

Local government

November 2006



More than the sum

Mobilising the whole council and its partners to support school success

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Introduction

- 1 Councils spend more money on schools than on any other function. The continued increases in government spending on education reflect its high priority. Achieving a demonstrable and sustained return from this investment is an imperative for everyone.
- 2 Traditional school improvement activity has tended to concentrate on teaching and learning at individual school level. Critical though this is, by itself the approach is limited, as is recognised in the wider commitment to the five outcomes in *Every Child Matters*^I (Ref. 1).
- 3 This report^{II} focuses on external factors contributing to school success rather than internal ones. It considers the vital links between school performance and the communities schools serve. It shows how councils and their partners can make a significant contribution to creating the conditions for school success and how schools for their part can contribute towards wider community well-being. It offers examples of good practice, for instance, where partnership working has been successful and provides a self-assessment questionnaire in Appendix 4. It is intended primarily for officers and elected members in councils and their partner organisations and for senior managers and governors in schools.
- 4 While almost all local public services can support schools, either directly, or indirectly through the benefits they bring to children and families, the report concentrates on the following key service areas: regeneration and renewal; social housing; community safety; arts, sports and recreation services; and youth services. It does not examine specifically or in detail the work of the council's children's services function or the health service, whose support for schools and partnership working is considered in the annual performance assessment and joint area reviews.

I *Every Child Matters* identifies five outcomes for children and young people, which provide the basis for work in this area. These are: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being.

II This report complements a National Audit Office study, *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England* (Ref. 2), which was published in January 2006 and which analysed what can be done at individual school level both by schools themselves and by external interventions on the part of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and local authority education departments.

- 5 The findings are derived primarily from detailed fieldwork carried out in summer and autumn 2005 in 12 councils, all of which serve areas of substantial deprivation.¹ The fieldwork included meetings with officers and members and visits to 34 primary, middle and secondary schools. These involved meetings with pupils, parents and community representatives as well as staff and governors. The report also draws on the Commission's wider audit and inspection work (including its contribution to joint area reviews of children's services and local education authority inspections), as well as other recent Commission research in areas such as leisure services (**Ref. 3**) and youth justice (**Ref. 4**). The study also benefited from the contributions of an external advisory group and discussions with a range of key stakeholders and academics.
- 6 Based on the evidence gained from the study, the chapters that follow set out key features underpinning good practice as councils, schools and their partners work together effectively to support school success. They cover:
- awareness and understanding;
 - strategic leadership by the council and local strategic partnerships;
 - positive leadership at school level;
 - operational coordination;
 - effective resource management; and
 - cross-cutting performance management.

¹ See **Appendix 1** for further details on the methodology.

1

Neighbourhoods and communities matter

Statistical context

- 7 The strong relationship between parental socio-economic circumstances and children's attainment is longstanding, and clear at both school and pupil level. More deprived pupils, and schools with more deprived intakes, generally perform less well academically than more affluent ones, across all Key Stages.
- 8 However, statistical trends indicate that in recent years there has been some narrowing of the attainment gap at school level, although at pupil level less progress has been made (**Ref. 5**). This suggests that issues associated with local socio-economic circumstances are still acting as a brake on improvement.
- 9 Children's educational underachievement is linked with a wide range of deprivation factors: low parental qualifications, poor housing conditions, low family income, ill-health, family problems and wider community factors such as low aspirations and unemployment. Multiple deprivation often passes from one generation to another, and is also related to local neighbourhood circumstances. Policy initiatives are increasingly recognising the need for multi-disciplinary approaches to break the cycle of disadvantage, which address the needs of the child, the family and the wider community (**Ref. 6**).

Policy context

- 10 There has been a series of major programmes aimed at improving the performance of schools in deprived areas. These include Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities and Leadership Incentive Grant. Programmes to turn round unsatisfactory schools have included Fresh Start, Collaborative Re-start and, more recently, Academies. The emphasis in many of these programmes has been to work with parents as well as children, and to start to tackle many of the underlying issues, such as low family skill levels, children's low self-esteem, lack of homework space and learning support, and low community aspirations.

- 11 The *Every Child Matters* framework explicitly recognises the interrelationship between different aspects of children's well-being in their overall development, and is based on the premise that more integrated services will help them better to fulfil their potential. While schools do not have a legal duty to cooperate with other agencies, it is expected that they will make an important contribution to the improvement of all five outcome areas for children and young people. New legislation proposes that schools must have regard to any relevant children and young people's plan.
- 12 Initiatives such as Sure Start, Children's Centres and extended services in and around schools (**Ref. 7**) are also based on the need for multi-disciplinary, multi-agency solutions to complex social issues affecting children's development.
- 13 These initiatives are taking place in a wider policy context where government has put tackling inequalities at the centre of neighbourhood renewal policy, with an increasing emphasis on education and schools as a means of achieving this aim. The national strategy and action plan, *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (2001), is based on the overarching principle that within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live (**Ref. 8**). Closing the gap in educational outcomes is one of the key success criteria.
- 14 But despite considerable improvements both in previously rundown and depressed neighbourhoods and in the quality of education at the schools which serve them, we are still some way from the ideal of every school being a good school. Indeed a critical challenge for many councils is the increased polarisation between successful, popular schools and those that are less successful and liable to descend into a spiral of decline. We visited a number of urban areas where the operation of parental preference, often intensified by falling rolls, results in the flight of large numbers of children from the city to secondary schools in the suburbs and adjacent villages. This has significant consequences in terms of declining fortunes for city schools, increased transport and pressure on places at outlying schools.

What this means for councils, schools and their partners

- 15 The nature of community and neighbourhood are fundamental factors in school success. Family life, the prevailing culture of the neighbourhood and the socio-economic profile of the school intake all have substantial effects on children's attainment and therefore their future life chances.

- 16 Because of this, improving schools and improving the prospects of the most disadvantaged pupils in schools is not a matter for schools alone or for schools supported only by external education professionals. The council as a whole, along with its wider partners, including the voluntary sector, has a key role in helping to create the infrastructure and conditions which maximise schools' chances of success.
- 17 School improvement and renewal are inseparable issues from neighbourhood improvement and renewal, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. While schools are profoundly affected by their neighbourhoods, they equally have a key role in promoting cohesion and building social capital,¹ for example by taking part in local regeneration schemes, offering adult education and helping families to access other local public services, such as health and childcare.
- 18 Community safety partnerships and agencies can work with schools to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour by young people, both in and out of school, thus contributing to neighbourhood renewal and supporting high aspirations and educational achievement in school.
- 19 Housing conditions affect children's health and ability to learn; and the profile of housing stock in an area affects the intake of a whole school and very often the performance of its pupils. Allocations policies may also have a significant impact on a school. The council has an important strategic role in the oversight of local social housing and a practical one where it is responsible for repairs and maintenance services of its own council properties.
- 20 Arts, sports and recreation services can support schools in many ways. They may provide additional facilities or resources to deliver the curriculum. They may help build children's confidence and self-esteem in a different context from the classroom, and give disaffected young people a more constructive alternative to crime and anti-social behaviour. They also offer enjoyment, widen children's experience and offer potential career opportunities.
- 21 Making effective use of both universal and targeted youth services can help to foster more successful schools, through linking young people to wider opportunities for personal and social development, and helping to tackle the root causes of underachievement and disaffection through individual support.

¹ Social capital may be defined as '...networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (Ref. 9).

2

Key features: what does good practice look like?

- 22 The importance of the neighbourhood, community and infrastructure issues, discussed in Chapter 1, gives a key role to councils and their partners in promoting school success and raising the achievement of children from the most disadvantaged homes. As community leaders, councils have a special role in bringing partners together, through such vehicles as the local strategic partnership and a wide range of local partnerships and initiatives tackling, for instance, neighbourhood renewal or crime reduction. As corporate bodies, they are responsible for key functions which have considerable influence on the context in which schools operate: for example, housing, regeneration, community safety, leisure and youth services.
- 23 Councils, as children's services authorities, are key players in the development of children's trust partnerships. In this context, there are statutory obligations on the partners to cooperate in the cause of improving outcomes for children and young people. This includes, for example, a duty on district councils, which have responsibility for housing and leisure in a two-tier system, to cooperate with the upper tier authority. The statutory appointment of a director of children's services provides a focus for making sure that all council services play their part in promoting school success and thereby improved outcomes for children and young people.

Good practice framework: key features

- 24 Based on the evidence gained from our study we have identified in this section the key features underpinning good practice as councils, schools and their partners work together effectively to support school success. They cover:
- awareness and understanding;
 - strategic leadership by the council;
 - positive leadership at school level;
 - operational coordination;
 - effective resource management; and
 - cross-cutting performance management.



Good practice framework – Key feature 1

Awareness and understanding by the council, schools and their partners of:

- how school success may be promoted through the whole range of local public services working in partnership with schools;
- how the policies and activities of local public services may have a positive or negative impact on schools and their contribution to the five outcomes in *Every Child Matters*; and
- how schools themselves can contribute to the promotion of neighbourhood well-being by councils and their partners.



Good practice framework – Key feature 2

Strategic leadership by the council and local strategic partnership which:

- articulates a vision, acknowledging the interdependency of successful public services and successful schools and seeing schools at the heart of the community;
 - communicates this vision effectively to all stakeholders;
 - involves schools in framing strategic and service plans which contribute to school success;
 - sets out through the community strategy and the children and young people's plan how schools and other local public services are to work together to achieve mutually agreed objectives; and
 - monitors progress and challenges services which are failing to support schools and pupil outcomes.
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Good practice framework – Key feature 3

Positive leadership at school level which promotes an ethos where:

- partnership working with local public services, the community and other schools is integrated into the vision, management plans and day-to-day working of the school;
- support for families is seen as central to better educational outcomes;
- the concept of community goes wider than children and parents;
- the school is seen as a community resource by staff, pupils, governors and local people;
- community engagement is promoted as important for all staff;
- there are high expectations and aspirations for pupils and the local community alike; and
- the school is responsive to community concerns.



Good practice framework – Key feature 4

Coordination of operational activity between schools and local public services which is underpinned by:

- an effective strategic framework;
 - protocols or service level agreements setting out respective objectives, roles, financing and performance measures – between public services and schools or groups of schools;
 - effective day-to-day communication links between service managers and schools or groups of schools; and
 - appropriate information and data sharing between schools and service managers.
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Good practice framework – Key feature 5

Effective resource management, where:

- councils, schools and their partners identify and allocate specific resources for partnership working between schools and local public services, to underpin planned activity;
- there is clear accountability for these resources and associated activity (for example, through service level agreements (SLAs));
- potential funding sources are widely known, accessible and fit for purpose; and
- councils and schools work together to maximise shared use of facilities.



Good practice framework – Key feature 6

Cross-cutting performance management arrangements which support partnership working at strategic and operational level in such a way that:

- performance measures, attached to key strategies, track how well the whole range of council and other public services are supporting school success;
- locally agreed performance measures, as part of SLAs or other joint working protocols, underpin and complement these higher-level targets; and
- potentially conflicting targets between partners are explicitly considered and tensions resolved through the forum of the children and young people's partnership.

25 The next chapter will review how well councils are doing in relation to each of the key features of the good practice framework. To assess you own council's progress, a self-assessment questionnaire is provided in Appendix 4.

3

Current practice: how well are councils, schools and their partners doing?

- 26 This chapter looks at the elements of good practice set out in the previous chapter and assesses how well councils, schools and their partners are doing at the moment, what the main barriers to improvement are and how they might be tackled.

Awareness and understanding



Good practice framework – Key feature 1

Awareness and understanding by the council, schools and their partners of:

- how school success may be promoted through the whole range of local public services working in partnership with schools;
- how the policies and activities of local public services may have a positive or negative impact on schools and their contribution to the five outcomes in *Every Child Matters*; and
- how schools themselves can contribute to the promotion of neighbourhood well-being by councils and their partners.

- 27 Local public services can help to create the conditions that make it easier for schools to thrive. Equally schools have a key contribution to make to wider community well-being. This interdependence is critical to improvement for both schools and their communities.
- 28 These connections between school improvement and wider neighbourhood renewal, described in paragraphs 15-21 above, seem obvious in general terms. But they are not always clearly understood and translated into action at the local level. The degree of awareness varies from council to council and from service to service. It is most developed at the interface between education, health and social care, in the development of

integrated children's services and the response that councils and their partners are making to the agenda set out in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*.¹

- 29 In some councils, there is a similar level of awareness in relation to one or more other services, such as community safety and housing, often accompanied by formal joint working arrangements. But many council members and officers in our research were unclear about how non-education services and policies affect, or could potentially support, schools. As a result there are missed opportunities for schools and other services to work together to maximise school success and avoid unintentional outcomes.
- 30 This limited attention to the connections between schools and broader activities across the public sector is understandable. Individual council activities, such as regeneration, housing, community safety and culture, are under significant pressures to deliver existing complex programmes and to meet their own specific targets and priorities, while at the same time making efficiency savings. The top priority for schools themselves is immediate improvement in pupil attainment scores.
- 31 But many schools do see an important role for themselves in the community beyond the classroom and pupils' immediate academic attainment. This role is likely to encompass wider multi-agency working. For these schools, in-depth community engagement is seen as critical to creating the conditions for improved pupil standards, through tackling low pupil and community expectations, improving adult skills and contributing to broader neighbourhood renewal. In the majority of schools we visited links with parents, local businesses and faith groups were viewed as an essential part of achieving better outcomes, although there was often less of a sense of partnership working for building wider social capital.
- 32 So the scope and nature of this approach, and the extent of its formalisation and integration into school management policies and plans, varies a great deal between schools. It is also often an isolated vision, for an individual school, rather than reflecting an agreed vision of the school's role in the local neighbourhood, as defined by the school with the community and local stakeholders, set within the larger vision and framework of the community strategy.

¹ The programme of joint area reviews is assessing progress on the developing integration of children's services and the success of areas in achieving the outcomes for children and young people set out in *Every Child Matters*. These issues are not specifically considered in this report.

- 33 All the councils we visited have significant programmes of work targeted at their most deprived communities. Many of the schools in these areas stand to gain considerably from these initiatives, and are engaged in individual schemes. But often heads said that they were not aware of the wider vision for their area, despite their undertaking of individual projects, and were not therefore in a position to maximise the benefits from or the contribution to regeneration plans.
- 34 Part of the background to this variable picture is a real tension, which schools and councils have to manage. This is the tension between, on the one hand, a commitment to the idea of schools at the heart of the local community and, on the other, maximising parental choice with the consequent movement of children away from their local community and the school which serves it.

Strategic leadership by the council and local strategic partnerships



Good practice framework – Key feature 2

Strategic leadership by the council and local strategic partnerships which:

- articulates a vision, acknowledging the interdependency of successful public services and successful schools and seeing schools at the heart of the community;
 - communicates this vision effectively to all stakeholders;
 - involves schools in framing strategic and service plans which contribute to school success;
 - sets out through the community strategy and children and young people's plan how schools and other local public services are to work together to achieve mutually agreed objectives; and
 - monitors progress and challenges services which are failing to support schools and pupil outcomes.
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- 35 The range of projects and initiatives across local public services is vast. A firm strategic approach ensures that all this energy is channelled where it matters most and in pursuit of defined overall objectives. We found that there is often limited strategic engagement between schools and wider council services on matters of key mutual interest. Better overall strategic links are clearly emerging through partnerships connected with children's services and extended schools. Nevertheless, at none of our fieldwork sites were there indications of an overall coherent strategy to ensure that actions across the range of local public services maximised the chances of school success.
- 36 At the highest strategic level the community strategy articulates a vision for partnership working in an area. Invariably local strategic partnerships give improved educational outcomes for children and young people a high profile in these plans. But they do not set out how the whole range of local public services can support school success or how schools can be at the centre of community and neighbourhood renewal.
- 37 Implementing the policy imperatives set out in *Every Child Matters* is providing a driver for closer cross-boundary working in respect of children and young people, particularly in health, social care and education. New children and young people's plans (CYPPs) explicitly set out how partnerships will address each of five outcomes.¹ For example, within this framework consideration of how to 'achieve economic well-being' for children and young people demands the involvement of those charged with delivering services, such as wider regeneration and housing strategies. Other outcomes may be facilitated through contributions from a range of other services and agencies, including community safety, leisure and youth services. There are new requirements in forthcoming legislation for schools to have regard to the plan and to be consulted on it.
- 38 Rightly the focus in CYPPs is very much on improving outcomes for children and young people rather than on institutional improvement. This means that CYPPs, and also the inspection framework for children's services, typically consider, for example, how community regeneration will address the needs of children and young people and what action is being taken to ensure young people have decent housing. But they do not usually include an analysis of the effect on schools of those same regeneration and housing initiatives, whether the impact is directly on schools, or indirectly, through the impact on

¹ *Every Child Matters* identifies five outcomes for children and young people, which provide the basis for work in this area. These are: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being.

families and neighbourhoods. Both the community strategy and children and young people's plan should set out a clear vision, plans and objectives articulating how all services can support successful schools, and how this will be assessed.

- 39 Over recent years schools have become more central to regeneration strategies and plans. But, for many councils, schools supported by children's services departments, are not yet consistently at the heart of a coordinated approach to regenerating their areas. There is often a gap between the vision at national level about schools being at the centre of regeneration and the reality of their limited strategic involvement, even though they may be involved in the delivery of individual local projects.
- 40 In many of the councils we visited there was very limited strategic engagement between housing and education functions. Changes in housing conditions and infrastructure may benefit schools, though they are not explicitly carried out for this reason. What links exist tend to be ad hoc rather than strategic and schools and the education service are rarely mentioned in policy documents. In counties there is the additional complication that responsibility for housing rests with the districts.
- 41 This strategic dislocation means that councils may be missing important connections between estate regeneration and school improvement. Recent trends to create mixed communities by changing tenure patterns may, for example, provide an opportunity to create more balanced intakes for local schools. Some councils are promoting a mixed tenure approach to new housing developments to pepper social housing throughout the borough and avoid the monolithic estates of the recent past. Such initiatives are likely to have a significant impact on the nature of school intakes and, therefore, school outcomes in the short, medium and long term.
- 42 But while the potential implications for schools of creating more mixed income communities through housing and planning policy need to be explicitly considered, they do not by themselves provide a panacea for school underperformance. In one authority we visited, although the social mix of the area had changed with the development of new private housing, virtually none of the more affluent parents in the new houses sent their children to the local school, which remains associated with the old deprived estate. As a result, children are travelling longer distances to school and the local school has not benefited from the new housing developments. In addition car usage has probably increased, making a detrimental impact on the environment. This demonstrates the way actions at school level and at wider community level depend on each other for long-term success.

- 43 Research for this study did not look in any detail at the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative and we cannot comment on current progress on implementation. However the programme demands really effective coordination between school planning and planning across all council services. Much more than a building programme, BSF is intended to transform secondary provision over the next 15 years. To do so, it must be fundamentally aligned with wider local authority thinking and planning on housing, regeneration and the other services covered in this report.
- 44 While there is usually local authority education or children's services representation on youth crime and offending strategy groups and subgroups, schools themselves are often absent or poorly represented. As a result, schools' agreement to participate in initiatives set out within crime and disorder reduction partnerships' (CDRPs') community safety strategies often has to be obtained on an individual basis, leading to a substantial variation in the level of engagement with these programmes, depending on the philosophy of individual headteachers.
- 45 The Commission's recent report *Public Sports and Recreation Services: Making them Fit for the Future* (2006) concluded that strategic planning of leisure services is also underdeveloped in the majority of councils, with poor assessment of current provision and future community demand (**Ref. 3**). Engagement between leisure and children's services departments and individual schools was found to be limited.
- 46 Nevertheless, we found a good example of strategic collaboration in Leeds, where schools play an integral part in the city-wide sports strategy (**Case study 1**).

Case study 1

Leeds city-wide sports strategy: working with schools

Leeds has a city-wide community sports network, developed jointly between the City Council and other stakeholders. The network is coordinated through Sport Leeds, the local strategic partnership for sport in the city and part of the Leeds Initiative. Sport Leeds has a number of subgroups, one of which covers PE and school sport. The group includes representatives from Education Leeds, the School Sport Partnerships, Leeds Healthy Schools, Sport and Active Recreation, extended schools and representatives from the higher and further education sectors.

One of the first projects for the group was the development of the Activate Sports Delivery Scheme for schools. Managed and delivered by Leeds Sport Development

Unit, Activate provides around 250 schools with access to a range of 6-hour coaching programmes in 10 different sports. These programmes are delivered in curriculum time and link into local and city-wide festivals for each activity. Activate is particularly valued by primary schools which would not necessarily have the resources or teaching expertise to provide such a wide range of quality opportunities for their pupils. Schools causing concern or in OFSTED categories¹ may be given additional coaching programmes, to help develop pupils' self esteem and their achievement at school.

Another example of joint working across the partnership is the Rugby League and Athletic Development Scheme (RADS). RADS has two key strands: talent identification through speed, power and coordination testing and the identification of health-related weight levels of pupils. Around 6,000 year 7 pupils are tested by Leeds Sports Development Unit and Leeds Metropolitan University each year, with 60 of the most talented boys and girls not already members of sports clubs invited onto a 24-week multi-sport talent development programme. The weight levels testing also provides accurate baseline data for obesity levels among pupils. Pupils who are obese, or at risk of obesity, are offered referrals into a range of programmes, along with their families. Consideration is being given to extending testing to primary school pupils so that earlier intervention is possible. Repeat testing at a range of ages would also help to monitor the success of the RADS scheme initiatives over time.

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- 47 In most councils, senior education officers from the children's services department are formally represented on the majority of key strategic planning bodies of the council. However, in relation to schools, we consistently found a low level of awareness of, and engagement with, strategic processes, beyond children's services. Heads said they often felt far removed from the formation of the wider strategic framework for local public services, such as community safety, housing, economic development, neighbourhood renewal, leisure or youth services. Contact with individual local public services tended to be ad hoc.
- 48 Overcoming these problems is not easy. There are major time and capacity constraints both in the council and in schools. All are under pressure to deliver immediate, often centrally driven, policy priorities, against which their performance will be judged. How to ensure schools and their partners in the council and outside understand and contribute to

¹ Categories are: serious weakness, special measures, formal warning.

the development of each other's and to overall strategic priorities is a challenge that can in practice only be resolved at local level. But each council needs to ensure that the strategic planning of local public services takes explicit account of the needs of schools and secures active contributions from the council's family of schools.

Positive leadership at school level



Good practice framework – Key feature 3

Positive leadership at school level which promotes an ethos where:

- partnership working with local public services, the community and other schools is integrated into the vision, management plans and day-to-day working of the school;
- support for families is seen as central to better educational outcomes;
- the concept of community goes wider than children and parents;
- the school is seen as a community resource by staff, pupils, governors and local people;
- community engagement is promoted as important for all staff;
- there are high expectations and aspirations for pupils and the local community alike; and
- the school is responsive to community concerns.

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- 49 Schools vary considerably in the extent and quality of their community engagement, their commitment to it and the difference it is making. For some this agenda is seen as peripheral to the main purpose of the school. Others are using this engagement with their communities and with the council in its range of functions both to make a demonstrable impact on pupil achievement and to build social capital in their area.
- 50 The leadership of individual headteachers is critical in mobilising staff, pupils and the community itself behind this broader agenda. This leadership, clearly apparent in the schools described in **Case studies 2 and 3**, emphasises an outward focus for the

school. It recognises that family circumstances have such an influence on a child's prospects for learning that they cannot be ignored. This means taking positive action to counter the negative education experiences of many parents and seeking to break the cycle of low aspiration and low attainment.

Case study 2

Ashbrow Infant School, Kirklees – an infant school, with a nursery and children's centre on site

Inspired by the headteacher's leadership and vision, there is a very strong belief held by staff in this infant school that the school is both a community and a family resource and that the school has a critical role in trying to break cycles of deprivation and raise aspirations. Many parents have had bad experiences of school and need to change their view so those attitudes are not passed on to the children. Under an enterprising headteacher, the school places an emphasis on numerous small initiatives, not one of which is necessarily making the big difference but all contributing to the philosophy of community engagement in action.

Examples of activities/initiatives include:

- a 'forest school' which facilitates outdoor education on site;
- a children's centre;
- adult classes;
- access to social services on site through a family support worker, which improves accessibility and avoids the stigma of being referred;
- free legal advice on site through a local solicitor;
- playschemes, where parents, rather than dropping children off, join in too as a family; and
- using lunchtimes for social skills – food is served by an adult at the table as in family groups. Parents regularly come in to have lunch with children and take on this role.

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Case study 3

Walker Technology College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

This technology college serves an area with high levels of social deprivation. It has improved its GCSE results (percentage 5 A*-C) from 25 per cent in 2001 to 61 per cent in 2005. There is evidence that the school's engagement with its community is an important element in its success. Taking a lead from committed senior management, this approach is taken up at all levels in the school. Features of this engagement include:

- the importance of a clear and consistent pastoral structure – parents and outside agencies know exactly who to go to and when. Reception is responsive and welcoming;
- providing extended services means involving other agencies in the community, but not necessarily bringing them into school: the school is engaging with them in the community, for example, local community centres offer programmes for students out of school and the local library is a venue for some classes. These provide an opportunity to re-integrate disaffected young people and parents into education;
- the outward focus of the school epitomised by a very extensive foreign exchange programme (current active exchange programme with schools in Ukraine, Denmark, China, USA, France and Germany) and constant use of its own outdoor centre;
- engagement of the voluntary sector in the day-to-day life of the school – for example, there is a counsellor from the charity Streetwise in school for two days a week and a strong partnership with 'Kids Cabin' art workshop;
- use of the community as a resource for an alternative curriculum, providing, for example, programmes for children out of school;
- a wide-ranging programme of adult education courses and lettings; and
- engagement of interest and support of a wider community than parents. The 'Friends of the School' is not a parent teacher association nor dedicated to fund-raising, but essentially a social club providing a fund of goodwill and support for a range of school activities.

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- 51 Given the importance of leadership at school level in determining school priorities and the relative autonomy of individual schools within the present system, it is perhaps inevitable that schools approach partnership working and community engagement with varying degrees of commitment.
- 52 But there are drivers now in place which make it more difficult for schools to avoid community and multi-agency engagement. Within the OFSTED framework for school self-evaluation, schools need to demonstrate how they are seeking out and responding to the views of the wider community of stakeholders. School inspections now award a grade for how well a school works in partnership to promote learners' well-being. The National College for School Leadership has been promoting a community leadership strategy to encourage greater collaboration in communities, including through partnerships across the local authority **(Ref. 10)**.
- 53 Most importantly, the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the development of extended services in and around schools are both increasing the pace of partnership working, in terms of schools working together and schools working with other agencies. Across the country multi-agency initiatives are drawing together professionals from key agencies and often concentrating on preventive work. These initiatives recognise the interdependence of schools and other agencies in meeting the wider needs of children and young people. But, as noted in the previous section, the level of explicit strategic coordination is still comparatively limited in areas other than health, social care and education.
- 54 The range of potential partners for schools is of course far more extensive than other council departments or statutory agencies. Some schools value close working with the local church or other faith communities, even though there is no formal affiliation through voluntary aided or controlled status. The business community can provide opportunities for work experience placements and a range of support, including talks on different career options, help with CVs and interview preparation as well as contributions as governors.
- 55 The voluntary sector may hold the key to effective working with some pupils and parents, when the school has had little or no success. We saw impressive examples of drugs workers, pastoral support workers, counsellors, all from the voluntary sector, working in close collaboration with schools and being able to demonstrate success in engaging with troubled youngsters.

- 56 Workforce remodelling offers particular opportunities for innovation and for mobilising talent from the community within schools. There is evidence that young people can relate well to the new cohorts of learning mentors (**Ref. 11**). One secondary school we visited (see Case study 5, page 24) employs around 70 non-teaching staff from the local community, engaged in roles such as teaching assistant and learning mentor. Local young people are employed as sports coaches in another project, while yet another trains and employs local residents, often mothers, as project staff (see Case study 4). These types of schemes can contribute to raising local skills. For example, one school has its own training scheme for technicians (**Case study 5**) and project workers in another have gained childcare qualifications (**Case study 4**) as well as providing valuable local role models for young people.

Operational coordination



Good practice framework – Key feature 4

Coordination of operational activity between schools and local public services which is underpinned by:

- an effective strategic framework;
 - protocols or service level agreements setting out respective objectives, roles, financing and performance measures – between public services and schools or groups of schools;
 - effective day-to-day communication links between service managers and schools or groups of schools; and
 - appropriate information and data sharing between schools and service managers.
-

- 57 There is a wide range of initiatives and projects, which bring together the work of schools, the council and other agencies. These are often well coordinated locally and demonstrate in very practical ways how action at school level can benefit pupils, parents and the wider community. But, as noted earlier, this activity is often not securely placed within a strategic framework and schools vary considerably in the degree to which they undertake this kind of work. In a number of areas, too, information sharing between mainstream council services and schools is not fully effective.

- 58 Nevertheless we found evidence of, for example, schools at the heart of local regeneration projects, partnership initiatives between housing and schools and productive collaboration between community safety partners and schools.
- 59 **Case study 4** shows how in Birmingham a community project has worked closely with a primary school over a long period and helped to foster the conditions which brought the school out of special measures.

Case study 4

Primrose Hill Community Project: an early years community project linked to a primary school within Birmingham City Council

Primrose Hill Community Project fosters children's development while providing local training and employment opportunities for residents from the Three Estates area in Kings Norton. It was set up in 1997 as a charitable trust, on the school site, by early years workers at the primary school, to meet the needs of children and families on this deprived estate. At the time the school was in special measures, there was poor pupil behaviour and a lack of parental engagement. The project made a major contribution in turning the school round and has helped to sustain it as a very successful school in challenging circumstances. There has always been a close relationship between the on site project and the school, through the joint role of the assistant headteacher as community project manager.

Funded by the New Deal for Communities (NDC) for a number of years, it offers a range of facilities: neighbourhood nursery; pre-school nursery and reception classes; playgroups; after school club; summer holiday activities; adult education and vocational training. A community café is planned, where parents will be able to meet and have breakfast, so facilitating further links with the school.

An integral part of the project is the training and employment of local residents as project staff. Completing the childcare training has led many local mothers to gain qualifications and work either at the project, the school or elsewhere. In our focus group these parents spoke enthusiastically about what they had gained from, and were able to give back to, the project. They also mentioned the positive impacts on their own children's aspirations from seeing what they had achieved. The project has received a positive independent evaluation, commissioned by NDC.

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- 60 Successful regeneration projects depend on accurate understanding of communities, gained by effective consultation, and place due emphasis on the need to build social capital at the same time as any physical regeneration. Schools' contribution to this process is indispensable. **Case study 5** shows how they can play their wider role in realising the vision for a local area.

Case study 5

The role of schools in regeneration and renewal in Hartlepool

Hartlepool, a small urban borough council, which is responsible for nine of the most disadvantaged wards in the country, has a strategic planning framework for economic development and regeneration, which is coordinated with other council service strategies. It benefits from a range of regeneration funding streams, including the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and NDC. Young people are regularly involved in Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) consultations.

Hartlepool NDC has carried out detailed work and established governance structures to enable residents to understand, define and propose action in their own communities. A wide range of engagement methods were employed including local street meetings and focus groups to reach specific groups such as ethnic minorities, older people and children. Community conferences have included groups of primary and secondary school children from across the town who have effectively helped to influence the contents of plans for their areas.

Stranton and Lynnfield primary schools have had Community Learning Centres built on site, funded using NDC capital, to provide early years education, childcare, positive parenting initiatives and study support. These two schools have also both recruited two social inclusion assistants and pupil attendance has improved significantly as a result. But while only these two schools are located in the NDC area, all schools in the town with substantial numbers of NDC resident pupils are engaged in NDC funded projects, aimed at raising their educational attainment.

Schools are also making a contribution to regeneration and renewal in other ways. For example, Dyke House secondary school has recruited and trained 70 non-teaching staff from the community, engaged in roles such as teaching assistant and learning mentor, and has its own training scheme for technicians. Schools are also well-developed in relation to extended school activities, with all schools running breakfast clubs and at least five extended activities. These activities enhance links with the community as well as providing enrichment opportunities for children.

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- 61 In work to promote community safety we found good examples of school success being fostered by multi-agency working and, at the same time, schools contributing to improved safety and well-being in the local area. This is exemplified in Portsmouth in the work of community wardens and the police, described in **Case studies 6 and 7**.

Case study 6

Community wardens working with schools and young people in Portsmouth

Portsmouth City Council community wardens have been widely appreciated by residents, including school pupils, for improving the quality of life in local neighbourhoods. As well as acting as a catalyst for practical problem resolution, for instance by linking with other agencies on behalf of residents (for example, police, environmental services, housing), they are also playing an important role in brokering relationships between residents.

The community wardens have made a point of developing relationships with local children and young people, both on the estates and in the school playground. Because of the trust they have developed, they can contact parents and discuss behaviour issues, and may intervene when there are fights between pupils from different schools. They have also been proactive in working with the housing department and schools in developing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs). Children in our focus groups said they felt safer because of the wardens, and parents mentioned the environmental improvements that had resulted, such as safer parks.

‘Because of the wardens – you can ask for help if you’re in trouble’ – primary pupil.

Prompted by children’s interest in the community wardens’ work, a community youth warden scheme has been developed with pupils from St Luke’s secondary school. Following presentations at assembly about the scheme, and an application process, a group of year 8 pupils is taking part in litter picks, clearing gardens and activities with younger children. They are uniformed, sign a contract to commit to behaviour standards, and are invited to take part in a range of outdoor pursuits, as a reward, where they also develop team-building skills.

While neighbourhood renewal funding (NRF) for the community wardens ended in March 2006, the scheme has been so successful that members agreed to fund the service from council budgets together with targeted funding from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. This has enabled the scheme to deliver a focused service in the area of the neighbourhood management pilots and to provide the service to all Portsmouth residents. The community wardens began delivering the new city-wide service in April 2006.

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Case study 7

Effective multi-agency working between the Council, police and schools in Portsmouth

The chief superintendent of the city's police force is committed to working in partnership to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in and around schools. Two schools in particular have collaborated very successfully. The Council has given the police the opportunity to brief all the headteachers on the approaches used, with an invitation to work with the police in their schools. A strategy for police in schools is currently being developed. The police have also been invited to be key partners on the Council's five new multi-agency partnerships which are to set up extended services in schools across the authority. Tackling anti-social behaviour will be a priority theme for these partnerships.

St Luke's Church of England Secondary School: Information sharing and joint working with the police

Building on a close relationship with a regular community beat officer, the school developed a formal protocol with the police to share information about young people, in order to identify and work with pupils causing serious trouble in and out of school, and to help tackle truancy. The protocol was crucial to formulating an effective joint approach to halt serious gang fighting and the racial abuse of local shopkeepers. There has also been a substantial reduction in unauthorised absence, since the police, school and Education Welfare Officer have been working together to tackle truancy (for example, through truancy sweeps, parenting orders and fixed penalty notices). Knowing that agencies collaborate and share information acts as a deterrent for young people. The school also does preventive work with the police where pupils at risk of offending are taken on tours of police cells, courts and prisons.

Mayfield Secondary School: Police in school

Intensive police support was sought by the school to tackle high levels of exclusions, truancy, in-school mobile phone robbery and complaints from residents concerning anti-social behaviour and crime. Police were integrated fully into the life of the school by the headteacher and staff. Police patrolled the corridors, attended assemblies and supported the school in enforcing school discipline. Police were involved on the school board, the truancy board, governors' meetings and the school council. As a result of this work, calls to the police control room to attend the school dropped by 42 per cent, and there was a 41 per cent reduction in overall crime. There was a 54 per cent reduction in exclusions and a 100 per cent reduction in mobile phone thefts and robbery in school.

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- 62 However, sometimes there can be unintended consequences for one area of work by action in another. For example, at an operational level in housing, there is often little explicit consideration of the effects of either allocations policy or the quality of stock management on schools and little deliberate sharing of information. While there are constraints on the placement of families in social housing, due to the location and limited availability of social housing stock, allocations policies which have no regard for their potential impact on schools can reinforce and concentrate disadvantage, so presenting serious challenges for schools. A poor approach to the maintenance and management of stock can result in a high turnover of tenants. This means that some schools face a continuous and ever changing stream of new pupils who experience significant barriers to learning.
- 63 Some councils are making real efforts to develop and maintain effective communication channels to mitigate these problems. **Case study 8** describes a helpful protocol that has been developed between the relevant agencies in Birmingham.

Case study 8

Housing protocol between the relevant agencies in Birmingham

In Birmingham a protocol has been brokered between the Council's education function, the housing department and registered social landlords. The protocol commits these parties to work together to promote better outcomes for children and young people. It includes a commitment to improve the quality of housing and environment in Birmingham, to promote educational continuity, and explicitly to consider the impact on learning and pupil mobility of decisions about housing allocations, particularly in the case of refugee, asylum seeker or other vulnerable families.

The protocol also commits the parties to share information and collaborate on preventing and dealing with anti-social behaviour, including racial harassment. It also suggests ways that social housing landlords may work with schools on joint projects. Information for new tenants about local public services (such as schools, childcare and adult education) will also be improved.

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- 64 This formalisation of working arrangements is a useful way of ensuring better cooperative working, with access to services systematically organised and based on written agreements rather than happening on an ad hoc basis. Youth services, for example, are

often fragmented, with few councils setting out clear entitlements to youth services through schools. Young people's access to services therefore depends on local relationships, including the priorities and philosophy of headteachers. So, a troubled young person in one school may benefit from rapid referral to tailored youth services aimed at early intervention, while in another school a similar young person may be excluded or even commit a criminal offence before they receive any support or effective intervention. As a way of overcoming these problems, **Case study 9** describes how youth services are delivered through Great Yarmouth High School with the aid of a formal partnership agreement, based on a format which is used throughout Norfolk.

Case study 9

Partnership between Norfolk Youth and Community Service and Great Yarmouth High School

Great Yarmouth High School has a varied intake, with many children coming to school from very difficult home backgrounds. The school values the contribution that other agencies such as youth services can make to helping their pupils realise their potential and achieve good academic standards.

In common with all schools across Norfolk, there is a written partnership agreement between Norfolk Youth and Community Service and Great Yarmouth High School, setting out roles and responsibilities for the delivery of youth services in and through the school.

The agreement covers:

- identification and referral of young people to projects;
- core and additional funding: from youth and community service, school and other agencies;
- joint planning: pupil involvement in decision making, timing and location of activities, and contribution to national curriculum and wider pupil outcomes;
- communication structures: data sharing, child protection, links to governing body, school management team, Connexions and others;
- recording young people's achievements and learning outcomes; and
- project evaluation.

There is a wide range of youth projects that pupils may access through the school. These include:

- counselling and advice work: fortnightly information and advice mobile, twice weekly health drop-in sessions with school nurse, access to tier 2 drug worker and referrals to qualified counsellor;
- ongoing support groups: including mentoring group (for low self-esteem), ethnic minority support group, and school engagement group (for underachieving young people) held at a youth resource base;
- safer communities project: students develop projects to improve their own communities, which have involved police, youth offending team, drugs agencies and probation service. Pupils have also helped police investigate crime in the community, and assisted with environmental clean-ups; and
- Duke of Edinburgh: scheme involves young people from range of backgrounds in activities that contribute towards an accredited learning outcome, facilitated by youth service coordinator.

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- 65 As this section of the report has demonstrated, there are numerous examples of effective partnership working on the ground. Where there are operational difficulties, these often have their roots in a poor sharing of information.
- 66 Joint area reviews are finding that the development of a children's services function is helping to improve the gathering and sharing of data and information. Analyses of need, carried out to underpin new children and young people's plans, are helpfully based on data from a wide range of partners.
- 67 But information sharing between agencies and schools about individual young people continues to be problematic in some areas. Lack of formal lead professional systems and unresolved data protection concerns seem to be the underlying causes. Recent *Every Child Matters* guidance aims to support information sharing between agencies, alongside
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- I Implementation of the *Every Child Matters* proposals includes the identification of lead professionals to coordinate provision and act as a single point of contact for a child and their family when a range of services are involved and an integrated response is required (Ref. 12).

the development of lead professionals, which are also proposed for teenagers in the Youth Matters Green Paper. The planned Information Sharing Index should further facilitate information sharing.

- 68 Problems and constraints also exist with the sharing of information at service level. In respect of housing, information sharing between housing departments or associations and schools or education/children's services departments is erratic. Schools are not always informed about decisions on housing allocations that may affect them significantly. This can also be true of physical regeneration schemes which may affect school intakes and therefore school viability. The children's services department in Birmingham, however, has developed good information sharing arrangements between schools and services, with a transitional funding protocol to protect schools from the worst demographic effects of housing clearance.

Case study 10

Birmingham – Information sharing and transitional funding for schools affected by regeneration

Education officers have developed close relationships with the Council's housing strategy section, planning department and regeneration services. There are regular meetings to share information and discuss the implications for schools of social and private housing developments, regeneration schemes and family relocations. Information sharing arrangements with social housing providers are underpinned by the new protocol described in Case study 9.

Recognising the disruptive impact that major physical regeneration schemes can have on school rolls, budgets and staffing for children who remain during that period, Birmingham City Council provides transitional funding for schools affected by housing clearance, with the support of the Schools Forum. As rolls fall, schools are funded back up to a notional level, based on projected housing figures. It is accepted that transitional funding may be needed for some time, as regeneration schemes tend to progress slowly. But the transitional amount is reviewed annually based on the housing situation, and there are strict criteria around pupil loss and its underlying cause.

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Resource management



Good practice framework – Key feature 5

Effective resource management, where:

- councils, schools and their partners identify and allocate specific resources for partnership working between schools and local public services, to underpin planned activity;
- there is clear accountability for these resources and associated activity (for example, through service level agreements);
- potential funding sources are widely known, accessible and fit for purpose; and
- councils and schools work together to maximise shared use of facilities.

69 This report did not review the adequacy of financial and resource management for joint working between schools and other services. However, in exploring barriers to effective partnership working, two aspects of resource management presented challenges:

- special funding;^I and
- shared facilities.

Special programme funding

70 Councils, schools and their partners have access to a range of special central government programmes for financing joint activity.^{II} In the face of pressure on mainstream budgets, special funding is often relied upon for the kinds of initiatives

^I 'Special funding' is used here to denote the range of non-mainstream funding streams available to local authorities and schools, from central government departments and associated public agencies, for implementing specific objectives, programmes and pilot initiatives. This funding is usually acquired through a bidding or formal application process, is often time-limited and may be targeted at priority groups or geographical areas. For the purpose of this report the term does not include the School Standards Grant or School Development Grant.

^{II} DfES, DCLG, Home Office and DCMS were the main central government departments providing special initiative funding to the schools in our research. Schemes often mentioned by schools included: Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; New Deal for Communities; New Opportunities Fund for Physical Education and Sport; Positive Activities for Young People; Youth Inclusion Programme.

described in this report. Many councils and schools are successfully gaining access to these extra resources to fund activity which they would otherwise find it difficult to undertake. However, senior council officers and headteachers reported ongoing difficulties with accessing and using these resources effectively.

- 71 In recent years the key government departments^I have recognised the funding complexity created for local authorities and schools by the many separate special funding streams for different purposes, and have taken important steps towards simplification. This includes a reduction in the number of separate schemes, the removal of onerous application and bidding requirements and a reduction in the reporting requirements. Arrangements have also been made to give schools greater funding certainty, with respect to both revenue and capital funding streams.^{II} Local area agreements (LAAs) are another significant development towards funding rationalisation, giving councils the opportunity to negotiate flexibilities with central government departments, with potential benefits for schools.
- 72 However, our research indicates that, although steps towards increasing simplification of government funding streams are welcomed by local authority officers and headteachers, they still experience a great deal of complexity at local level. Part of this complexity relates to remaining central government requirements on local authorities for different types of capital and revenue funding; and part of it to the mechanisms whereby local authorities and their partnerships^{III} themselves choose to give schools access to this funding. Because the amounts of special funding available under each scheme may be quite limited, it may not be appropriate to allocate a small set amount to each school. Better value for money may be obtained by targeting larger amounts at schools most in need or those most able to make use of the funding. This may involve schools in locally developed bidding or application processes, although the extent of the requirements does vary across councils and partnerships. In order to reduce the burden on schools, councils and

^I For example, DfES through the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) and the amalgamation of separate Standards Fund grants into the School Development Grant; and the Department for Communities and Local Government through the granting of increased devolution of spending decisions and accountability to local partnerships for area-based regeneration initiatives.

^{II} For example, through the introduction of multi-year budgets with guaranteed minimum increases in per pupil funding each year; minimum funding guarantees for the School Development Grant and School Standards Grant; and three-year timeframes for the spending of most capital allocations for schools.

^{III} For example, regeneration partnerships.

partnerships should review their special funding arrangements and simplify these as far as possible, in consultation with schools.

- 73 Applying for special funding schemes is often very demanding of senior time. Multiple sources of funding may be required to finance particular schemes, and repeated applications may be needed. While capacity issues exist within council departments for accessing funding, these are particularly acute for schools. Smaller schools, primary schools in particular, struggle to find the time and expertise to investigate and apply for funding, and can lose out as a result. But even in larger secondary schools, heads and senior staff may be deterred by the time required to apply for, administer and monitor funding attached to special programmes.
- 74 However, we did encounter some good examples of councils helping partnerships of schools to access special funding collectively. For example, in one area an existing Excellence Cluster has developed a system whereby lead schools take it in turns to make applications and returns on behalf of others. Headteachers reported that this arrangement had reduced the burden on individual schools of seeking and administering funding, including NRF and regional development agency programmes.
- 75 Sustainability is also a major concern for service managers and headteachers. Special programmes are time-limited, usually offering funding of between one and three years. While the rationale for such funding is given as encouraging innovation and piloting of schemes that can subsequently be mainstreamed, senior officers and headteachers reported that, in reality, even the best schemes can rarely be sustained using existing funding sources. Finding continuing funding for effective existing schemes may be difficult because of the highly specific criteria applying to special funding programmes, so that much time has to be spent trying to identify suitable sources of further funding. Changing local priorities, for example with respect to regeneration schemes, sometimes means projects which are initially funded are not successful in obtaining funding subsequently. If alternative funding cannot be found, effective schemes have to be discontinued.¹

¹ With respect to extended services, DfES has recently issued Funding and Planning Guidance which sets out the expectation that these services should become sustainable through charging and reconfiguration of funding strands at local level (Ref. 13).

76 Other barriers to effective resource management which were cited by council officers included:

- lack of funding compatibility between different government schemes with similar purpose;^I and
- wasted bids due to lack of clarity concerning application criteria and changing government priorities.

Headteachers mentioned:

- lack of easily accessible information about all the potential funding streams open to them, leading to missed opportunities;
- budgetary and planning problems due to short-term horizons for special funding streams, and late notification about funding allocations;
- recruitment and retention difficulties in delivering time-limited special programmes, especially where only one year's funding is guaranteed; and
- inconsistencies in the level and type of monitoring requirements for different schemes, creating unnecessary paperwork.

77 Central government, councils and their partners need to consider how the multiple funding sources for schools can be further simplified and coordinated, including the potential use of LAAs to achieve this.^{II}

Shared facilities

78 Shared use of public facilities can provide a major opportunity for maximising value for money. Historically many schools have offered at least some community use of facilities, such as sports halls and playing fields. The extended schools agenda provides a framework for much wider community use of school facilities, within a multi-agency context designed to help deliver the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*. The large government investment in school sports, and the requirement for specialist schools to offer community facilities, is already leading more schools to open to the public.

^I For example, between the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for PE and Sport Fund, and the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

^{II} DfES will be considering further streamlining of grant streams as part of the School Funding Review, the results of which will be implemented from 2008/09.

- 79 **Case study 11** sets out an example of how Blackpool Council is maximising the benefits of sports facilities for both schools and the community.

Case study 11

Maximising shared use of sports facilities by schools and the community in Blackpool

Blackpool is a small authority with a shortage of open space, so coordinated and shared use of new or upgraded sports facilities is a key priority. The Council and its schools also attempt to use sport as a way to motivate pupils to achieve better academically. There have been a number of shared-use developments involving schools, with benefits both for pupils and the wider community.

The Palatine Campus, which includes a leisure centre and a new public library, was developed around two schools, one of which is now designated as a sports college, and offers its facilities to the community as a condition of specialist status. One of the reasons for developing the Palatine Campus on a school site was to help break down barriers and improve access generally to a range of services: library usage figures are now higher than those combined of all the separate libraries closed to fund the Palatine. And while the Palatine High School gave up land for the development, it now benefits from the improved on-site facilities.

The authority has also ensured community access to new multi-use games areas in a large number of secondary and primary schools in the borough, through a successful bid to the National Lottery New Opportunities Fund (NOF), which required out-of-hours access for the whole community as a grant condition. Attached to the capital funding, there is also revenue to fund a community sports coordinator to run out-of-hours programmes for the first 18 months, secure sport club involvement and thereby start to seek further funding.

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- 80 However, some schools are reluctant to allow community use of school premises. Sometimes there are legitimate security concerns but it can betray a deeper reluctance to regard the school as a community asset. And with the increasing autonomy of schools (**Ref. 14**), some leisure officers raised concerns about councils' future willingness to invest in leisure and sport facilities in schools, if they might be taken out of the public domain.

- 81 Our research also indicated that where there is community use of school facilities, this may take place separately from the rest of the school's activity, or be offered purely as an income generator. More explicit consideration needs to be given to how community use of school facilities can contribute to wider mutual benefit, for example, through getting parents involved in school, or fostering community understanding between pupils and local residents.
- 82 The Commission's report *Public Sports and Recreation Services* (**Ref. 3**) found that although some partnership working is being promoted through specific funding initiatives, generally there is a lack of effective strategic engagement between council sports and recreation services and schools. This is associated with missed opportunities for joint financing of shared use facilities, despite substantial new government capital investment programmes. The same report also highlighted incompatibility of government funding streams as a barrier to the financing of shared-use facilities.¹
- 83 In taking forward extended schools and implementing *Every Child Matters* policies, councils and schools need to work together more effectively to exploit the potential of shared-use facilities and joint funding opportunities. This is particularly critical in taking forward the Building Schools for the Future programme. Given its broad remit, which includes developing extended services, it is vital that councils consider opportunities for joining up capital projects.
- 84 Earlier sections of this report have highlighted the limited strategic engagement between schools, wider council services and their partners. High-level strategies do not currently set out a vision for how the whole range of council services can support school success, nor how schools can be at the centre of community and neighbourhood renewal. Implementation plans and associated performance management frameworks likewise do not currently measure how well council and other local public services are supporting school success. High-level targets for schools currently focus on raising academic attainment, reflecting the high priority given to these by councils, schools and government departments.

¹ In particular, between the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for PE and Sport Fund, and the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, due to uncoordinated timescales. However, steps have been taken by the DfES to help authorities to join up BSF with different capital streams across government through the issuing of new guidance (**Ref. 15**).

Performance management



Good practice framework – Key feature 6

Cross-cutting performance management arrangements which support partnership working at strategic and operational level in such a way that:

- performance measures, attached to key strategies, track how well the whole range of council and other public services are supporting school success;
- locally agreed performance measures, as part of SLAs or other joint working protocols, underpin and complement these higher-level targets; and
- potentially conflicting targets between partners are explicitly considered and tensions resolved through the forum of the children and young people’s partnership.

- 85 Children and young people’s plans are high-level strategic plans and as such may lack the necessary detail for effective performance management. But they are underpinned by a much wider performance management framework, containing not only academic indicators, but also many other measures to assess the contribution of other agencies to improving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Some of these outcomes may be delivered by other agencies through schools. However, performance measures tend to focus on improving priority outcomes for individual children and young people, in specific areas of activity, rather than aiming to evaluate the overall contribution of other services and agencies to schools, as organisations, and hence their ability to provide an adequate network of support for their pupils.
- 86 In mobilising all services to support school success, high-level performance measures will need to be developed to set targets and track progress. In designing these, consideration should be given to agreeing shared targets, so that schools and services are working to the same goals.
- 87 DfES guidance on developing CYPPs recognises that there is a risk of potentially conflicting targets causing tension between the CYPP and the plans of partners. The guidance gives the example of the potential conflict between policing plans to increase the number of offenders brought to justice and a target in the CYPP to reduce the number of children in the criminal justice system.

- 88 We found similar tensions. For example, managers working with young people at risk and young offenders reported difficulties in engaging schools in preventive work. Many community safety professionals believe that a key barrier is that from a performance management perspective, schools have little direct incentive to engage with community safety programmes. The different priorities stemming from different performance management frameworks are barriers to joint working between schools and other agencies, whose main concern is youth justice and inclusion. Whereas youth offending teams and Connexions services have clear performance incentives to ensure more challenging young people are in education, training or employment, the concentration of schools on improving school league table scores has given them a perverse incentive to exclude them.
- 89 In a similar way, our research found that arts, museums and leisure services sometimes encountered schools that turned down their tailored programmes, seeing them as a distraction from academic attainment. Youth service managers also reported that many schools did not value what their services could offer young people, whether in establishing school-based schemes or in referring young people to schemes outside school. Yet effectively used, these services can potentially contribute both to improved wider outcomes for children and young people and to improved academic attainment. This is particularly important for children whose social circumstances mean that their parents are less likely to help them engage with these activities outside school.
- 90 Effective performance management arrangements not only track how well objectives are being achieved but also provide incentives for focused action and initiative. Potential conflicts between targets and performance measures owned by the various partners need to be explicitly considered and tensions resolved through the forum of the children and young people's partnership. The aim is to generate genuinely shared targets to reflect shared priorities.

4

Conclusion

- 91 This report began with the premise that schools' prospects for success are inseparable from the communities they serve. Because of this, the whole range of local public services can make a real contribution to the process of improving schools and sustaining that improvement.
- 92 The report has described ways in which the whole council and its partners can act together to support school success. It concludes that, while there are many good individual examples of strong partnership working, still more can be done to ensure local public services and schools work effectively together, within a robust strategic framework.
- 93 In summary, councils and their partners, working with schools, need to develop and communicate a holistic vision for the place of schools in the wider community, set out in the community strategy and the children and young people's plan. They need to ensure that the strategies and implementation plans show clearly how every service, function and partnership can support school and pupil success.
- 94 For their part, schools need to develop a clear individual vision, incorporated within school plans, which sets out the school's role in the local area and how the school will work with the whole range of local public services in support of both school and community success. Schools need to promote an ethos among staff, pupils and parents where the school is seen as a community resource and there are high expectations for pupils and the community alike.
- 95 The good practice framework (Chapter 2) and accompanying self-assessment questionnaire (Appendix 4) are designed to help councils and their partners to improve collaborative working in support of school success.

Appendix 1: Methodology

The main evidence for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews in 12 fieldwork areas across England, during summer and autumn 2005¹. These areas contain substantial levels of deprivation, and between them represent a range of different conditions such as rural/urban, unitary/two-tier authorities, larger/smaller administrative areas, ethnic diversity and different types of economy.

Within each fieldwork area, a small highly deprived geographical sub-area (often a cluster of wards) was identified for detailed research. Most of the research with schools was focused in these sub-areas, with a view to gaining an understanding both of the challenges facing pupils from these particular communities, and the supporting links between schools, local public services and other organisations (for example, local businesses, faith groups, voluntary organisations).

Fourteen councils participated in research in the following 12 main fieldwork areas: Barking and Dagenham; Birmingham; Blackpool; Cornwall/Kerrier; Derby, Hartlepool; Kirklees; Leeds; Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Norfolk/Great Yarmouth; Portsmouth; Swindon.

Within councils, semi-structured interviews were held with senior council officers and members responsible for the following service areas: children's services; regeneration and renewal; housing; community safety; arts, leisure and sport; youth services; environment, transport and planning.

On each site, senior managers and/or staff from a small number of partner organisations were also interviewed, including: police; youth offending teams; regeneration schemes; voluntary and community organisations.

Thirty-four primary, middle and secondary schools took part in the research [see Appendix 2]. Different types of schools were visited including: specialist schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided schools and one city academy. The age remit for the study was 3-16 years. Three of the school visits were carried out jointly with the National Audit Office, as part of the research for their report *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England*.

In each school there was a semi-structured interview with the headteacher; and in most schools there was also a range of interviews with other senior teaching and non-teaching staff (for example, behaviour improvement programme key workers, inclusion assistants,

¹ Supplementary research was carried out in May 2006 with education officers and headteachers to explore specific funding issues in more depth and take account of recent changes in DfES funding arrangements for schools.

community development workers), and school governors. The school-based research also included 4 focus groups with parents and 11 with pupils, covering the whole age spectrum.

The study benefited from an external reference group of key stakeholders with representatives from the following organisations.

- Association for School and College Leaders
- Department for Education and Skills
- University of Cambridge – Education Department
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- National College for School Leadership
- National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
- OFSTED
- National Audit Office
- Local Government Association

In the course of the study meetings were also held with senior officers in the following organisations.

- ContinYou
- The Education Network
- Improvement and Development Agency
- Local Government Association
- National Association of Headteachers

And with academics from:

- London School of Economics
- University College London – Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis
- University of London – Institute of Education

The report also draws on the Commission's wider audit and inspection work (including its contribution to joint area reviews of children's services and local education authority inspections), as well as other recent Commission research in areas such as leisure services and youth justice.

Appendix 2: List of participating schools

Council area	School	Sector	Status
Barking and Dagenham	Jo Richardson Community School	Secondary	Community
	Thames View Infants' School	Primary	Community
Birmingham CC	The Heartlands High School ^I	Secondary	Community
	Kings Norton High School	Secondary	Community
	Primrose Hill Community School	Primary	Community
Blackpool UA	Beacon Hill High School	Secondary	Community
	St George's C of E High School	Secondary	VA
	Boundary Primary School	Primary	Community
	Mereside Primary School	Primary	Community
Cumbria CC	Crosthwaite C of E Primary School ^I	Primary	VA
Derby CC	Da Vinci Community College	Secondary	Community
	Derwent Community School	Primary	Community
Great Yarmouth DC/ Norfolk CC	Caister High School	Secondary	Foundation
	Cliff Park High School	Secondary	Foundation
	Great Yarmouth (VA) High School	Secondary	VA
	Lynn Grove VA High School	Secondary	VA
	Oriel High School	Secondary	Community
	Greenacre First, Middle and Nursery School	Primary / Middle	Foundation
Hartlepool BC	Dyke House Comprehensive School	Secondary	Community
	Lynnfield Primary School	Primary	Community
	Stranton Primary School	Primary	Community
Kerrier DC/Cornwall CC	Camborne Science and Community College	Secondary	Community

^I Interviews were carried out jointly with the National Audit Office as part of their research for the report *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England* (January 2006).

Council area	School	Sector	Status
Kirklees MDC	Fartown High School	Secondary	Community
	Ashbrow Infant and Nursery School	Primary	Community
	Birkby Junior School	Primary	Community
	Christ Church Woodhouse CE VA Primary School	Primary	VA
Leeds CC	Primrose High School	Secondary	Community
	Shakespeare Primary School	Primary	Community
Manchester MDC	Manchester Academy ¹	Secondary	Academy
Newcastle upon Tyne CC	Walker Technology College	Secondary	Community
	Wharrier Street Primary School	Primary	Community
Portsmouth CC	St Lukes C of E VA Secondary School	Secondary	VA
	Somers Park Primary School	Primary	Community
Swindon BC	Holy Rood RC Junior School	Primary	VA

Total number of schools visited: 34

– Community 23

– Voluntary Aided 7

– Foundation 3

– Academy 1

– Primary 16

– Secondary 18

¹ Interviews were carried out jointly with the National Audit Office as part of their research for the report *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England* (January 2006).

Appendix 3: References

- 1 HM Government, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, 2004.
- 2 National Audit Office, *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England*, 2006.
- 3 Audit Commission, *Public Sports and Recreation Services: Making them Fit for the Future*, 2006.
- 4 Audit Commission, *Youth Justice 2004: A Review of the Reformed Youth Justice System*, 2004.
- 5 DfES, *Statistics of Education: Trends in Attainment Gaps 2005*, 2006.
- 6 Social Exclusion Unit, *Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of Progress and Priorities for the Future*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004.
- 7 DfES, *Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All – A Prospectus*, 2005.
- 8 Social Exclusion Unit, *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*, Cabinet Office, 2001.
- 9 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*, 2001.
- 10 National College for School Leadership website:
www.ncsl.org.uk/communityleadership/index.cfm
- 11 OFSTED, *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: Management and Impact*, 2003, pp46-53.
- 12 Website: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/leadprofessional/
- 13 DfES, *Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and Their Partner Organisations*, 2006.
- 14 As envisaged, for example, by the proposed legislation in: The Stationery Office, *Education and Inspections Bill*, 2006.
- 15 DfES, *Guidance for Local Authorities on Improved Joined-up Planning and Funding*, 2005.

Appendix 4: Self-assessment questionnaire for councils

Section 1: Awareness and understanding

- 1.1 This self-assessment questionnaire is designed to enable councils to evaluate their own progress in relation to the good practice framework set out in Chapter 2. Questions are grouped under each of the six key features of the framework.
- 1.2 Is there a broad understanding across the council of how school success may be promoted through the whole range of council and other local services, working in partnership with schools? What are the barriers to understanding in each case?
 - By members of the LSP?
 - By senior elected members?
 - By senior council officers?
 - By other local public service partners?
 - By local voluntary organisations?
 - By headteachers?
 - By teaching staff?
 - By non-teaching staff?
- 1.3 In which parts of the council is there less awareness of this issue and why?
- 1.4 How well do service directors/heads of service understand how the policies and practices of their particular service may impact on schools, positively or negatively? How does this understanding vary across services?
- 1.5 Is there an understanding of how schools themselves can contribute to the promotion of community well-being, with councils and their partners? What are the barriers to improved understanding in each case?
 - By members of the LSP?
 - By senior elected members?
 - By senior council officers?
 - By other local public service partners?

- By local voluntary organisations?
- By headteachers?
- By teaching staff?
- By non-teaching staff?
- By residents?

Section 2: Strategic leadership by the council and local strategic partnerships

- 2.1** Do the council and its partners have a vision for the local area that acknowledges the interconnection of successful public services and successful schools? If so, how and where is this set out?
- 2.2** Within this vision what role do schools have in creating and sustaining successful communities?
- 2.3** Is this vision communicated effectively to all stakeholders including:
- Members of the LSP?
 - Senior elected members?
 - Senior council officers?
 - Other local public service partners?
 - Local voluntary organisations?
 - Headteachers?
 - Teaching staff?
 - Non-teaching staff?
 - Residents?
- 2.4** What are the barriers to effective communication?
- 2.5** Which stakeholders are least aware of the vision, and why?
- 2.6** How are schools involved in framing strategic and service plans?
- 2.7** Are all schools actively involved, or effectively represented, in the strategic planning of other services that may have an impact on school success, including:

- Housing?
- Regeneration and renewal?
- Community safety?
- Leisure and recreation?
- Arts and museums?
- Libraries?
- Youth services?
- Voluntary sector?
- Other?

- 2.8** Why are some strategic connections between schools and services stronger than others?
- 2.9** In what way does the community strategy set out how schools and other local public services are to work together to achieve mutually agreed objectives?
- 2.10** In what way does the children and young people's plan set out how schools and other local public services are to work together to achieve mutually agreed objectives?
- 2.11** In what ways do the LSP and/or council challenge services which are failing to support schools?

Section 3: Positive leadership at school level

- 3.1** In what ways do headteachers promote an ethos of partnership working with local public services, the community and other schools? How far is this common practice?
- 3.2** What evidence is there that schools' concept of community goes wider than children and parents? Is this a common feature of schools?
- 3.3** Is this ethos regularly integrated into the vision, management plans and day-to-day working of schools?
- 3.4** Is it common practice for headteachers and school management teams actively to promote support for families, as part of a strategy to achieve better outcomes for children and young people?
- 3.5** What evidence is there that schools are seen as a community resource by staff, pupils, governors and local people? Is this a common feature of schools?

- 3.6 In what proportion of schools is community engagement promoted as important for all staff?
- 3.7 In what proportion of schools are there high expectations and aspirations for pupils and the local community alike?

Section 4: Operational coordination

- 4.1 To what extent is operational activity between schools and local public services underpinned by an effective strategic framework?
- 4.2 What protocols or service level agreements are in place for joint work between public services and schools (or groups of schools), setting out respective objectives, roles, financing and performance measures?
- 4.3 How effective are day-to-day communication links between service managers and schools or groups of schools?
- 4.4 Is there effective, timely and appropriate information and data sharing between schools and service managers? How does this vary between service?

Section 5: Effective resource management

- 5.1 What specific resources are allocated for joint work between schools and other council services?
- 5.2 What specific resources are allocated for joint work between schools and other local public services or voluntary organisations?
- 5.3 Is there clear accountability for these resources and associated activity (for example, through protocols or service level agreements)?
- 5.4 Are potential external funding sources widely known, by:
- headteachers and senior staff?
 - council service managers?
 - children's services department officers?
- 5.5 In what ways does the council work with schools to maximise shared use of facilities? [Eg, sports facilities]

Section 6: Cross-cutting performance management

- 6.1 What performance measures, attached to key strategies, does the council have to track how well the whole range of council and other public services are supporting school success?
- 6.2 What performance measures have been agreed locally, as part of SLAs or other joint working protocols between services and schools, to underpin and complement these higher-level targets?
- 6.3 Are there examples of potentially conflicting targets between partners being explicitly considered and tensions resolved through the forum of the children and young people's partnership?

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