



EVALUATION OF EXCELLENCE IN CITIES PRIMARY EXTENSION

A Report of the Transition Strand Study

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Excellence in Cities (EiC) policy is a major government initiative which aims to redress many of the problems which have, in the past, been associated with inner-city and other deprived areas. In these areas, educational attainment has been lower than in other parts of England, and many young people are not able to attain their potential. EiC has the broad aims of improving schools in deprived settings by raising educational standards, promoting educational partnerships, and sharing and disseminating good practice. EiC was introduced into secondary schools in 24 Phase 1 Partnerships in September 1999: these partnerships include all the local education authorities in inner London, as well as major conurbations elsewhere, such as Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds and Sheffield. EiC was extended into other areas in September 2000 (Phase 2) and September 2001 (Phase 3).

From September 2000, the initiative was extended to include primary schools in all the Phase 1 Partnerships. Guidance from DfES indicated that approximately a third of the relevant schools should receive funding from EiC, but Partnerships were free to agree different arrangements if they wished.

EiC seeks to achieve its aims primarily through the delivery of a number of policy Strands. In primary schools, these are

- ◆ support for gifted and talented pupils (the G&T Strand)
- ◆ the provision of Learning Mentors (the LM Strand)
- ◆ the provision of special Learning Support Units (LSUs) within schools, aimed at providing short-term support for pupils facing particular difficulties and with the aim of re-integrating these pupils into the normal classroom (the LSU Strand).

All primary schools involved in EiC receive funding for LM provision and sub-samples of these schools also received funding for the Gifted and Talented and/or LSU Strands.

In addition, key emphases in primary EiC are put on:

- ◆ multi-agency working and work with families

- ♦ transition from pre-school to primary school and between primary and secondary school.

In 2000, the DfES commissioned a consortium consisting of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the Centre for Educational Research (CER) and the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) at the London School of Economics (LSE), and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), to conduct an evaluation of EiC in secondary schools in Phase 1 and 2 areas. In 2001, this was extended to include the Primary Extension, as well as secondary schools in Phase 3 areas.

This is one of a series of reports arising from this evaluation.

1.1 Rationale and Methodology

There is a considerable body of research (e.g. Galton *et al.*, 2003; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002; Sainsbury *et al.*, 1998; Schagen and Kerr, 1999) which demonstrates that many pupils make little if any progress in the first year or two of secondary school in terms in the core areas of English, mathematics and science. The transfer from relatively small primary schools, with most teaching being undertaken by generalist class teachers, to large secondary schools with specialist teachers is difficult for many pupils. There has, therefore, been considerable emphasis in recent years on supporting pupils through this stage of their lives.

This study focuses on issues related to the ‘transfer’ of pupils from primary to secondary school, from the perspective of primary and secondary school staff and pupils in their first year at secondary school, i.e. Year 7. The DfES refers to the process of moving from one school to another as ‘transfer’, whereas the process of moving from one year group to the next is referred to as ‘transition’. However, schools often use the term ‘transition’ to refer to both processes, and therefore the terms are used interchangeably in this report.

The specific topics that this research was designed to explore included: familiarisation processes in the new school; methods of boosting pupils’ confidence; coping with

change; and the use of secondary Learning Mentors (LMs). In particular, the research sought to identify whether the EiC Primary Extension was having an impact on arrangements for transition.

As part of a study of the LM Strand (Hobson and Kington, 2002), eight primary schools across four EiC Partnerships were visited between April and June 2002. A series of face-to-face interviews was conducted with key staff in each school, including the headteacher, Year 5 and Year 6 teachers, and a teacher with responsibility for transition. LMs in primary schools, who often have a key role to play in supporting transition and transfer, were also interviewed. Most of the LMs interviewed reported undertaking work relating to pupil transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3. In most of the primary schools visited, LMs had established links with and/or visited local secondary schools.

This report follows up pupils who had attended these eight primary schools to examine how they found the transfer to secondary school. In order to interview pupils from the case-study primary schools, who had since moved to secondary school, use was made of existing data from the National Pupil Database (NPD). NPD data made it possible to identify, for each of the eight case-study primary schools, the secondary school to which pupils who had attended the case-study primary schools most commonly transferred. These eight secondary schools were then contacted and agreement for us to carry out the research was obtained.

In each secondary school, in addition to interviews with one group of approximately four Year 7 pupils from the primary case-study school and, where possible, one group of approximately four Year 7 pupils from a non-EiC primary school in the area, interviews were also carried out with the head of Year 7 and one Year 7 form teacher (the form tutor of at least one of the pupils being interviewed). Additionally, staff at the primary schools were contacted again and were asked to reflect on the transfer arrangements that had been in place and to discuss any planned future developments relating to transfer.

Where possible, the experiences of the pupils who had attended the EiC Primary Extension schools were compared with pupils who transferred from a primary school which was not involved in the Primary Extension.

The interview data was analysed using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package MAXQDA, which allowed for the electronic coding and retrieval of the interview data.

Due to unforeseen staff difficulties at one of the secondary schools on the day of the research visit, the research team were not able to complete the planned series of interviews, and so this report is based on data from seven primary and seven secondary schools. This included interviews with seven primary teachers with responsibility for transition, seven heads of Year 7 in secondary schools, and six Year 7 form tutors. Twenty-eight pupils from EiC primary schools took part in the discussion groups, and 15 pupils from non-EiC primary schools.

1.2 Reporting

The findings of the research are presented under the following headings:

- ♦ perceptions of the transfer process
- ♦ the organisation of transfer work in schools
- ♦ support for transfer
- ♦ provision prior to transfer
- ♦ provision after transfer
- ♦ inter-school links
- ♦ pupils likely to need additional support
- ♦ successes and challenges.

Where appropriate, quotations from interviews are attributed to (a) the type of school (primary or secondary) and (b) the type of interviewee (e.g. teacher, EiC pupil or non-EiC pupil) involved.

2. PERCEPTIONS OF THE TRANSFER PROCESS

This Section examines perceptions of the transfer phase, as reported by primary and secondary school staff. The school staff interviewed were asked their opinion on the importance of planning and implementing a transfer support process, the issues faced by pupils during this stage in their lives, and the extent to which Year 7 pupils had settled into secondary school.

2.1 The Importance of Support for Transfer: the Perceptions of Primary School Staff

All the teachers and headteachers interviewed in primary schools emphasised the importance of preparing pupils for transfer, as is illustrated in the comments below:

I think it's absolutely vital because they're going to a whole new world and they need to be knowing what to do if things go wrong.

[Primary teacher]

It is important to make sure the bridge is stable for them to cross.

[Primary teacher]

Those interviewed felt that schools were increasingly aware of the need to prioritise support for transfer, and were acting accordingly. For example, three schools highlighted that progressively more LM resources were being targeted at transfer-related issues. Some interviewees also felt that it was becoming more important to prepare pupils for transfer because teachers were increasingly dealing with children with challenging behaviours. These pupils in particular would not necessarily receive the same level of pastoral support in a larger secondary school and so might require greater preparation for settling into a new school.

Despite the acknowledgement that transfer was important, several of those interviewed in primary schools said that it was difficult for their school to focus on transfer in Year 6 until after the completion of the end-of-key-stage assessments in May. As one teacher said:

Put it this way, I think that SATs get in the way of transferring and preparing children for that jump.

[Primary teacher]

2.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Transfer Process

Staff in both primary and secondary schools were asked to reflect on the most recent group of pupils to transfer from primary to secondary school. According to the primary school interviewees, the success of transferring pupils from primary to secondary school varied from secondary school to secondary school due to differences between these schools. Interviewees believed that transfer was more successful where there was a high degree of inter-school contact. In two of the primary schools visited, it was reported that, although the transfer process seemed to have gone well, there was little contact with the secondary school once the pupils had transferred. This is illustrated in the comment below:

The feedback I've had so far from some schools everything seems fine. But we don't have that much contact with most schools . . . [There is] no formal post-transition contact with other secondary schools, at least not once they're settled in . . . There doesn't seem to be much of a system for checking things.

[Primary teacher]

In the same two schools, interviewees said that they tended to get feedback from those parents who still had other children at the school. In a third school, feedback on how pupils settled into secondary school was achieved on a more formal basis, as the head of Year 7 visited the primary school with previous pupils to talk to the new Year 6 pupils: this provided an opportunity for the primary teachers to find out from the pupils how successful the transfer process was.

Over half of the primary schools visited were more critical of the transfer process. In two cases, this was related to issues about the allocation of secondary school places: some pupils could not start Year 7 along with their peers as they were still waiting for their appeal to go through.

In six of the seven secondary schools visited, staff believed that pupils had settled well into secondary school life. Teachers noted that the new Year 7 pupils were well behaved and confident. In a secondary school where the transfer from primary to secondary had been unsettled, one interviewee believed that this was because staff had not visited the primary schools to exchange information and meet prospective pupils. Again, this reflects the need for positive working relationships across school phases.

When asked to compare the most recent pupil cohort who had transferred to the secondary school with earlier cohorts, most primary schools interviewees believed there had been no difference in the way in which pupils had settled in. In only two schools did interviewees feel that there had been improvements in the transfer process this year. One suggested that this was because of the increasingly '*receptive secondary school*'. The second school thought that the quality of the feedback from the secondary school (referring to how pupils had settled in) had improved.

Secondary school interviewees were also asked to compare the current Year 7 pupils with the pupil cohort who had transferred to the secondary school in the previous year. About half the interviewees believed there had been an improvement in how pupils had settled in this year. In a school which had been developing its transfer procedure, including re-organisation of the pastoral support system, an interviewee said:

This year we have only moved two pupils . . . But last year we moved dozens and [we are] still moving them. [This] suggests the information we got has been used well.

[Secondary teacher]

Interestingly, involvement in EiC was not mentioned as a reason for an improvement in the transfer process.

2.3 The Main Issues Related to Transfer: the Perceptions of Secondary School Staff

Secondary school staff were asked to comment on areas of difficulty faced by pupils joining Year 7. The main difficulties pupils faced were reported to be:

- ♦ organising their books, stationery and homework, and finding their way round the school
- ♦ bullying
- ♦ managing relationships with peers and teachers.

The transfer difficulty most frequently cited by secondary school interviewees was pupils' lack of organisation. Teachers frequently mentioned that pupils were having problems with handing in their completed homework on time or they were failing to ensure that they had the appropriate books and equipment with them each day. One school was considering developing a study skills programme to address this issue. Bullying was another problem interviewees raised. Schools tended to deal with this problem initially by contacting the parents of those involved and offering counselling where needed. Another frequent problem mentioned was the inability of some pupils to mix and make friends. In such cases, pupils were often encouraged to join lunch-time clubs or participate in extracurricular activities.

As highlighted by one secondary teacher, primary and secondary schools have different expectations of their pupils. The new Year 7 pupils have to learn how to become more independent and responsible, within new surroundings, with different teachers, friends, subjects and, frequently, new settings and teaching arrangements.

The main problem is the dichotomously different ways they are treated in primary as opposed to secondary and the problems that some experience as a result of that.

[Secondary teacher]

3. THE ORGANISATION OF TRANSFER WORK IN SCHOOLS

Effective transfer between primary and secondary schools requires appropriate mechanisms within each school, and an effective means of ensuring that the two phases work supportively. This section gives an overview of how transfer was coordinated between primary and secondary school, considers the key personnel involved in the transfer between key stages 2 and 3; the time spent on organising the transfer of pupils and schools' procedures, both informal and formal; and addresses whether the EiC Primary Extension has had an impact on arrangements for transfer.

3.1 Key Personnel

In each of the primary schools visited, the individual with the main responsibility for transfer was interviewed. In most schools, these were members of the school senior management team (SMT), including the headteacher, head of Year 6 or the coordinator for special needs (SENCO). Their roles mainly involved liaising with the secondary schools, completing the LEA transfer form and liaising with parents. The latter commonly included helping with the completion of secondary school application forms.

In the majority of secondary schools visited, the head of Year 7 had the overall responsibility for planning and coordinating transfer policy and activity. However, Year 7 form tutors often worked closely with the head of year to implement, and monitor, transfer activity and related issues. Four secondary schools mentioned that the position of head of year rotated between staff each academic year, with the head of Year 7 in one academic year becoming head of Year 8 in the subsequent year, and so on. For pupils transferring into Year 7, this meant (in theory) that the head of year followed the pupil cohort through the school. In this way, transfer into and within the school was coordinated and developed by the same member of staff from Year 7 to Year 11.

3.2 Transfer Procedures

Primary school staff interviewed found it difficult to quantify the time they spent on transfer-related activity. In the secondary schools visited, staff responsibilities and the amount of time spent on transfer-related activity was found to vary widely. In both cases, this seemed to relate, at least in part, to differing interpretations of what constituted transfer-related activity.

Primary and secondary staff were asked what part of their transfer work was as a result of formal school procedures, and how much was less formal. This was intended to explore structured, and therefore planned and sustainable, activity as opposed to work conducted informally, perhaps based on personal relationships or centred around one or two motivated members of staff. Most of those interviewed indicated that the work they did was both formal and informal in nature. However, 'formal' activity as defined by interviewees did not always relate to a written school policy, but rather to a plan that was shared with relevant colleagues. In three secondary schools, the head of Year 7 and form tutors reported that they participated in a substantial amount of activity over and above what they felt formed the formal transfer process. In these cases, such additional work was dependent on one or two individuals; this raises questions about sustainability, continuity and consistency.

Two primary schools mentioned that their school procedures for transfer were influenced by recommendations based on national guidelines. Another teacher who spoke of national guidelines said they were not as familiar with the guidelines or procedures as they should be. However, the teacher believed that, as their school supported pupils on a needs-led basis, they were doing the right thing for pupils.

One primary school interviewee stated that approximately 70 to 80 per cent of their 'formal' procedures for transfer were developed by the LEA, the Education Action Zone and the main receiving secondary school. This suggests that the primary school did not take a leading role in the transfer activity and that they tended to rely on outside guidance for supporting pupils through the transfer process.

3.3 EiC and Transfer

As part of the overall evaluation of the EiC Primary Extension, surveys of headteachers and teachers in EiC and non-EiC primary schools were carried out in spring 2002 and spring 2003. The report of the findings of the 2003 surveys (Ridley *et al.*, 2003) showed that EiC schools were more likely (94 per cent) than non-EiC schools (89 per cent) to have arrangements to facilitate transfer to secondary school. The most common forms of provision offered by EiC schools were:

- ♦ taster days, where Year 6 pupils attended the secondary school to which they would be transferring for one or more days (90 per cent)
- ♦ staff visits between schools (83 per cent)
- ♦ cross-phase projects (56 per cent)
- ♦ cross-phase working groups (24 per cent)
- ♦ links between LMs in primary and secondary schools (6 per cent).

Our interviews with school staff demonstrated a wide variety of approaches and activities developed by schools to address the issue of pupil transfer between key stages 2 and 3: many of these were similar to the transfer provision found in the 2003 surveys (Ridley *et al.*, 2003).

However, the majority of the staff interviewed in the secondary schools did not know which primary schools were part of the EiC Primary Extension. Staff in five EiC secondary schools stated they were not aware of any EiC primary schools. The remaining two schools stated they were aware of some EiC primary schools but only as a result of our research. These findings suggest that primary schools' involvement in EiC was not a factor which secondary schools took into account when considering the activity which they provided for the transfer process.

We interviewed both pupils who had attended EiC primary schools and pupils whose primary schools were not involved in EiC, but we found no systematic differences between these two groups of pupils. While this is not to say that such differences do not exist, they do not seem to be apparent to pupils, or are not easily identified through the data gathered.

4. SUPPORT FOR TRANSFER

This Section discusses the types of school-based provision found during our visits to schools. This section examines school-based support in primary and secondary schools, and goes on to discuss inter-school and inter-agency cooperation.

4.1 Provision prior to Transfer

Communication between staff and pupils

Interviews with EiC primary school staff indicated that school-based support for pupils transferring from primary to secondary school often began with staff talking to pupils about the forthcoming move to secondary school. There were several opportunities and forums for these discussions, on either a group or an individual basis. However, the two types mentioned most frequently were class/school assemblies and circle time.

Assemblies offered an opportunity for staff to introduce the subject, in a whole-school environment, as well as providing a forum to share forthcoming plans and arrangements with pupils, such as visits to or by secondary schools staff or pupils.

Some schools were using circle time to encourage open communication, and to develop confidence and social skills. In these schools, circle time was used as a more interactive forum for sharing and exploring transfer-related issues with pupils. For primary school pupils, circle time provides a familiar and 'safe' opportunity to raise and discuss anxieties and general issues surrounding transfer.

Staff interviewed in both primary and secondary schools indicated that secondary school staff often made visits to the main feeder primary schools. During some of these visits, secondary school staff spoke directly to Year 6 pupils, during assembly and/or during circle time. In some cases, current Year 7 pupils (often those who had attended the primary school) went into the school to encourage Year 6 pupils to go to open evenings. This also gave Year 6 pupils the opportunity to ask questions of the

Year 7 pupils. In a minority of secondary schools visited, teachers also had an opportunity to go into primary schools to teach a Year 6 class.

School–parent contact

Most of the primary school staff interviewed emphasised the importance of parents understanding and complying with the applications process. Schools saw that they had a key role in this respect. Two schools stated that letters were sent to parents (often from as early as the September preceding transfer), explaining how to apply to secondary schools and listing the secondary schools available to them. Parents were encouraged to request clarification or guidance or to raise concerns with the school at the earliest opportunity.

I remind the kids – I constantly say to the children that if you have any worries or your parents have worries then come and see me about them, we have done this before, you haven't.

[Primary teacher]

Primary school interviewees noted that some parents required several reminders to ensure that deadlines were met, whilst some parents also required individual help in completing the appropriate forms. A minority of schools offered additional support to parents who could speak or read little or no English. In these cases, the schools concerned tried to ensure that parents had sufficient support to avoid the possibility that children would be left without a school to transfer to.

A lot of our parents are English as a second language, so I get our children to go home and tell their parents to come into school if they don't know what to do. I'll get a translator to go through and write letters and fill the forms in for them.

[Primary teacher]

However, in certain circumstances, the school–parent contact regarding transfer was associated with the specific needs of a pupil or of the parents. For instance, one interviewee noted that parents of pupils with special educational needs were often concerned to find a school in which they could have confidence that the needs of their child would be met, rather than the more usual factors such as geographical location, siblings at the school or overall academic standards.

Secondary school staff indicated that their first point of contact with parents, after school placements had been confirmed, was often during parent induction evenings or during a parent interview day. Parent induction evenings (organised before the start of the school term) were often the first opportunity parents had to highlight any areas of concern or interest regarding their child's education. They were also an opportunity for parents to see how the secondary school operates.

Three secondary schools said they organised parent interview days. These provided an opportunity to share information between teachers and parents, for example about the school ethos and the working habits expected from pupils, and to discuss home-school agreements.

Encouraging independence and confidence

More than half the primary school staff interviewed pointed to the importance of trying to encourage the development of independent learning skills, and to develop their pupils' ability to take on more responsibility for their education. In one school Year 6 children were issued with homework diaries to encourage and enhance their ability to plan their own work. Another school had introduced a mentoring system, which involved Year 5 and 6 pupils teaming up with younger pupils and 'buddying' them at lunchtime. The school hoped that this would help to develop a sense of responsibility and self-esteem among their older pupils. In a different school, the headteacher explained that the Year 6 pupils were given the opportunity to go on a three-day camping trip, prior to starting secondary school, with the aim of making the pupils 'more independent'.

Social links

Most primary school staff believed that it was beneficial to create social links between Year 6 pupils and pupils in secondary schools prior to the Year 6 pupils transferring. For example, in one primary school social links were developed by setting up a pen-pal system with one of the receiving secondary schools. This involved children writing letters to each other for four or five weeks prior to transfer. The primary school interviewee felt that this had been very successful, and all the children had received a reply from their secondary school pen pal.

Secondary school staff interviewed also believed that it was important to create social links with prospective Year 7 pupils. In one secondary school, the head of Year 7 visited the feeder primary schools at least once a month and displayed information on the notice board in each school. This information included details of events and activities at the secondary school which might be of interest to prospective pupils. In the same school, there was also a joint arts festival for Year 6 and 7 pupils. In another school, Year 7 pupils went back to their primary school and performed a Christmas play. As one secondary interviewee said, the aim of these activities was to try to help Year 6 pupils to understand what secondary school was like and to develop relationships with teachers and pupils in the secondary school.

Curriculum-based links

As well as ensuring that primary pupils are well prepared socially and emotionally for secondary school, it is important that their academic progress is supported, rather than hindered, when they change schools (e.g. Galton *et al.*, 2003; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002). Some EiC Partnership areas were, therefore, developing curriculum-based links between primary and secondary schools in order to bridge the gap between key stages 2 and 3: these activities were generally referred to as bridging projects. The majority of primary schools visited used bridging projects, particularly for numeracy, literacy and science. One interviewee stated that the bridging projects in English had proved successful and made the pupils feel safer, particularly because they knew the receiving secondary school continued with the work. A teacher from the receiving secondary school confirmed that they had come to an arrangement with the primary school whereby the pupils would use the secondary school text books in the last few weeks of primary school and then take the books with them to the secondary school so that they could continue the same work in Year 7.

While curriculum continuity was seen as important for transfer, one primary interviewee pointed out that the management of curriculum links could be difficult, particularly where pupils transferred into many different secondary schools.

The interview data shows that bridging projects between Year 6 and 7 pupils had been coordinated in five secondary schools, mainly initiated by individual departments at the secondary schools contacting the primary schools. Where this was happening,

schools were keen to develop this further: for example, interviews with staff in three of these schools revealed that individual departments were being encouraged to develop their own working relationships with primary schools with the aim of supporting key stage 2 teaching. The head of Year 7 in one of these schools spoke of how the English department had successfully carried out a workshop for the Year 6 pupils and there were plans to develop the bridging projects for mathematics and science. A different school was trying to get staff from foundation subjects, such as PE and art, to visit the primary schools because the pupils would have spent the majority of their time focusing on end-of-key-stage assessments in English, mathematics and science.

Observing good practice

One secondary school interviewee pointed out that it was useful to observe good practice in the primary school in relation to the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Another secondary school planned to invite primary teachers into the school to work with Year 7 pupils, in order for them to see how key stage 3 was taught.

Visiting prospective secondary schools

In all the secondary schools visited, interviewees indicated that they provided opportunities for families to visit their prospective school on a number of occasions.

Open days

In Year 6 we remind them and encourage them to go to open evenings at different schools. My advice to parents is that there are a number of schools out there and you'll visit them and decide from that.

[Primary teacher]

Most secondary schools organised open days to assist pupils and their families in deciding which schools they would like to attend. Depending on the process operating in the area, these meetings were held from October onwards, and in most schools were aimed at both parents and pupils. These events tended to take the format of a general open day, where families could go and look at the classrooms and displays. Some schools also hosted 'fun' activities such as science demonstrations to capture the interest and attention of prospective pupils. In one secondary school, the

invitation to attend the open day was extended to Year 5 pupils. This was welcomed by a primary school interviewee, who thought that this gave Year 5 pupils an early opportunity to visit a secondary school to see what it was like.

One disadvantage of these 'open days' was noted by a primary school teacher, who commented that open days could be quite disruptive as they took place in term-time: pupils could attend several open days, and not all pupils attended the same events. The interviewee hoped that, in future, the LEA would ensure that the programme of open days was more coordinated.

Pupil and parent interviews

Pupil and parent interviews tended to be held during the last few weeks of the summer term after school places had been confirmed. Three secondary schools hosted parent interviews, which offered an opportunity for both parties to get to know each other. In one of these schools, secondary staff held interviews with both parents and pupils simultaneously. During these interviews, secondary staff asked pupils about their likes and dislikes, and who they would like to be with in their form group. It also gave families a chance to meet relevant staff, including the head of Year 7, form tutors and members of the school SMT. In a different secondary school visited, as part of the formal transfer process the form tutor organised interviews with all the new Year 7 pupils in order to set targets for the forthcoming year.

One secondary school interviewee pointed out that the inductions and interviews could be demanding on staff time due to the various activities on offer and one school noted that it took two to three days to interview all the parents of the prospective Year 7 pupils.

Induction visits for pupils

Induction visits for future pupils tended to be held at the end of the summer term prior to transfer and after school placements had been confirmed. The activities provided during induction days varied between the secondary schools visited. However, most induction visits included a tour of the school and a number of 'taster lessons'.

Pupils were often invited into the school for a full day and placed in their prospective form groups. This gave them an opportunity to meet and talk to pupils they were

likely to be placed with in September. In some cases, pupils also had an informal discussion with their prospective form tutor or met other key staff, such as the head of Year 7, a Learning Mentor, peer mentors or a member of the school SMT.

The case study below illustrates the different opportunities families had to visit one particular secondary school prior to pupils transferring to it.

Figure 1: A Secondary School

After the head of Year 7 had visited the primary schools and spoken to the current class teacher, the school organised a range of opportunities for pupils and their parents to meet staff from the secondary school:

- ◆ An open induction evening for parents whose child was offered a place at the school. This took about two hours and gave parents a range of information about the school. Prospective pupils were also invited to attend.
- ◆ A member of the secondary school staff – ideally each pupil’s prospective form-tutor – interviewed every parent, from April onwards. The parents received information about the school (e.g. the working habits expected of pupils and the school ethos), and home–school agreements were discussed.
- ◆ A Pupil Induction Day was held in the last few weeks of the summer term preceding transfer. Pupils met their new form tutor and had a tour of school.

4.2 Provision after Transfer

Secondary schools undertook a range of activities to support transfer from key stage 2 to 3.

Provision during the first term

On their first day in Year 7, pupils in most schools were provided with a range of activities to help them settle in. These activities were often intended to provide new pupils with an opportunity to get to know one another and their new school. For example, new pupils were given a tour of the school, issued with a school booklet, maps, timetables and planners. In one school, there were designated ‘transition’

sessions during the first week when pupils were given information about staff and took part in team-building exercises. Another school used a treasure hunt to help pupils to familiarise themselves with their new surroundings. In two of the schools, the Year 7 pupils and sixth form were the only pupils in school on the first day of term. This was seen as being less intimidating for the new pupils and as making it easier for them to become familiar with their new school. Pupils remained in their form groups for an initial period, ranging from the first day to the first half-term.

The case study below illustrates the transfer process in one secondary school during the first few weeks of the new academic year.

Figure 2 : A Secondary School

For the four-week induction period, Year 7 pupils were in their form groups and they moved around the school together in those mixed-ability groups. During this time, they completed a range of ability tests. If secondary school staff had any concerns, they contacted the primary school to discuss this further.

At the end of the induction period, pupils were banded into two main groups (higher and lower ability) using end-of-key-stage 2 assessments, the results of the ability tests, information from primary class teachers, and observations that secondary school staff had made of the new pupils. There was then a parents' meeting so that parents could discuss the banding and test results with teachers.

An interviewee in one school said that, in the first few days, the school held an assembly to explain the schedule for the following weeks; how to contact staff if there was a problem; and to encourage pupils to take care of their belongings.

Two schools had initiated a system of form tutor diaries or log books. Pupils could write down the good and bad things happening to them in and out of school. One interviewee described the diary as a way in which pupils could express their feelings, which could often be easier than speaking to someone directly. The diary then went to the form tutor, so it gave teachers a chance to learn more about their pupils. In the second school, the form tutor completed the diaries, which were used as a tool for the

teacher to record any problems and to assess how well pupils were settling into their new school.

While promoting independence and confidence among Year 6 pupils were mentioned by several interviewees in primary schools, these were rarely mentioned in the interviews with secondary school staff. However, these objectives were achieved directly and/or indirectly through many activities provided by secondary schools. Examples included easing pupils into their new environment, keeping pupils in form groups for the first few weeks of term and providing pupils with homework diaries.

Parents' evenings

Parents' evenings were often held after the pupils had entered Year 7. Data indicated that, in those schools that had a formal induction for pupils, these evenings took place towards the end of this period. Interviews with staff from these schools indicated that discussions with parents at this stage tended to focus on how their children were settling in.

4.3 Pupils' Perceptions of pre-Transfer Support

Evidence from the pupil focus groups suggests that all the Year 7 pupils received similar types of support for transfer while at primary school. When asked about how their primary schools had prepared them for moving to secondary school, pupils most frequently mentioned having discussions with their class teacher, particularly during circle time, in addition to doing '*harder work*' they would eventually do in Year 7.

Overall, focus group data suggest that pupils found the discussions with their primary teachers about moving to secondary school reassuring. However, it is obviously important that information is provided openly and sensitively if it is to support pupils' social and academic progress, a point illustrated during a focus group where pupils from one primary school said that the discussions they had with their primary teachers had made them more apprehensive, as they were told they would have more work and would be sent out of class if they were not well behaved.

Where pupils had had an opportunity while at primary school to talk to teachers from the secondary school, this was generally found to be very helpful.

[Secondary school teachers] *talked to us and said not to worry about bullying and getting lost . . . they don't accept bullies.*

[EiC pupil]

In general, pupils also found bridging projects they had done to be very useful. One pupil commented that he felt '*one step ahead*' due to the more advanced mathematics and English work he had done. Another pupil said that he felt better prepared for secondary school because of these projects. However, a minority of focus group participants indicated that curriculum links did not always work well in practice. For example, pupils in two secondary schools said that they had not continued with the Year 7 work they had done while in Year 6.

Pupils expressed varying views about end-of-key-stage assessments as a means of preparation for secondary school. Some pupils saw the assessments as a way in which the teacher prepared them for secondary school, by ensuring they had good results and high levels of achievement. Other pupils felt that the emphasis on key stage results meant that there had not been enough time to prepare them for secondary school.

In one group of pupils, while all the pupils had attended the same primary school, pupils from different classes had experienced differing support and activity. This suggests that preparation activities for transfer were not consistent throughout the school, and that at least some aspects of support for transfer depend on individual staff approaches rather than whole-school policies and practices.

Pupils in the focus group discussions recalled far more activities that were provided by their secondary school than those provided by their primary school. The main activities pupils mentioned included open days, induction days prior to transfer (including the 'taster lessons'), secondary staff visiting them in their primary school, and the school booklet they were given.

One pupil said that, through the induction day at the end of Year 6, they found out what they would be doing when they transferred to the secondary school, which increased their confidence.

4.4 Pupils' Perceptions of Post-transfer Support

Generally, focus group data showed that pupils were very positive regarding the support they had received from their secondary school, particularly the induction days. A pupil highlighted how the secondary school asked them about their concerns and how to address those issues:

On induction day . . . we did a game where we had to put what we were worried about in a hat and she [the form tutor] read them out. People were mainly worried about getting lost and bullied . . . our new form tutor showed us planners and how to use them.

[EiC pupil]

Other pupils highlighted the importance of having a tour of their new secondary school, and having an opportunity to start making friends. A number of pupils also spoke of the school booklet as being very useful, it '*told you everything you needed*' and gave one pupil an insight into '*a day in the life of [School]*', as there was information on the school uniform, lessons and the equipment needed.

The experiences of pupils from EiC primary schools and those from primary schools not in EiC were broadly similar.

5. INTER-SCHOOL LINKS

As part of the survey carried out in spring 2003 in EiC and non-EiC primary schools, headteachers were asked about their perceptions of the overall quality of their relationships with other schools (Ridley *et al.*, 2003). This showed that EiC primary schools' relationships with secondary schools were not, on the whole, felt to be as good as they were with other primary schools. Interestingly, a greater proportion of non-EiC schools than EiC schools described their relationship with secondary schools as very good (46 per cent and 32 per cent respectively). In addition to this, the 2003 teacher survey found that a greater proportion of non-EiC teachers reported having good relationships with local primary and secondary schools than did EiC teachers (Ridley *et al.*, 2003).

Earlier Sections of this report have described the activities available to support transfer, and have demonstrated that the exchange of information, teachers and projects between key stage 2 and 3 are considered by school staff to be important factors in an effective transfer process. The following Section will discuss the working relationships and links between primary and secondary stages in more detail.

5.1 Inter-School Contact

In the schools visited as part of this study, the key contact for inter-school contact in primary schools tended to be the headteacher, deputy head, SENCO or head of Year 6, although other Year 6 teachers were also involved. In secondary schools, the key contacts were the head of Year 7, form tutors and SENCOs.

When primary school staff were asked about the consistency of the contact between their school and secondary schools, all observed that the contact varied, as some secondary schools were more proactive than others. Interviewees appeared to be most satisfied with the secondary schools that had been in contact regularly, as this had enabled them to build up a good working relationship.

However, primary school interviewees raised a number of issues regarding the contact they had with secondary schools. For example, one interviewee said that, from time to time, their school had to initiate and organise visits to the secondary school: although the interviewee recognised that this was a shared responsibility, they would have liked the secondary school to be more proactive. Another interviewee felt that the secondary schools did not see transfer as a priority and contacted primary schools only when there was a problem with a pupil who had transferred into the secondary school. A third interviewee felt that the primary curriculum was not taken into consideration at the secondary school: this undermined the strategies and methods used at the primary level and could result in a negative experience for pupils. One primary school said they passed on detailed information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to the relevant secondary schools but said that they were unclear as to whether this information was used, as they had not received any feedback from the secondary schools.

Contact between primary and secondary schools appeared to be an area which could usefully be developed, as noted by a number of primary school interviewees:

[there's] not really an ongoing link other than transition. We aim to develop that next.

[Primary teacher]

As with all transition, we're now putting a lot more into place including face to face exchange of information from teacher to teacher.

[Primary teacher]

Interviewees from secondary schools had a more positive view of their communication with primary schools than did the primary schools themselves. However, similarly, it was reported that contact varied from school to school and was often dependent on enthusiastic individuals within the primary school rather than formal systems. One secondary school interviewee pointed out that it was often easier for secondary school staff to visit the primary schools, as secondary school staffing was more flexible. Another interviewee stated that, although she knew which primary schools were doing English transition modules, she did not know which of these schools were in EiC or what other activities they were doing.

One way of increasing the cooperation between schools and improving the current transfer process, adopted by one secondary school, was to hold an open discussion with the all feeder primary schools:

Figure 3 : A Secondary School

The head of Year 7 held a meeting for all the primary headteachers and Year 6 teachers. He gave a presentation about the transfer process, which was followed by an open discussion. This gave primary school staff an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the existing procedures with a view to improving these.

In most secondary schools, staff interviewed said there was more contact with the main feeder primary schools than with those sending fewer pupils. In schools with a large number of feeder primary schools, either contact was limited in terms of time or there was not enough time to visit all of them. This was particularly the case for schools close to the borders of several different LEAs. In these cases, where there were a small number of pupils joining the secondary school, only one member of staff would visit the primary school, or in some cases a member of staff would telephone the school to gather the information on the pupils.

5.2 Information Sharing

The information given to secondary school staff through liaison with the primary schools included:

- ◆ end-of-key-stage assessment results (seven schools)
- ◆ pupils' backgrounds and characteristics, including special needs, fluency in English, etc. (six schools)
- ◆ social/pastoral issues (five schools)
- ◆ attendance (three schools)
- ◆ involvement with external agencies (two schools)
- ◆ medical history (one school).

The following case study illustrates how one school used the information provided by the primary school to allocate pupils to form groups.

Figure 4 : A Secondary School

Pupils were allocated to form groups so that the academic profile of each form was similar, based on the information collected from the primary schools, and so that each pupil was with another pupil of the same gender from their primary school. Children with special needs were assigned to only half the form groups, so that better use could be made of Learning Support Assistants.

In general, secondary school staff said that the information received was very useful, particularly for informing teaching, banding pupils and targeting extra support where it was most needed and addressing potential problems early.

All secondary schools across the four Partnerships received hard copies of the transfer information, although two schools also received electronic versions. In some schools, once the information had been collated, usually by the head of Year 7, this was passed on to the form tutor. However, in other schools the head of Year 7 collated the transfer information, which was passed on to form tutors only on a 'need to know' basis. One form tutor believed this to be the best arrangement because it meant that pupils could start their new school with a blank canvass, and that the head of year would pass on any information that was relevant. One secondary school interviewee thought that the information she received was more 'streamlined' or focused than previously, although she was not sure if this was due to EiC or to developments in ICT.

An important issue raised by secondary school staff was the timing of the information. This related particularly to end-of-key-stage assessment results which were received too late in the year to be of use. All the secondary schools stated they would like to receive this information earlier, for example in order to arrange form groups and to highlight any potential gifted and talented pupils.

One interviewee said that the school received the common transfer form only for pupils in their own borough and highlighted the need for the systematic use of the common transfer form across boroughs to ensure consistency in the information provided by all primary schools.

A few secondary schools reported instances where information about behavioural issues or special needs did not seem to have been passed from primary schools, or where the information was considered inaccurate. Interviewees emphasised that it was important that information transferred between schools was complete, accurate and relevant.

Interviewees were asked if there was any information about pupils which they did not normally receive but which would be useful in relation to transfer matters. These included:

- ◆ previous curriculum work and reports (two schools)
- ◆ attendance (two schools)
- ◆ exclusions (one school)
- ◆ involvement with external agencies (one school)
- ◆ special needs (one school)
- ◆ whether the pupil had been identified as gifted and talented (one school)
- ◆ whether the pupil had had support from a Learning Mentor (one school).

There is some overlap between the information secondary schools received and the information that they would have liked to receive indicating that, across boroughs, there were inconsistencies in the information that primary schools passed on to secondary schools. Interestingly, two interviewees mentioned that they did not always receive information on attendance, despite the fact that there was space provided for this information on the DfES common transfer form. This suggests that, at these schools, their LEA transfer form does not require primary schools to provide information on attendance or that data is not being filled in completely. Interviewees from the case-study secondary schools stated that they were more likely to access this information through face-to-face contact with teachers at the feeder schools.

The examples below illustrate how some schools ensured that their school received all the relevant information on pupils before they transferred.

Figure 5 : A Secondary School

The head of year had devised a questionnaire for pupils to complete: this addressed pupils' anxieties in starting secondary school, gauged their enthusiasm for school, extracurricular activities and hobbies and interests. All relevant information that form tutors needed was passed on to them.

Figure 6 : A Secondary School

An inter-agency meeting was held, attended by the health and educational welfare services, the educational psychologist and school staff including the SENCO, senior pastoral staff and the school nurse. This considered every child coming to the school and discussed issues relating to pupils. This ensured that the school had sufficient information about pupils in order to cater for their needs.

As discussed previously, some schools spoke to parents to gather information about pupils. In one secondary school which received little information about pupils, in the first term form tutors observed pupils' behaviour, strengths, weaknesses and personalities, and produced a mini-report on each pupil to attempt to get to know their pupil cohort better. In another school, staff had arranged for all the pupils allocated a place to complete tests in reading, spelling and mathematics to supplement the information provided by primary schools.

Overall, the majority of secondary school interviewees believed they had a good relationship with their main feeder primary school, which meant that, if they did require any further information, they would telephone the school.

6. PUPILS LIKELY TO NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

There are some groups of pupils who are more likely to find the transfer to secondary school particularly challenging, for example those with emotional or behavioural difficulties, with low levels of academic achievement or those who lack confidence. The strategies reported by primary and secondary interviewees to deal with particular groups of pupils who might need additional support included:

- ◆ the involvement of Learning Mentors or the school SENCO
- ◆ home–school diaries
- ◆ peer support
- ◆ external support (e.g. education welfare service or an educational psychologist).

In one primary school, the deputy headteacher was becoming increasingly concerned about the difficulties that some pupils with special needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, had experienced during transfer. He noted that it was important to work with the secondary schools and, if possible, to try to resolve any issues before the pupils' transfer to the secondary school. Secondary school interviewees reported that, where there were prospective pupils with special needs, the SENCO would visit the primary school to gather specific information which would then be passed on to relevant members of staff.

One interviewee commented that the most recent Year 7 had settled well into their new school due to the strong pastoral system with a variety of support available to the pupils: where the needs of the pupils could not be met by current school-based provision, the school used external support.

6.1 The Role of Learning Mentors in Supporting Transfer

The findings from the LM Strand Study (Hobson and Kington, 2002) and interviews with primary and secondary school staff from the current study suggest that LMs play

a key role in the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school, and so the role of LMs will be discussed in more detail here.

LMs in primary schools

All but one of the case-study primary schools spoke of LM involvement and, in all these cases, the LMs were involved in supporting transfer with Year 6 pupils. Activities included discussion during circle time, role play scenarios and creative writing. In one school, the LMs had a 'worry box', where pupils could post their concerns: at the discretion of the teachers, these could then be discussed during circle time or in assembly. Two schools indicated that LMs targeted certain pupils, particularly those who would find moving to a new school more challenging.

Three of the primary schools visited referred to positive links and the exchange of information between primary and secondary school LMs. Two of these primary schools were in a Partnership in which the LMs were managed at the LEA level, and this suggests that LEAs and possibly other agencies could facilitate the exchange of information across school phases.

LMs in secondary schools

The research found that the process of referring pupils to a LM varied in the secondary schools visited. In three of the schools, referrals were made through the head of Year 7. Thus, if a member of staff discovered a child was experiencing difficulties, they would have to discuss this with the head of Year 7, who would then refer the case on to the LMs if deemed necessary. In other schools, the referral system was more flexible. For example, in one school those who could make referrals included the head of year, LMs and pupils, who could self-refer if they felt they needed to speak to someone.

Three of the secondary schools visited reported that they were aware of pupils who had seen a LM at primary school, either from visiting the primary school or from transfer information they received. A further three schools stated that they would discover if a pupil had received previous LM support only if they had direct contact with the staff at the primary school.

The information received was generally used to highlight if a pupil needed support. It was also used to determine whether or not the school had the resources to cater for the needs of the pupil and, if not, whether they needed to buy in external support.

Secondary school interviewees were asked if pupils would automatically see a LM if they had seen one at the primary school. Only in one school would such pupils automatically be added to the LM list. The head of year 7 in one secondary school said that the perceptions of what is important differ between primary and secondary schools, and so there would be differences in those referred to a LM. That said, there would be pupils for whom the continuing support of a LM could make a substantial contribution to a successful transfer. In one secondary school, an interviewee commented on how the LM from the primary school had come into the secondary school occasionally, to help ensure a smooth transfer.

Secondary school interviewees highlighted a number of reasons for which a pupil might be referred to a LM in the first term or so at secondary school, including behaviour difficulties, bullying, poor attendance, low self-esteem, poor organisational skills, and difficulty in forming friendships. Many of these were not directly related to transfer but, if not addressed speedily, could result in the pupil failing to settle well at secondary school and be able to make progress.

Only two secondary schools stated that LM resources were specifically targeted at transfer-related matters. The case study below illustrates how the LMs were utilised in one of these schools.

Figure 7 : A Secondary School

The school has three types of ‘mentor’:

- ♦ Year 7 mentors dealing with all types of issues including organisation, homework, coping with the peer group and relationships with teachers
- ♦ ‘Lets get serious’ mentors who tended to work with boys in lessons, observing pupils or taking them out of lessons for one-to-one sessions
- ♦ LMs who worked with pupils with SEN. Pupils were allocated time and were sometimes withdrawn to do a special progress unit. At the beginning of term, pupils were allocated LMs, to make sure the school could cater for the needs of all children with special needs.

On induction day the school used all the LMs. Two LMs were placed in each form group and followed the class around for the day. By this stage, the school had already identified who was likely to need LM support, so it was an opportunity for the LMs to get to know the pupils.

Pupils' understanding of LMs

Year 7 pupils were asked who they would talk to at school if they were unhappy or worried about something. The evidence suggests that schools had a comprehensive pastoral support system: all pupils in the focus groups knew who to talk to, and one pupil commented that there were '*loads of people you can talk to*'.

Individuals who pupils would speak to included:

- ♦ friends and family (referred to in seven groups)
- ♦ their form tutor (seven groups)
- ♦ a student counsellor, prefect or peer mentors (six groups)
- ♦ their head of year or senior teacher (six groups)
- ♦ a LM (two groups).

When prompted, pupils across four of the schools knew of LMs in their secondary school. In three of these schools, pupils said that, if they wanted to see a LM, they could knock on their door. One pupil stated that this was unlike primary school, where pupils had to make an appointment. In the fourth school, pupils said that they were given allocated times to see a LM. None of the pupils in the remaining three schools knew of any LMs in their secondary school, although two of these schools did have LMs.

7. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Interviewees from all schools were asked to identify the most successful aspects of transfer in their school, and those aspects which caused most concern.

7.1 How Did Pupils Feel they Settled into Secondary School?

The evidence from the pupil focus groups suggests that, overall, both EiC and non-EiC pupils settled well into secondary school, and the majority of the pupils said that they were enjoying their new surroundings. Pupils were asked about what the positive aspects of moving to secondary school were, and they commented on the following:

- ◆ making new friends (mentioned in six pupil focus groups)
- ◆ increased variety of lessons (five groups)
- ◆ different teachers and more specialisation in subject areas (three groups)
- ◆ better facilities and being in a more spacious environment (three groups)
- ◆ increased confidence and responsibility (two groups).

As one pupil illustrated, transferring from key stage 2 to 3 would be the first of many life transitions:

It has prepared you for life; this is just a test. Once you get into your career, this is what's going to happen.
[EiC pupil]

Other positive comments included:

In primary school, if you were clever you had to stay at that level because the teachers couldn't help but at secondary school they can stretch you more.
[Non-EiC pupil]

Since I have arrived, I've learnt not to put myself down. I used to say I'm never going to make it. I'm rubbish at maths and things. But now at secondary, teachers tell me not to say that, they make me confident.
[Non-EiC pupil]

All the different classes and different teachers, they are really nice. I don't know what's been bad.

[EiC pupil]

The negative aspects of moving to secondary school reported by pupil focus groups included:

- ♦ bullying and being 'pushed around' by older pupils (four groups)
- ♦ more challenging work (three groups)
- ♦ more homework (three groups)
- ♦ stricter teachers (two groups)
- ♦ getting lost and having to move to different classes for each lesson (two groups)
- ♦ longer school days (two groups).
- ♦ having to carry a school bag all day (two groups)

7.2 Successful Aspects of School Procedures for Transfer

Primary school interviewees identified communication with the secondary school as the main strength of their school procedures. This included the information that was sent to the secondary school, which was often more comprehensive than that required by the LEA's transfer form; discussions with secondary teachers; and visits by Year 6 pupils to the secondary school where there was an opportunity for them to meet Year 7 and 8 pupils.

The flexibility of EiC funding for LMs enabled schools to target LM resources at transfer-related issues, and this was perceived to be an effective way of utilising school resources.

Two schools believed encouraging pupils to become independent learners and to be more responsible was the key to a successful transfer programme. This is illustrated in the comments from the headteacher from one of these schools:

All the way through the school, we prepare the pupils to be confident and assertive and the curriculum at [the school] revolves around the pupils taking responsibility and so they are used to that. They understand what is going to happen as the staff communicate and share that with the pupils.

[Primary teacher]

This statement also reflects the ability of some schools to communicate to pupils, in an ‘*open and receptive*’ way, what they should expect from secondary school ‘*without making them fearful*’.

The ability to relate to parents was also identified as a strength of one school. The school believed that it was vitally important to inform parents at each stage of the transfer process and to involve them in the transfer of their children from primary to secondary school where feasible.

The main successes identified by secondary school interviewees included pupil interviews and inductions: when pupils started secondary school, they felt more at ease because they recognised staff and other pupils at the school. The school that conducted parent interviews also perceived this to be positive aspect of their school procedures as they managed to speak to parents on an individual basis. A good pastoral support network was also considered to be a strength of many schools: interviewees believed there was a caring, family atmosphere in the school and that pupils knew who to go to if they had a problem. In addition to this, the schools where form tutors had the same form group from Year 7 through to Year 11 perceived this to be a better arrangement, as form tutors got to know the pupils very well. School relationships with particular primary schools were seen as very productive and this appeared to have an impact on the quality of information received from primary schools. Lastly, some schools thought that transfer was most appropriately organised if one person was responsible for the coordination of the transfer procedures in each school because it enabled that individual to build up a good working relationship with the main contacts in other schools.

7.3 Challenging Aspects of School Procedures for Transfer

Primary school interviewees were also asked about the weaknesses in their school procedures for transfer. Interviewees’ main concerns were:

- ◆ the lack of a standard practice for transfer
- ◆ lack of knowledge of what secondary schools had to offer
- ◆ difficulties when just one child transfers to a particular secondary school
- ◆ pressure to focus on end-of-key-stage assessments and to address transfer issues only after these were completed
- ◆ the need for more qualitative data to meet the needs of pupils, with many secondary schools being seen as interested only in assessment data
- ◆ the allocation of school places.

Secondary school staff were also asked about the main challenges in planning and implementing a transfer support process. Their responses, most of which have been discussed in previous sections, included:

- ◆ information on prospective pupils was received too late or was incomplete
- ◆ information provided by primary schools was not utilised effectively by secondary teachers
- ◆ liaison with primary schools was not continuous throughout the school year
- ◆ teaching in secondary schools did not always take account of the teaching strategies used in primary schools
- ◆ a lack of time to coordinate transfer (particularly for visiting primary schools and utilising pupil transfer information before the start of term)
- ◆ a lack of formal procedures for transfer
- ◆ a lack of consistency across the LEA, e.g. where some but not all schools use bridging projects.

7.4 Improving Transfer

There was a consensus amongst primary and secondary schools on how transfer arrangements could be improved to support pupils transferring from key stage 2 to 3. These included:

- ◆ improved cross-phase links, with
 - continuous liaison throughout the school year

- improved exchange of information
- curriculum continuity including transfer and transition modules and cross-phase project work
- increased consistency / fluidity in teaching strategies used across phases
- more direct contact between phases, for both staff and pupils
- tracking pupils' social and academic progress from Year 6 to Year 7 using data provided from both primary and secondary schools
- ◆ increased school–parent contact
- ◆ a national framework/guidelines for transfer to improve consistency within and across boroughs.

Several primary schools planned to increase the LM input into transfer-related work. In secondary schools, those responsible for transfer were also trying to get individual departments to initiate work with primary schools. Other future improvements all related to the transfer information received from the primary schools and LEAs. Secondary schools wanted to receive the transfer information earlier, they wanted more information, and they planned to use the information more effectively.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Data from this research suggest that there seemed to be an increasing awareness of the importance of improving the transfer of pupils from key stage 2 to 3. However, the lack of EiC-related findings suggest that schools were developing their provision for transfer motivated by general need, with little impact from the EiC initiative.

In the case-study schools, the transfer activity for supporting pupils was broadly similar across primary schools and also across secondary schools. Secondary schools tended to take the leading role in the transfer process. Much of the transfer work which involved cooperation between primary and secondary schools, appeared to be on an informal basis with a reliance on motivated individuals rather than on formal structural relationships.

LMs in the case-study schools were reported to undertake work relating to pupil transfer. However, the evidence suggests that LM involvement in transfer-related activity could be further improved. Only two secondary schools stated that LM resources were specifically targeted at transfer-related matters. In addition to this, three primary schools, including two schools where the LMs were managed at the LEA level, referred to the usefulness of exchanging information between LMs, suggesting that greater input from LEAs could aid the facilitation of cross-phase links.

The evidence also suggests that most pupils have a relatively smooth transfer into secondary school and that significant problems related to transfer tend to occur in only a small number of isolated cases.

Overall, the key factor in supporting the transfer of pupils from primary school to secondary school appeared to be cross-phase links, including curriculum continuity and the effective exchange of information and teachers. This was an area that all the case-study schools reported they could develop further, along with the need to increase consistency within and across boroughs and to improve parent-school contact.

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