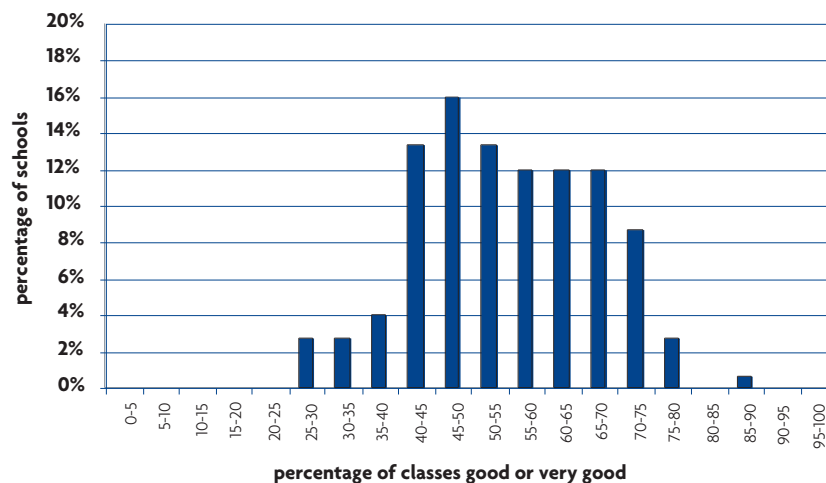
Secondary schools ESTYN Inspections 1996/1997-1999/2000: Quality of teaching assessed as...

Chart 14: satisfactory or better



In secondary schools, about one third of the 150 schools inspected in the period 1996/1997 to 1999/2000 had between 95% and 100% of their teaching assessed as satisfactory or better. Nearly a quarter were assessed as having 10% or more of classes as less than satisfactory. In over one school in ten 15% or more of classes were unsatisfactory.

Chart 15: good or very good



The distribution of the proportion of lessons assessed as good or very good is less widely spread than for primary schools. This is due in the main to the larger size of secondary schools which means that it is unlikely that:

- a very small proportion of good and very good teaching will be found; or that
- almost all teaching will be good or very good.

Despite this, the range is still substantial, being of the order of 60 percentage points.

Other factors that may influence performance

Charts 16 and 17 show that there is a relationship between levels of examination performance and deprivation. The link appears stronger at secondary school than at primary school.

This relationship is used as the basis for the National Assembly's Benchmark documents which group schools together according to free school meal entitlement for more equitable comparison. It is also used later in this Appendix in order to take deprivation into account when comparing the effect of other possible influencing factors.

Chart 16: Deprivation and KS4, by school

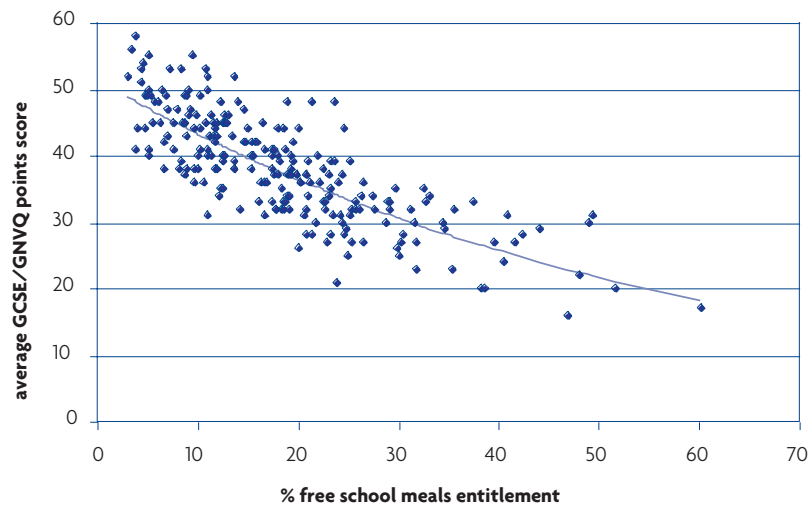


Chart 16 shows the character of the relationship between levels of deprivation and performance – using the average GCSE/GNVQ points score. Similar charts published over the past seven years show a constant relationship.

Note that there are different performance outcomes for schools of similar fsm levels.

Chart 17: Deprivation and KS2 teacher assessments, by school

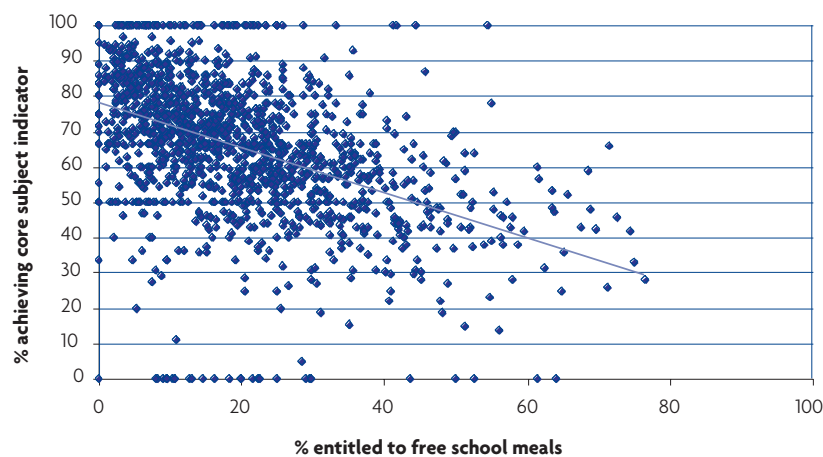


Chart 17, using Key Stage 2 data, shows a similar, relationship between deprivation and performance, but here much less of the variation is linked to deprivation.

Chart 18: Total expenditure on schools, by LEA

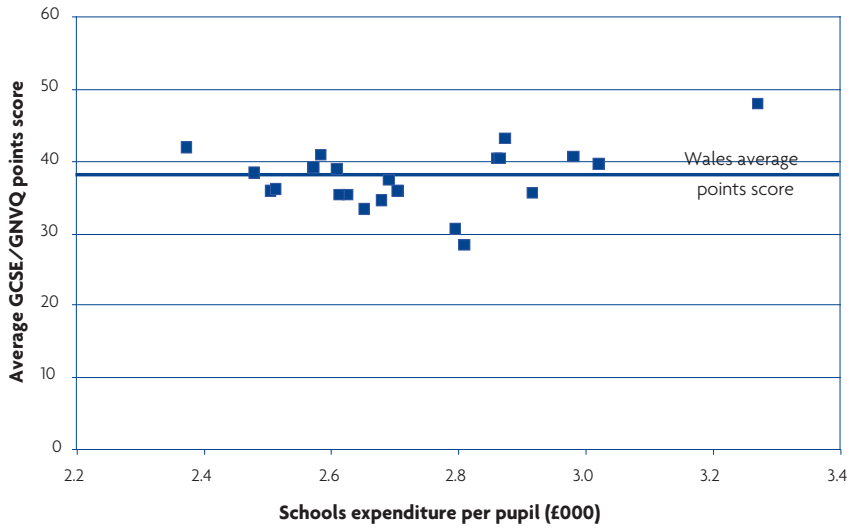
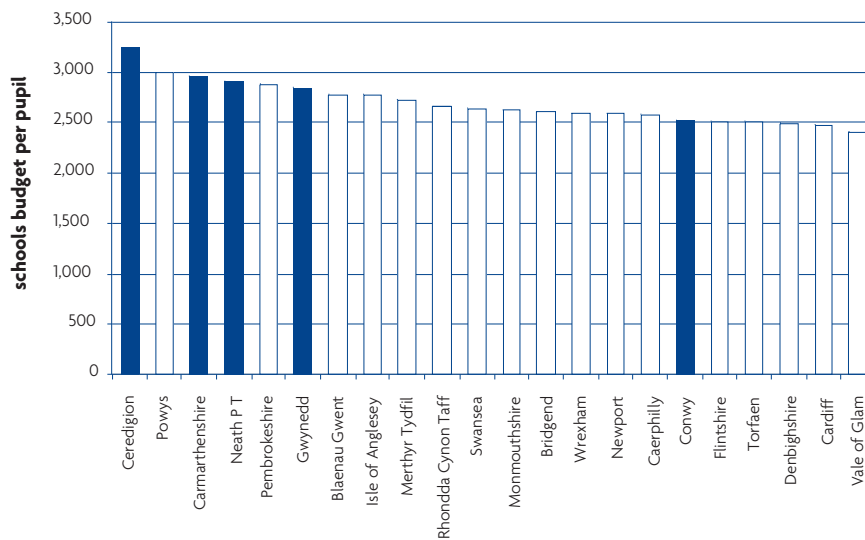


Chart 18 shows little evidence of a link between total expenditure on schools and levels of performance at Key Stage 4.

Chart 19: Total expenditure on schools, by LEA



For Chart 19, the relationship between performance and deprivation, shown in Charts 16 and 17, has been taken into account in analysing the effect of expenditure levels.

In those LEAs that are shaded, performance at Key Stage 4 is statistically significantly above expected, given levels of fsm entitlement. However, one of the relatively high spending LEAs has significantly lower than expected examination performance. This indicates that there is no simple link between spending and performance.

Chart 20: Vocational qualifications, by school

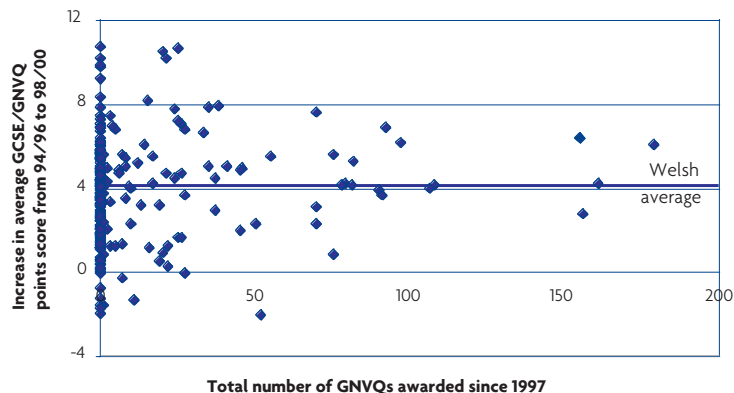


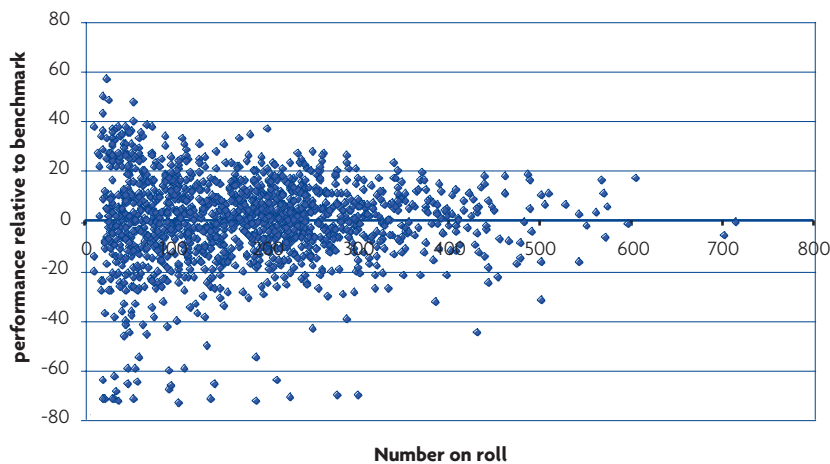
Chart 20 shows the increase in average points score between the period 1994-1996 and 1998-2000, and the total number of GNVQs awarded since 1997, for each secondary school. The large number of points on the vertical axis are those schools which had not introduced GNVQs.

The average increase for those schools who had introduced GNVQs is higher than for those who had not. However there is no trend of the advantage increasing as the number of GNVQs achieved increases, suggesting that any benefit is limited.

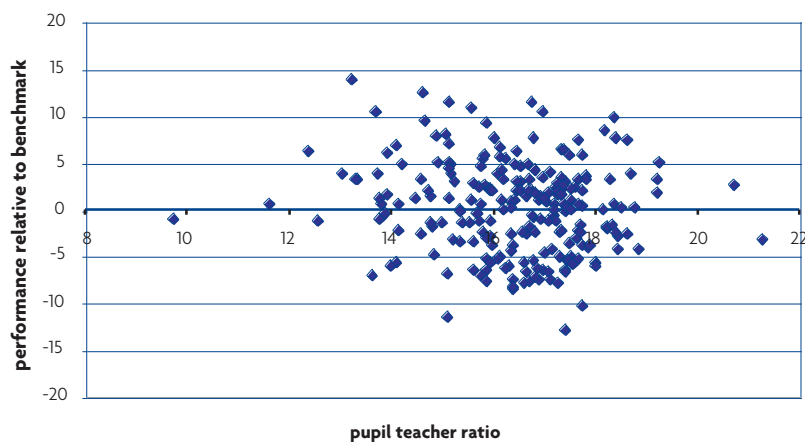
School size and class size

In Charts 21 and 22 performance has been measured relative to a fsm benchmark i.e. using the relationship shown in Charts 16 and 17, to more fairly compare school performance.

Chart 21: Primary school size



The absence of a strong diagonal trend (such as that in Chart 16) in Chart 21 suggests that there is no apparent relationship between school size and examination performance in primary schools, even when levels of deprivation are taken into account. There is a similar finding when pupil/teacher ratios are analysed.

Chart 22: Pupil-teacher ratios, secondary schools

At secondary school (Chart 22) there was no statistically significant link with school size, but some evidence of a trend of higher performance at Key Stage 4 in schools with lower pupil/teacher ratios, once deprivation is taken into account. However, in secondary schools, pupil/teacher ratios do not necessarily reflect the size of teaching groups.

Experience of teachers

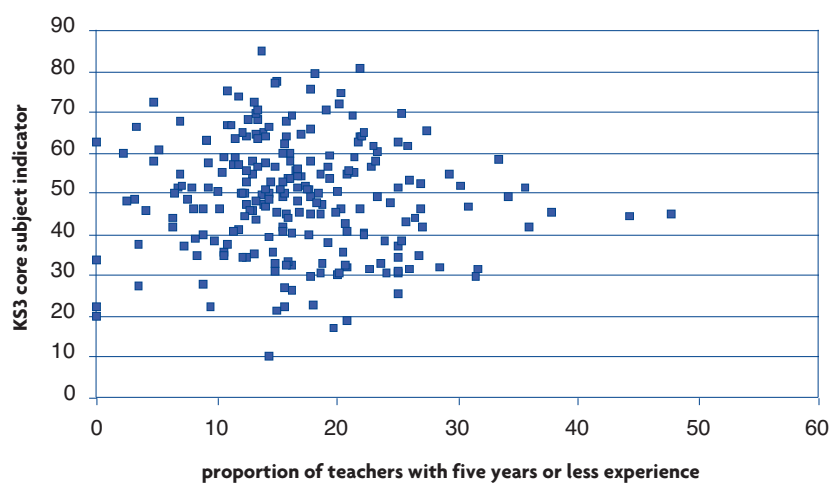
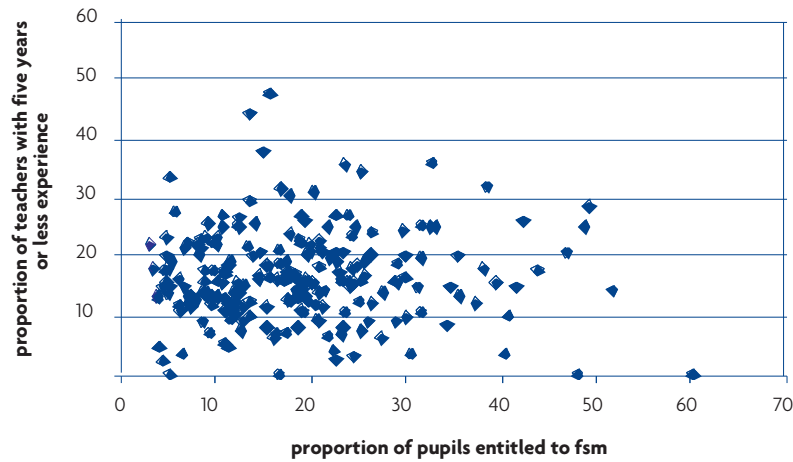
Chart 23: Secondary Schools, proportion of teachers with five years or less experience, and KS3 performance

Chart 24: Secondary Schools, experience and deprivation

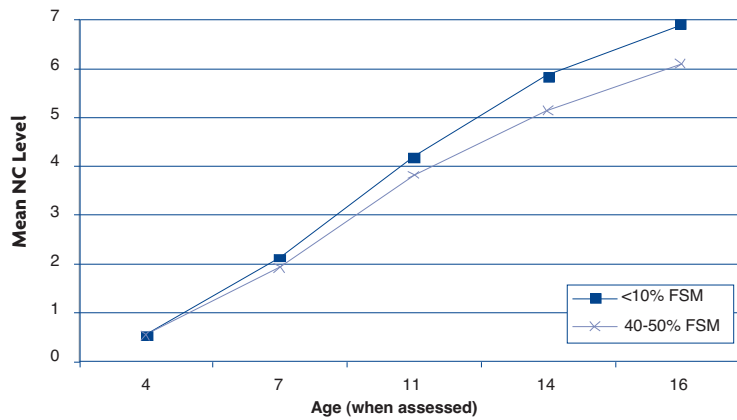


Comparisons between data on levels of performance with data supplied by the General Teaching Council for Wales on teacher experience indicate that there is no significant link between levels of performance and levels of teachers' experience in the school. Neither is there a link between experience and levels of deprivation in the school.

It is not possible, however, to consider the effect of the use of supply teachers on school performance as the data is not able to track the presence of supply teachers in schools.

A Closer Look at the Impact of Disadvantage

Chart 25: Pupil Progress



As with analysis of actual performance levels (see Charts 16 and 17), Fischer Family Trust's analysis of progress between Key Stages shows less progress being made by children in schools with high fsm entitlement.

The gap in progress made between "high fsm" and "low fsm" children increases at different rates throughout the school years.

Chart 25 shows the average national curriculum level at entry (to Reception) and at the end of each Key Stage.

Chart 26 : When the gap widens most

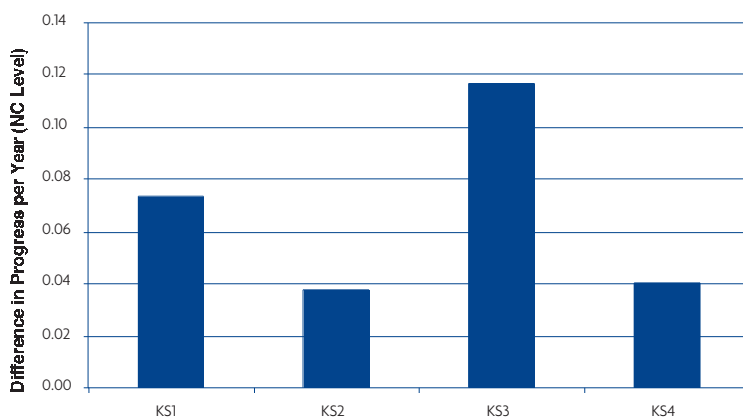


Chart 26 shows how the average progress per year varies between "high fsm" and "low fsm" areas.

Although data for Key Stage 1 is based upon a much smaller sample than that for other Key Stages, the differences are still statistically significant. Data for Key Stage 4 does not include pupils who are not entered for any examinations. Overall, around 45% of the 'gap' occurs during Key Stage 3.

Chart 27: Effect of disadvantage at Key Stage 3

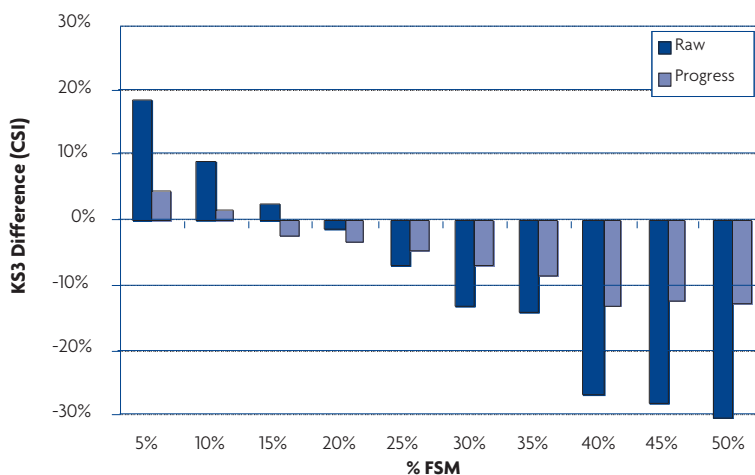


Chart 27 shows the extent of the effect of socio-economic factors (measured by fsm entitlement) on progress. Key Stage 2 to 3 is used as this is the most significant area.

The "raw" data shows the difference in actual achievement levels for schools at various levels of fsm entitlement, relative to the Welsh average.

The "progress" data takes into account the Key Stage 2 results of pupils, and shows how much progress pupils have made, again relative to the Welsh average. Although the effect is less stark, children in schools in the higher fsm bands make significantly less progress than the Welsh average.

Taking into account pupil prior-attainment and the level of free school meal entitlement, the Key Stage 3 progress of pupils was significantly higher than expected in about 20% of schools in Wales.

Chart 28: Pupil progress in schools with high % fsm

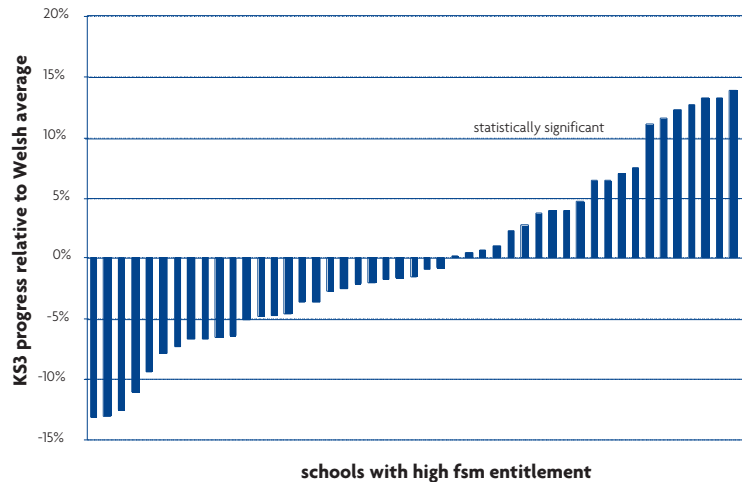


Chart 28 shows that in the 50 or so secondary schools in Wales where 25% or more pupils are entitled to free school meals, progress is significantly higher than expected in 10.

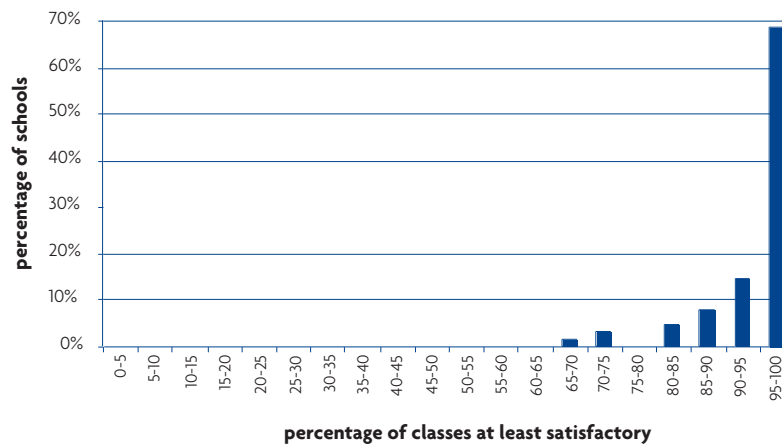
Furthermore, in about 8 of these schools each year, pupil progress is still significantly high even without taking into account the socio-economic factor.

Charts 29 to 32 show that in both primary and secondary schools there appears to be a relationship between levels of deprivation in the school and the quality of teaching as assessed by Estyn. This link appears stronger in secondary schools.

Primary Schools

Quality of teaching assessed as at least satisfactory in primary schools inspected 1999/2000...

Chart 29: with lower levels of deprivation⁽³⁾



(3) less than 10% of pupils entitled to free school meals

Chart 30: with higher levels of deprivation⁽⁴⁾



(4) more than 30% of pupils entitled to free school meals

The proportion of schools in which teaching was at least satisfactory in 95%-100% of classes was significantly greater in those schools with lower levels of deprivation than in those with higher levels of deprivation.

The proportion of the schools with higher levels of deprivation which had more than 10% of classes where teaching was unsatisfactory, was one and a half times as great as for schools with lower levels of deprivation.

Secondary Schools

Quality of teaching assessed as at least satisfactory in secondary schools inspected 1996/1997 to 1999/2000...

Chart 31: with lower levels of deprivation⁽⁵⁾



(5) less than 12.5% of pupils entitled to free school meals

Chart 32: with higher levels of deprivation⁽⁶⁾

This feature is more marked in secondary schools. The proportion of schools in which teaching was at least satisfactory in 95%-100% of classes was over two and a half times greater in schools with lower levels of deprivation than in those with higher levels of deprivation.

Well over twice the proportion of schools with higher levels of deprivation had more than 10% of classes where teaching was unsatisfactory than in schools with lower levels of deprivation.

(6) more than 22.5% of pupils entitled to free school meals