Supporting learning in the transition from primary to secondary **schools**

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Acknowledgments

Executive summary and recommendations

The transition from primary to secondary school is a major life experience for both pupils and their families. For a majority, this is a time of widening horizons and growing independence. However, there is evidence, from the findings of this study and from previous research that for a significant minority it can be a time when their confidence as learners is reduced and they fail to progress as expected. In extreme cases, it can be a time of great trauma which triggers a disengagement from formal education. Schools and teachers can make a difference. So also can other professionals and parents. The findings of this study lead to a number of important recommendations for policy and practice.

Governance

The research highlights the complexity of transition in a system where secondary schools can receive pupils from many primary schools, and primary schools can send pupils to many secondary schools. The influence of parental choice and competition can add another layer of complexity and compound disadvantage for some pupils. However, the study also describes the new forms of emerging governance, which include academies, trusts, federations, and all-through schools. These changes in governance have brought with them new types of local collaboration, between primary and secondary schools, and new opportunities for changing the context in which transition takes place.

Recommendation 1 – national and local level

That collaboration and partnership between schools is strengthened, with a particular emphasis on enhancing pupils' learning and attainment between primary and secondary school. Such partnerships could reflect the school choices made by parents and be centred upon the communities from which schools draw and share pupils. (Chapters 3, 4 & 6).

Recommendation 2 – local level

That children's services authorities take an active role in enabling patterns of transition in order to better support those children who might be particularly disadvantaged, given the new types of collaboration and partnership that are emerging. (Chapter 3)

Recommendation 3 – school level

That governing bodies consider opportunities for new forms of partnership within their community that might further support transition. (Chapters 4 & 5)

Teachers from two cultures

There is a growing understanding of the benefit of drawing on a combination of the strengths from both primary and secondary approaches to teaching and learning, in order to enhance pupils' learning across the primary/secondary school transition. But more work is needed to support teachers from primary and secondary schools to find the time and space to work together to develop coherent approaches to both academic and pastoral transition. This is especially the case in the area of pupil assessment where a lack of trust and common language can be counterproductive at the point of transition. Evidence from the study suggests that there is some concern on the part of primary teachers that they have little opportunity to be involved in the processes of transition or the development of pupils after they have transferred to secondary school. This means that the detailed knowledge and understanding of their pupils that they have built up over many years is often under-utilised.

Recommendation 4 – national and local level

That barriers should be removed at national and local level to enable the joint training, development and support of primary and secondary teachers, especially those who work with pupils around transition from primary to secondary school. In particular the proposed Masters in Teaching and Learning[i] should incorporate elements that allow primary and secondary teachers to work together on issues of academic transition between primary and secondary school. (Chapter 6)

Recommendation 5 – national, local and school level

That primary and secondary school teachers should be supported to work together to develop teaching, learning and assessment practices that are commonly understood and valued, and bridge the gap between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Particular attention should be paid to the learning of mathematics and English. (Chapter 6)

Pupils' learning

Evidence from the study suggests that pupils who have developed an independent approach to their learning in primary school can have this compromised, or even reversed, in the larger, more complex environment of the secondary school. The need to relate to many different subject teachers, who may all have different ways of working and make different demands, may create a dependency and a lowering of self-esteem which can inhibit pupils' ability to take control of their learning.

Recommendation 6 – national, local and school level

That schools should be supported to pilot a transition model in which Year 6 pupils transfer to secondary school in June. Such a model could involve primary pupils spending 3 days in a secondary school and 2 days in their primary school. (Chapter 6)

Recommendation 7 – school level

That approaches to teaching and forms of curricular content specifically intended to bridge the gap between the more child-centred approaches of primary school and the more subject-centred approaches of secondary school be developed for the middle years of schooling. (Chapters 4 & 6)

Involvement of parents

The engagement of parents in their children's education is an important factor in raising attainment. Their active support at transition has also been found to be important in easing the transition from primary to secondary school. However, this is a time of changing relationships between teachers, parents and pupils and this can compromise the secondary school's ability to foster strong connections.

Recommendation 8 – school level

That schools, both primary and secondary, create coordinated ways to work closely with parents and families of pupils, to help in the planning, preparation and process of transition. (Chapter 5)

Involvement of other professionals

The Every Child Matters agenda recognises that schooling does not take place in isolation from the community. Other professionals are involved in the lives of children and their families and their input could be particularly helpful at the point of transition. Evidence would suggest that this is currently an under-developed area. However, the recent introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) provides an ideal opportunity for engaging in partnership working for all professionals involved in the care and support of children and their families.

Recommendation 9 – local and school level

That children's services authorities promote the embedding of multi-agency working, especially in respect of transition from primary to secondary school. More attention should be given to the potential of using multi agency arrangements to engage a range of voluntary and statutory organisations in easing transition for the most vulnerable children[ii]. (Chapter 5)

Monitoring, evaluation and support

Changing patterns of governance have also brought a lessening of the direct control which children's services authorities have over the process of transition. However, evidence from the study would suggest that there are new and important roles and responsibilities that can only be tackled at this level.

Recommendation 10 – local level

That children's services authorities review their structures and organisation with the aim of assisting in the breakdown of divisions between primary and secondary schooling. Such divisions currently operate at the level of schooling, governance, curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and inspection. (Chapter 6)

Recommendation 11 – national, local and school level

That policy makers work with schools to take an active role in evaluating the patterns of transition between primary and secondary schools in their area and encourage the development of minimum standards. (Chapter 7)

Recommendation 12 – local level

That children's services authorities consider whether they could further support schools by setting up a system for more effective transfer of pupil information. (Chapter 6)

In conclusion

This study has been carried out by a Higher Education Institution (HEI). HEIs have the expertise to engage in research that impacts on educational policy and practice at a national and local level.

Recommendation 13 – national, local and school level

That central government, children's services authorities and schools exploit the potential of HEIs to evaluate and research transition practices that relate to new models of school governance, with a particular focus on raising educational standards.

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[i] The Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) is a new professional qualification for teachers, which aims to further improve teacher quality to raise standards in education, narrow gaps in attainment and give children better life chances.
[ii] This recommendation is consistent with the results of the project "Supporting Vulnerable Young People in Transition", published at the same time as this study and available from
http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/news/2010/transition-quartetcommunityf

Chapter 1: About the project

The overall aim of this project is to identify models of best practice that positively support the transition from primary to secondary school. By "positively support" we mean partnerships and other ways of working that act to enhance and support the transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The project investigates the advantages and disadvantages of various models from the perspective of pupil learning, with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy. However, our interest is not simply on attainment, narrowly defined. We also focus on the culture and ethos of learning within the school and wider community and on the engagement of parents in supporting learning.

Particular attention is paid to new models of school partnership, for example all-through schools, federations and joint headship.

The specific aims of the project are to:

- characterise different models of partnership between primary and secondary schools with a particular emphasis on transition;

- identify the advantages and disadvantages of such models from the perspective of students' learning and behaviour, and also with regard to supporting a culture and ethos of learning that connects together children, parents, teachers and governors;

- identify and understand programmes that support literacy and numeracy across the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;

- explore how school culture is created and articulated and what characterises the benefits derived from a strong culture of learning within the school and its community;

- identify models that are effective in engaging parents and which maintain that engagement as the pupil passes from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;

- be sensitive to how various models of partnership may be context specific and may or may not transplant from one situation to another;

- make recommendations about how to improve the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, drawing on the empirical research, a wider reading of the relevant literature and consultation with stake holders.

The main focus of the project is on Bristol and its surrounds, with additional research in other parts of the country to highlight particular models of transfer and transition, including a study of all-through schools.

The historical legacy of education in Bristol is one where the fee-charging sector plays an important role, where there is a mixture of good and less well–performing schools, and where the compact nature of the city and somewhat arbitrary borders lead to a flow of pupils across the boundaries of the local education authorities. A consequence of this legacy is that there is much interest in developing new ways of practising and supporting education within the city. A range of models has been adopted, including subject specialist schools, the formation of Academies and Trust schools, geographical partnerships, and the conversion of some formerly fee-charging schools to Academies.

At a time of innovation within the education system, Bristol makes a fascinating case study that can inform and benefit from practices adopted in other parts of the country.

The research was primarily qualitative, supported by quantitative analysis of educational micro-data. Case studies have been developed of 17 secondary schools and their linked primary schools, 12 of these are within Bristol. The sample includes LA, Trust, Academy, Faith, and fee-paying schools. In addition key stakeholders have been consulted. Data analysis involved a systematic and iterative process of building categories and results, informed by both the literature and the data[1].

Note:

Within the report we make links to a separate but complementary study: "Supporting Vulnerable Young People in Transition Study". It is available from http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/news/2010/transition-quartetcommunityf.

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[1] See Appendix 1 for more information about data collection and analysis.

Chapter 2: Why study transition?

Summary

The move from primary to secondary school is a significant period in the lives of young people and their families. Pupils, typically, move from a relatively small primary school where they are well-known and taught all their subjects by one class teacher, to a large secondary school where they are taught by many subject teachers who each see them for a limited time each week.

For some this can be an exciting time of new experiences and widening horizons. For others, however, it is a time of uncertainty, anxiety and a loss of confidence. These negative factors can lead to a decline in attitudes to learning, levels of attainment and social and emotional wellbeing. It can represent a major disjuncture in the lives of some young people which, at best, can restrict their future potential and life chances and, at worst, can be a trigger for more serious disaffection and disengagement from formal schooling and, ultimately, from social norms.

Evidence from previous research

There is a growing body of research, both in this country and internationally, which associates the transition of pupils from one phase of education to another with underachievement. A recent National Strategy paper from the Department for Children, Schools and Families highlights research which argues that transfers and transitions have been identified as leading to a 'dip' in pupil attainment in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain and Tasmania (Australia), as well as in England[1]. This highlights a concern that secondary teachers are not stretching their pupils sufficiently in the curriculum and poses questions about relationships between primary and secondary schools in successfully supporting pupils academically over transition.

Research in the last decade has consistently shown that transition from primary to secondary school, in particular, can be associated with levels of attainment being held back or even reversed[2]. Major discontinuities in school climate and ethos, educational practices, and social and organisational structures mean that students have to "learn to read, negotiate and adapt to a very different school culture"[3] when moving from the relatively small and secure context of the primary school to the larger and more compartmentalised structure of the secondary school. Such differences have been referred to as '*fundamental*' and, it is argued, include '*the rhythms, the language, the approach, in fact the very nature of the phases* (primary and secondary schooling) (which) *are as different as any two cousins can be.*'[4] For

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[1] DCSF (2008) p.3
[2] DCSF Research Report RR019, Evangelou, et.al. (2008) pp.1-5
[3] Pratt & George (2005).
[4] Harris, D. (2008)

some children, often those with the strong support of their families and schools, this is an exciting and invigorating time. It is a time to grow and develop as a learner. For too many, though, it can be a time of uncertainty and anxiety which impacts adversely on their learning.

Earlier in the decade Galton *et al.*[5] provided evidence that two in every five pupils fail to make expected progress in the year after moving to secondary school, supporting the current claim of an academic 'dip' post transition where Y7 pupils' learning appears to stagnate or regress. Evidence from their research supported the earlier findings of Fouracre[6] who found evidence of a clear academic discontinuity between primary and secondary school, with teachers underestimating Y7 pupils' abilities. In a later study, Galton *et al.*[7] also found evidence of a decline in both students' perceptions of their academic competence and their enjoyment of school and learning at the end of their first year in secondary school. Attitudes to science and especially mathematics also declined. In a subsequent review of evidence, Galton *et al.*[8] found that approximately 30% of pupils made no progress in mathematics between Year 6 and Year 7 with the figure jumping to approximately 50% in English and science.

Such findings were supported by a contemporary report in 2002 by Ofsted[9], which looked at the effects of transfer in a sample of 32 primary and 16 secondary schools. The study found that, whilst the pastoral aspects of the transfer process worked well for the Year 7 pupils interviewed, limited progress was being made with the curricular aspects of transfer. Importantly, they found few signs of continuity or preparation for the changes in teaching and learning. Similarly, the Welsh school inspection service, Estyn, produced an Annual Report[10] which contained evidence which confirmed that many pupils failed to maintain their level of progress after the move to secondary school. However, the report went on to say that there was clear evidence that effective collaboration between primary and secondary schools could bring immense benefits in attainment at Key Stage 3 (11 – 14yr olds).

Galton & Hargreaves[11] argue that schools should direct their attention to the academic dimensions of transition to sustain pupils' progress. They claimed that the social and emotional issues surrounding transition from primary to secondary school were less significant at a time when schools were working to minimize liaison problems and reduce pupil anxiety. However, this is somewhat at odds with more recent evidence[12] that suggests that some social and emotional aspects have still to be fully addressed.

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[5] Galton et.al. (1999)
[6] Fouracre. (1993)
[7] Galton et.al. (2002)
[8] Galton et.al. (2003)
[9] Ofsted (2002)
[10] Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales (Estyn) (2003)
[11] Galton et.al. (2000)
[12] Hughes et.al. (2006)

Other research has produced evidence that particular groups of students appear to be less enabled to cope with change, making them more vulnerable at periods of transition. Issues such as gender[13], ethnic heritage[14], class and socio economic background[15], and special educational needs have all been highlighted. The issues can have an impact on high achievers, "under-achievers" and looked-after children. There is evidence from a recent study within the City of Bristol that a significant minority of children, predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds, fail to achieve at secondary school despite average, or above average, performance at Key Stage 2. Wetz argues that it is the quality of relationships within schools that can make the difference[16].

In seeking resolutions for such issues, researchers have also drawn attention to the role of parents and families in the lives of young people in supporting transition[17]. Greenhough[18] found that schools could address the 'dip' in attainment at the start of secondary school by working more closely with children, their families and their primary schools. Osborn, McNess & Pollard[19] argue that the social and emotional aspects of children's adjustment to school cannot be separated from their academic performance and that developing and maintaining an appropriate 'learner identity' may be of crucial importance. They also point out that the process of primary/secondary transition does not stop on the day that the child starts secondary school and that issues and concerns relating to transfer continue throughout Year 7 and beyond. They argue that primary-secondary transfer is a long term process and that planning for transfer needs to start in Year 5 and continue through into Year 8.

Hughes *et al.*[20], while recognising that much progress has been made in this area over recent years, recommend importantly that in connection with home-school knowledge exchange activities, 'One size does **not** fit all'. Some activities work well in one context but are less successful in others so that a programme of activities needs to be tailored to the particular circumstances of different schools and communities.

It is possible to argue as Anderson *et al.*[21] did in 2000 that the challenges presented through transition from primary to secondary school include:

- increased school size (both buildings and size of student population);
- departmentalization of subjects and streaming or tracking;
- increased emphasis on 'rules of behaviour' with less tolerance for misbehaviour;

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[13] Jackson & Warin (2000)
[14] Graham & Hill (2002)
[15] Lucey & Reay (2002)
[16] Wetz (2006)
[17] Newman et.al. (2000)
[18] Greenhough (2007)
[19] Osborn et.al. (2006)
[20] Hughes et.al. *op.cit.*
[21.]Anderson et.al. (2000)

- greater emphasis on relative ability and competition (in contrast with effort and improvement);

- increased heterogeneity of the student population (in terms of racial, ethnic and social class diversity).

In addition a systematic literature review carried out by researchers in New Zealand[22] highlighted eight themes as needing particular attention with regard to successful transition:

academic attainment	organisational issues
social adjustment	pupil perceptions
linkages between schools	cultural factors
socio-economic factors	gender differences.

Many of Anderson's challenges and these highlighted themes are taken up in a DSCF review of good practice, *Strengthening transfer and transition: partnerships for progress* (2008), which emphasises the importance of partnership working as essential for effective transfer and transitions. The evidence in this review, drawn from action research in 47 schools across seven children's services authorities, suggests that successful partnerships are built on a common vision, shared responsibility and trust. The review goes on to argue that sustained collaboration requires systems and structures that support ongoing links between partners and recognises the need for continuity and progression in curriculum and pedagogy.

Finally, attention should be drawn to the fact that the split at 11 years of age, from primary school to secondary school is largely an accident of history and not universal, even within England. The fee-charging, selective system has, more traditionally, transferred at 13 years of age, and some children's services authorities continue to support a system where children transfer at 8 or 9 years of age to a middle school and then at 13 or 14 years to a senior school.

In continental Europe and beyond, countries as diverse as France, Norway, Japan, Taiwan and the USA all have a three-tiered compulsory schooling system. Though terminology makes a direct comparison difficult, in general these types of organisations consist of an elementary stage, a lower secondary stage and an upper secondary stage. Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden have a single comprehensive system that includes children from the ages of 6 or7 years to 16 or 17 years, after which students move on to more specialist schools for the last two or three years of schooling. There is a similar system in Finland though the comprehensive stage is divided into a lower school (7-12yrs) and upper school (13-15 yrs), after which students move to either an academic or vocational school.

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[22] McGee et.al. (2004)

Conclusion

The transition from primary school to secondary school can have an adverse impact on children's learning and wellbeing. A variation in the size, structure, teaching methods, curricula and specialisation of the two school systems can make the transition difficult for certain vulnerable groups to negotiate. Strong relationships with teachers and peers can be central to successful transition, as can the involvement of the wider family and community.

Key findings

— Research has demonstrated that there is a measurable dip in some pupils' academic attainment following transition to secondary school.
— The differences in culture and organisation between primary and secondary schools in England can add to pupils' fear and uncertainty as they transfer from primary to secondary school.
— Evidence suggests that there is a need to pay particular attention to the social, emotional, curricular and pedagogical needs of pupils if transition is to be successful.
— Education systems in other countries create a more gradual progression through the various levels of formal education.

Chapter 3: Transition in a competitive market?

Summary

Policies of "school choice" mean that a pupil could, in principle, attend any school of their choosing. In practice, geographical admissions criteria and a preference for local schools mean many transitions are from primary to secondary schools within the local area.

Recognising this encourages the grouping of schools into local partnerships that are responsive to the needs of their local community and which jointly manage their transition arrangements. The role of an enabling authority is to foster such partnerships, whilst also being mindful of creating unintended geographical barriers and the risk of perpetuating social divides.

School choice and markets

> For us, we're in a situation where we've got five schools around. They're brand new builds … and a lot of children go out of the county; there aren't enough children at the moment. So everybody's fighting for children wherever you can get them. (Teacher - Secondary School)

School choice has been widely studied in England and Wales, as in other countries.[1] In itself, choice is not new. The UK has never had the same commitment to neighbourhood schooling – where every child from a neighbourhood attends the same school – as is found in the United States.

Indeed, the 1944 Education Act (which established free secondary education for all children in England and Wales) said that "pupils should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents" insofar as it was practicable to do so given "efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure."[2]

Parents and pupils might now choose a school for denominational (religious) reasons or because of the nature and specialities of the favoured school – it might have a single sex intake, for example. With the means to do so, they might choose a fee-charging private or charitable school, many of which have a longer history of providing education than the state sector does, and which together provide places for about 6 or 7 per cent of today's population.

Yet, if both choice and diversity have historical antecedents, the newer change to the educational landscape has been the deliberate *promotion* of school choice and its part over the past two decades in Government policies. Such recent policies have

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[1] Forsey et al. (2008)
[2] The observation is from Brighouse (2002) and is after Stillman in Halstead (ed., 1994).

generated competition between schools to attract pupils and funding, opportunities for new ideas and financing including commercial investmen;, subject and skills specialisation; the reorganisation of schools into loose or strongly coupled groups and partnerships; the ability for a school to opt out of local authority governance; the publication of "league tables" (in England but no longer in Wales, and neither Scotland nor Northern Ireland); and the desire to raise standards, resulting in target-setting interventions in underperforming schools.

In short, the language of school choice has accompanied the application of market-based principles applied to schools, encouraging parents and pupils to be active consumers and not merely passive recipients of educational services.

In practice, the educational "market" may be more metaphoric than it is real and important questions have been raised about the equity of advancing choice when the ability to exercise that choice varies geographically and socially. Schools, too, it is alleged, may "cherry pick" through selective admissions or more subtle mechanisms such as the cost of school uniforms.

A persistent concern raised by opponents of school choice is that it will exacerbate social inequalities because "higher status" parents are better able to get their children into the more desirable schools, either through greater understanding of the admission process or by increased means to influence outcomes – for example, buying a house close to a well performing school. However, it is not clear why the alternative – limiting choice – would produce more socially equitable outcomes. The effects of housing and employment markets remain, as does the ability of some to afford private education.

Collecting empirical evidence either way is difficult. An early and important longitudinal study suggested that social segregation – between school differences in the proportion of pupils from less wealthy households – fell in the period following the 1988 Education Reform Act, rising slightly from the mid to late 1990s but not back to previous levels.[3] Whilst some commentators have questioned the statistical properties of the segregation index used for the study, their own research reveals similar trends, though also noting that the initial fall was overstated.[4] Others have advocated a multilevel modelling approach, reaching the reverse conclusion – that variations between schools increased over the period, with between-school variance increasing more in selective children's services authorities than in non-selective areas.[5]

The latter observation is interesting because, as the authors note, children's services authorities with grammar schools and entrance examinations already have a socially differentiated system. It is not clear why the 1988 Act would increase those differences. The answer, they suggest, is to do with the measurement of poverty. Eligibility for free school meals – the indicator often used – is not a consistent

[3] Fitz et al. (2003)
[4] Allen & Vignoles (2007)
[5] Goldstein & Noden (2003)

measure of, say, the poorest quarter of society. Eligibility is dependent upon personal circumstances that in some years will apply to more people than in other years. In this regard, it is unsurprising if differences between schools did indeed fall in the early 1990s. The cause would be more due to macroeconomics than education policies: the descent into recession in 1990 and 1991.

What is apparent is that choice – precisely because it is choice – generates outcomes that may be counter to other policy objectives. For example, there is evidence it permits ethnic polarization – the separation of ethnic groups into different schools from one another.[6] Whatever the success or failure of the policies, "the market" that has emerged is one that is shaped by its main funder, the state. And Governments – both Conservative and Labour – have mixed ambitions.

Within education, there has been a desire to raise and measure attainment through core curricula and subject groupings, and by standardized testing and inspections. As a market, the school system is strongly regulated. Moreover, there is the same tension between choice and efficiency that was evident in the 1944 Education Act.

If parents and pupils really did have a free choice then they would be guaranteed entry to whichever school they wanted. Of course, there are very practical reasons why a school cannot accommodate without limit, as well as mandatory reasons such as class size limits in the early years of primary schooling (elementary schools). However, even a more constrained system of choice requires there to be more places available than are filled. In that sense, it is not the most financially efficient. Yet, without the surplus, a person's ability to enrol in a school depends less on their own choice and more on the choices made by other people competing for the places available.

Arguably, the current system is not really one of school choice but of expressing a preference. Within the state sector, parents and their children have no guarantee that the school they would like to attend is the one at which they will be offered a place. It all depends on the number of places available and the number of applications for them. If demand exceeds supply – and for the most popular schools it often will – then an allocation mechanism is applied by the relevant admissions authority. Criteria often include geographical distance and whether there is a sibling already in the school; they may also include testing (to recruit a balanced intake of abilities), religious affiliation or even a random lottery.

In Bristol, for example, the admissions criteria for community schools are in the following order: (1) children in public care; (2) whether there is a sibling in the school and, if they have been recently admitted, whether they are (still) residing in the school's designated area of priority; (3) whether the applicant lives in the first or second priority area for the school; (4) whether there is a sibling in the school (where (2) has not applied); and (5) the straight line distance between home and school.[7]

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[6] Harris and Johnston (2008)
[7] http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/schools/admissions/admission-arrangements-09.html

The geographical dimension especially is interesting. On the one hand it is tacit recognition of the community role of schools as well as the organisational (and environmental) benefits of recruiting from a locally targeted area – it reduces distances travelled for the "school run" for example. On the other hand, introducing geographical criteria is inconsistent with the idea of choice since there is no *prima facie* reason why the possibility of admission should be dependent upon proximity to a school. It will also encourage house price inflation around the most sought after schools. Nevertheless, in regard to the transition from primary to secondary school, previous research showed that children's services authorities perceive benefits from ensuring there are enough places for children to attend local schools should they wish to do so.[8]

Transition patterns in Bristol

Figure 3.1 shows a hypothetical pattern of transition whereby pupils from four feeder primary schools attend the local secondary school.

The arrangement permits the partnership working and sustained collaborations that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) identifies as essential for effective transition and therefore as a key driver for raising standards in schools.[9] The stable pattern allows for an exchange of teachers between the primary and secondary schools, shared good practice, the use of student mentors to assist and reassure younger pupils, and joint curriculum development with continuity across the transition. Transition is managed by all the "stakeholders" within the local cluster – schools, teachers, parents and pupils – receiving assistance from the local authority to do so.

It is conducive to the following aspirations:

> I'm going to work very specifically with just three schools on transition […] I'm spending time putting together a project group with [thinking out loud] job swaps to get both primary practitioners into secondary and vice versa… [Also] teachers with learners. So it isn't that the learners go up for a transfer day on their own; the teacher accompanies them and they identify [discreetly to tutors] the vulnerable children. (Interviewee)

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[8] Evangelou (2008), p. 9
[9] "Strengthening transfers and transition: Partnerships for progress" (DCSF, 2008)
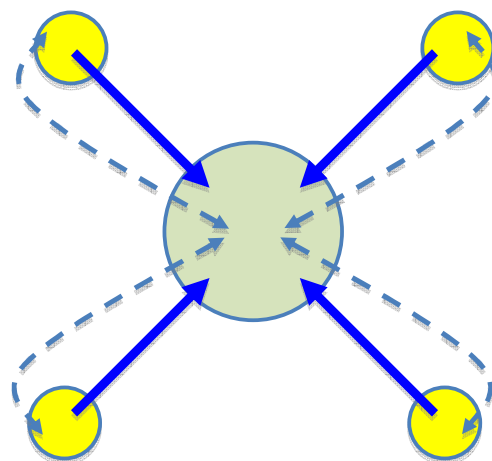
Figure 3.1. An integrated model of transition. The four primary schools feed into a single secondary school, permitting curriculum continuity and the exchange of teachers and pupil mentors.

The picture of Figure 3.1 is, however, also one where there is either little choice available or all the pupils are choosing their local secondary school, with sufficient places available for them to do so. Reality is more complex:

> I suppose if I was to be God then I would say that the admissions system is a complete mess. How can it be that there's equal preference within Bristol? It must be a nightmare to administer […] I mean you've got [a school] with a shrinking catchment, because people have bought into the area. So now they're probably offering only 60 places from their 200 because everybody has a sibling […] [And] then you've got some poor soul that lives just outside the catchment, that it isn't too far from me, but can't get in to me because the sort of lottery system isn't working […] you know it is madness, but I think in a co-ed situation there should be a better carve-up of everything so you've at least got a fair crack of some of the catchments. […] But then of course the middle classes will always buy in, won't they, to those areas. You can't stop people buying houses. So however it's allocated is such a nightmare, and I just think it's awful if you can't go to a school that is within walking distance. (Head teacher - Secondary school)

Figure 3.2a shows the movement of pupils from primary schools into Bristol secondary schools in 2007 (pupils in year 7 of Bristol schools in the academic year 2007–8). The map is topological, not strictly geographical (the true locations of schools are disguised). The smaller, white circles represent primary schools. The coloured lines connect these to the secondary schools to which they send pupils.
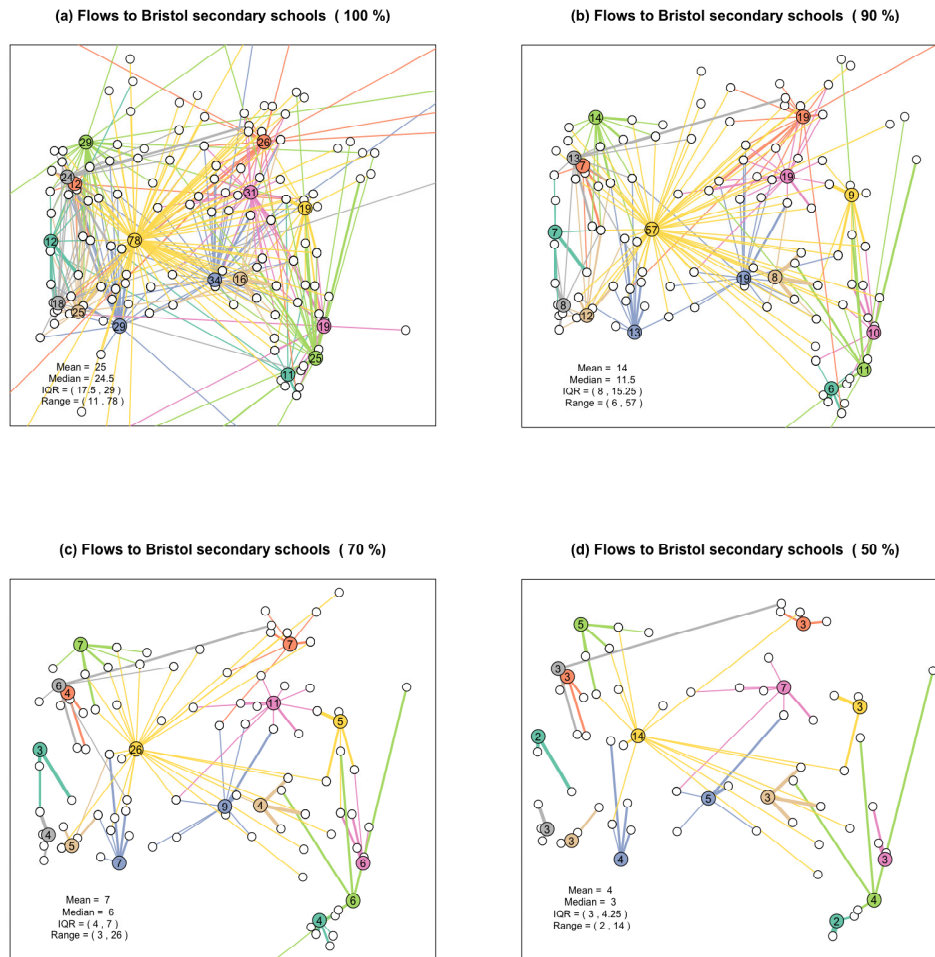
Figure 3.2. Mapping the flows of students from primary to Bristol secondary schools in 2007: (a) all pupils; (b) the first 90% of pupils into each secondary school; (c) the first 70%; (d) 50%.

One third of the primary schools are actually outside Bristol local authority, sending pupils in. However, the net migration is predominantly the other way. Whilst approximately five per cent of Bristol secondary school pupils came from primary schools in other children's services authorities, more than twenty per cent of Bristol's primary school pupils in 2007 (who stayed in the state system) went out to secondary schools in other children's services authorities. By way of comparison, the figures for Birmingham in the same year are: in, 5%; out 10%.[10]

Such complexity is not unique to Bristol. Again using Birmingham as a comparator, there the average secondary school received pupils from 31 secondary schools in 2007 (with a typical range from 24 to 48). However, the seeming complexity can be

[10] The movements do not include those from state primary schools into fee-charging secondary schools. In 2007 only 60% of pupils within the Bristol state sector appear to have gone into Bristol maintained secondary schools. We estimate that approximately one fifth went into fee-charging schools. The comparable estimate for Birmingham is less than 10 per cent.

overstated. We have viewed the transitions patterns if *all* pupils into every secondary school are considered. However, some primary schools will send a few pupils, others more: "*Although we've got 11 or 12 schools that are feeding into us this year, of those we probably have six that are our main feeder schools*". (Deputy Head - Secondary School)

Figure 3.2b shows the transition patterns if the primary schools are ranked, per secondary school, by the number of pupils they send, when only the first 90% of pupils are considered. The number of connections between primary and secondary schools is much reduced. The average secondary school in Bristol receives 90% of its pupils from eleven or twelve primary schools, with a typical range from eight to fifteen. The equivalent maps for the first 70% and 50% of pupils reveal more distinct and localised geographies (Figure 3.2c and 3.2d, respectively). Despite the initial complexity, a Bristol secondary school typically receives half its pupils from just three or four primary schools (in Birmingham, three to six).

Figure 3.3 summarises what the maps are showing. Although pupils can make the transition to a secondary school from a large number of primary schools, the majority will be drawn from only a few schools (Figure 3.3a). The average distance between the sending primary school and the receiving secondary school was 2.3 km for all pupils in Bristol in 2007. However, the distance reduces to 1.2 km for the first 70% of pupils (Figure 3.3b).

Comparing this snapshot for a single year with the results for all transitions in the years 2002–7, the patterns appear chaotic. If all pupils are considered, the average secondary school received pupils from 62 primary schools over the period, with the average distance between the schools being 4.2 km. However, at the 70% threshold there is much greater stability. The average secondary school received pupils from seven primary schools, with an average distance of 1.2 km (Figures 3.3c and 3.3d).

Overall the maps confirm what other research previously has shown. For example, although less than half of pupils in urban areas outside London attend their nearest secondary school, almost three quarters attend one of their nearest three secondary schools.[11]

These geographies of school transition are not unexpected. For primary schools, proximity and ease of travel are the main reasons parents choose a school, this being especially true for less affluent parents and those with no educational qualifications.[12] Given that parents identify safety and travel as the issues, after bullying, about which they are most concerned for their children at secondary school;[13] given that constraints such as reduced access to private transport remain true for less affluent parents regardless of the child's stage of schooling; and given

[11] In London about one quarter of pupils attend their nearest school, and almost one half attend one of their nearest three secondary schools: Burgess et al. (2006).
[12] Burgess et al. (2009)
[13] Evangelou et al., op. cit., table 4.13.

the use of geographical admissions criteria, it would be surprising if many pupils did not attend a reasonably "local" school. Nevertheless, there are exceptions,

> Ideal world – you'd draw from four or five primary schools, you'd know their social worker, they'd come in, you'd know the parents because you'd go in, you'd go to their parents' evenings, you'd go to the rest of it – but we're not in that situation. (Teacher - Secondary School)
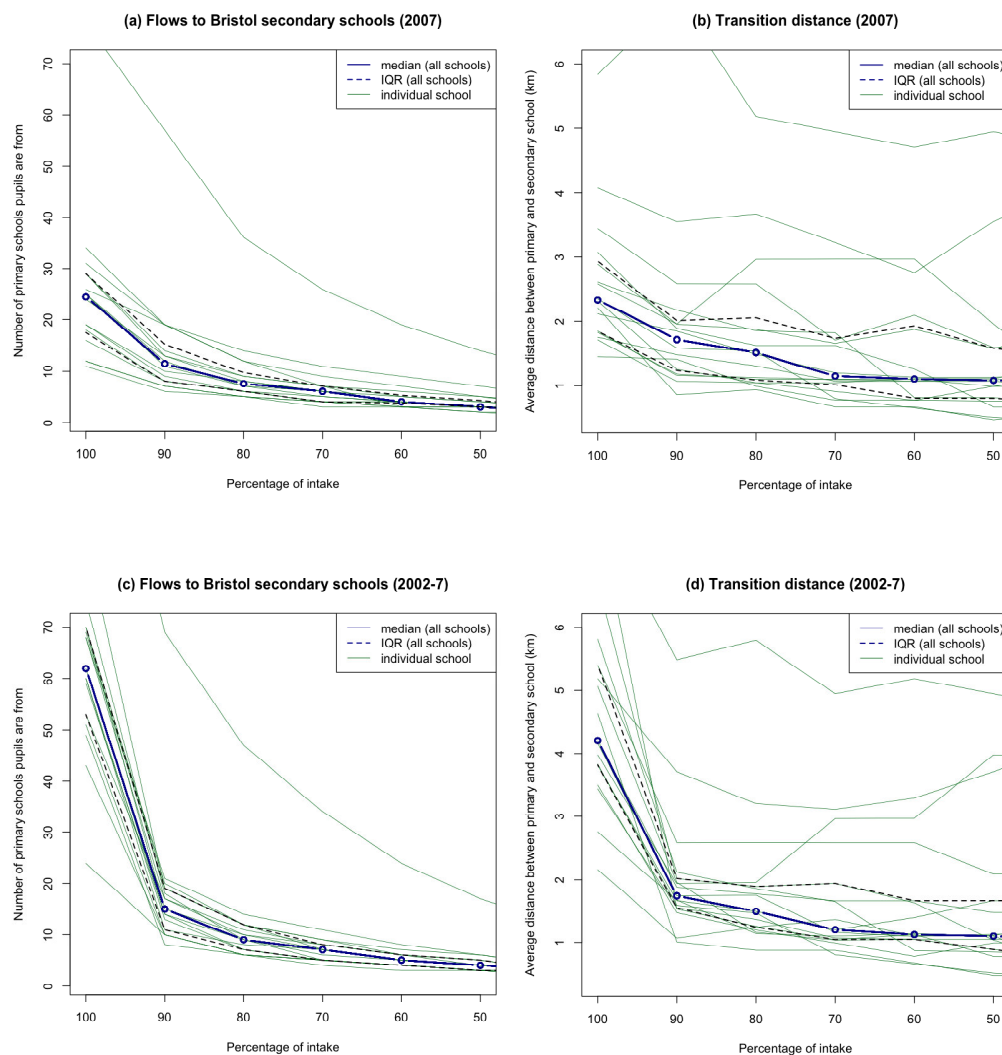

Figure 3.3. Showing (a) the number and (b) the average distance between a secondary school and each of its feeder primary schools in 2007, and (c) and (d) for the period 2002–7. See text for details.

Managing transition within local partnerships

> With the secondary schools, our partnership is that we're in a cluster of schools and we work together sharing best practice […] We then have two partnerships in terms of primary sector. One is the formal extended schools partnerships – that locality group aligns with neighbourhood community services, health services, social care services… to a point. There's then the more informal grouping which would be the family of schools that are the dominant feeder schools for the academy. Now each year children come from probably 25 schools… but of the 25, 80% of our students would come from six. And that family of six is an informal group… but I would say a group where we probably do more in terms of interaction with each other – more shared resourcing in that sense. (Head Teacher - Secondary School)

Earlier we highlighted the importance the DCSF gives to partnership working to manage transition effectively. The importance of schools working in partnership with other schools and with wider children's services is also affirmed in the recent "21st Century Schools" White Paper.[14] The quote above identifies two types of arrangement that have emerged in Bristol. The first is the more formal (or top-down) and reflects the local authority's division of the city into three areas and ten localities. Within each of the localities there are extended school partnerships (see Figure 3.4).[15]

The second is more informal and reflects the localised patterns of transition we identified in the preceding analysis, and suggested in the hypothetical model of Figure 3.1. To re-iterate, those patterns are not simply a natural (spontaneous) consequence of people's school choices; they are shaped by geographical admissions criteria. Still, where those patterns exist, they can support shared resourcing in the manner our interviewee suggests.

It might reasonably be argued that the role of an enabling local authority is to facilitate local partnerships, to support them, and to encourage effective transition within them. We do not demur. However, we need to also be cognisant of less attractive consequences.

It is true that 70–80 per cent of a typical secondary school's intake is drawn from fewer primary schools than the complete 100 per cent and that it is therefore logical (and more resource efficient) to focus on the former. However, what if more vulnerable students are those who tend to make the transition from further afield? Knowing that children who move to a secondary school with most of their primary

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[14] (DCSF, 2009), chapter 3

[15] Extended Schools provide a range of services and activities over and above the normal curriculum. An extended school partnership brings together local schools from every age group with other local providers (source: http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/schools/extended-services.html).
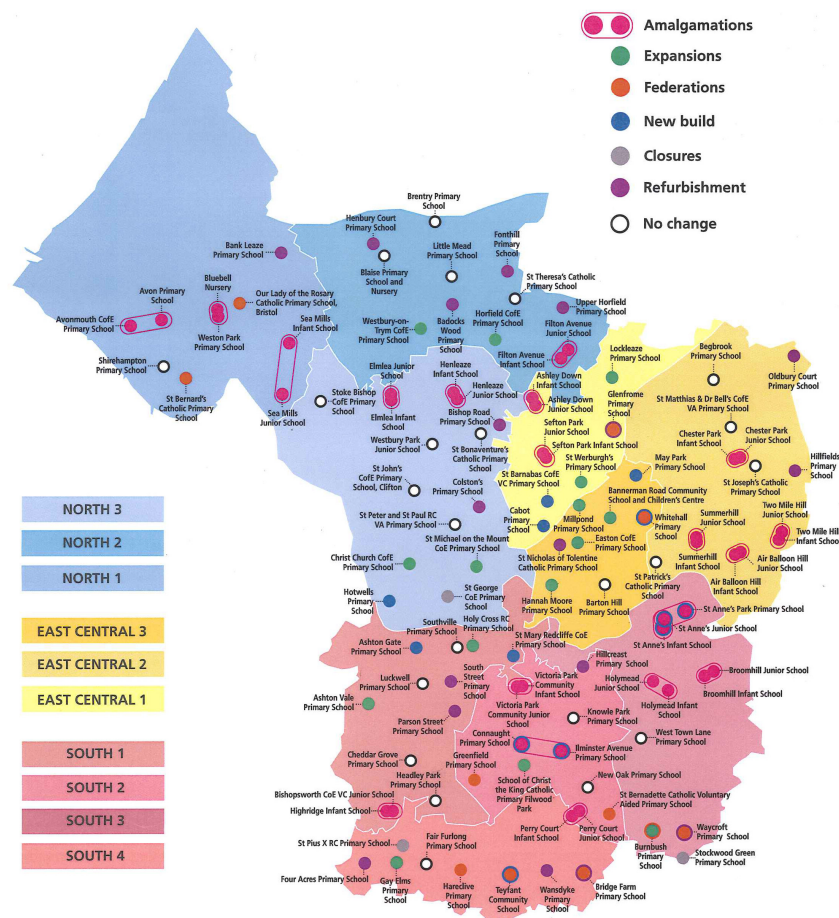
Figure 3.4. Showing the extended school partnership areas and primary schools in Bristol. (source: http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/schools/extended-services.html)

school friends tend to settle better, it could be that the same geographical partnerships used to foster transition could also create unintended barriers.[16]

Figure 3.5 provides evidence of how they might. The important graphs are (a) to (c). Figure 3.5d is provided to aid the exposition; it is described first.

To the left of the graph, the proportion of pupils from primary schools providing 90 per cent of the intake that are female in each secondary school is shown. The proportions are expressed as ratios: the proportion of female students for 90 per cent of the intake divided by the proportion of students in the entire intake per school. If the ratio – the index value – is one, then the proportion of females for the first 90% of pupils is the same as for all pupils in the school. If greater than one, the proportion is greater. If less than one, the proportion is also less.

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[16] M Evangelou et al., *op. cit.*, p. 26.
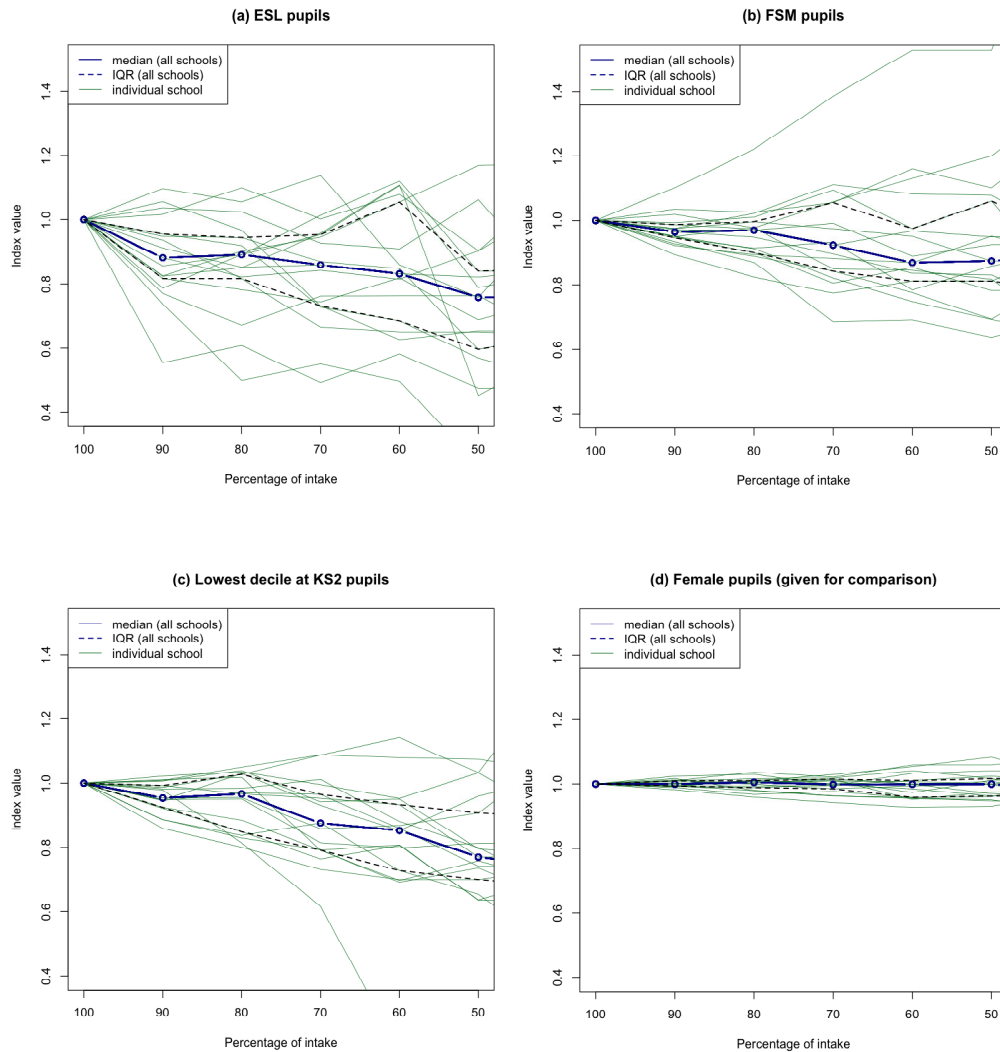
Figure 3.5. Indicating the proportion of each secondary school's intake belonging to various social and attainment groups. A value exceeding one means that the school recruits a greater proportion of the group from some of its feeder primary schools than it does for its complete intake; a value less than one indicates the opposite. See text for further details.

Of course, there is little reason to suppose that a greater (or lesser) proportion of female students would be drawn from all primary schools into the secondary school than from those providing the first 90%, 80%, 70%, etc. of pupils. Figure 3.5d confirms it to be so. Random variations mean there are some differences between the cohorts (the values are not all exactly equal to one) but those differences are slight.

Now compare Figure 3.5d with 3.5a. Figure 3.5a is constructed in the same way, except it considers the proportion of students in each school for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). Typically the proportion is greater when all students are considered than when, for example, only the first 70–80% are. In other words, there is a tendency for EAL pupils to make the transition over greater distances and (presumably) across the boundaries of local partnership arrangements.

However, we should note that there are differences between schools. Some receive a greater proportion of their EAL pupils from their core feeder schools. Some receive a greater proportion from further away. The same is true for pupils who are eligible to receive a free school meal (FSM: Figure 3.5b) and also for pupils scoring in the lowest ten per cent of attainment on exit from primary schools (key stage 2 results, KS2: Figure 3.5c).

None of the above is an argument against the geographical grouping of schools. It is simply recognition that partnership working will aid transition for *all* pupils only when it permits a greater responsiveness to their individual needs and circumstances. If it becomes too bounded by geography, it could adversely affect those who cross the boundary.

A second concern about grouping schools geographically is that it restricts or, at least, shapes choice and risks reinforcing social divisions across a local authority. Bristol is a city of contrasts, containing some of the most and least deprived electoral wards in England. Those differences become apparent between schools.

Imagine the factors that affect educational attainment of children and young people – factors that include access to learning resources and whether English is spoken as the first language – are randomly distributed across the city and that the intake into each secondary school simply reflects the overall socio-economic and cultural composition of the city as a whole. Under such circumstances, the average educational attainment of the most recent entrants into each secondary school (year 7) as measured as they left primary school (KS2) would be similar for each secondary school, with only random differences between them.

Unsurprisingly, that is not what actually happens. Instead, there is a significant geographical patterning, with schools that contain higher performing pupils "connected to" other schools containing the same, and schools with lower performing pupils connected with other similar schools.

This is the finding of a spatial regression model, summarised in Table 3.1, where schools are said to have stronger connections the more primary schools they have in common for the first 90 per cent of their intake.[17] The key statistic is the measure of spatial similarity which is shown to be statistically significant. In addition, faith schools attract higher attaining pupils, FSM and EAL pupils achieve lower levels of

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[17] The 90% threshold is chosen to capture the differences between schools across the city. At a 70% threshold the spatial effect disappears reflecting the similarity of schools within their immediate locality. The model is a lag y or spatial effects model, of the form: $y = \rho Wy + X\beta + \mu$

attainment (on average), a school that draws from a higher number of primary schools for 70% of its intake appears to attract higher attaining pupils but, reversely, a school that draws on a higher number for 90% of its intake is receiving lower attaining pupils (which might imply "good schools" have more localised catchments and more socially advantaged pupils within them).

Predictor of mean KS2 result of pupils in year 7 of secondary school*[1]	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	
(Intercept)	−0.115	0.053	−2.168	0.030	
Proportion of pupils speaking ESL	−0.446	0.127	−3.515	≈0.000	**
Proportion of pupils taking FSM	−0.677	0.049	−13.702	≈0.000	**
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs	−0.135	0.040	−3.378	0.001	**
Proportion of pupils female	0.031	0.038	0.814	0.416	
Proportion of pupils "white"	−0.331	0.083	−3.963	≈0.000	**
A faith school	0.593	0.132	4.503	≈0.000	**
Number of competing schools at 70% threshold*[2]	1.001	0.206	4.859	≈0.000	**
Number of competing schools at 90% threshold*[2]	−0.861	0.280	−3.078	0.002	**
Measure of spatial similarity (ρ)	0.894	0.061	14.635	≈0.000	**

*[1] Standardised units (z values)
*[2] Set at zero for faith schools
** Significant at a 99% confidence

Table 3.1. Summary of a spatial regression model exploring the differences in average KS2 attainment of pupils entering Bristol secondary schools in 2007.

In principle, randomly allocating pupils to schools or permitting greater movement from primary to secondary schools across the city would reduce the social and geographical differences between schools. However, to do so requires reconsideration of the geographical admissions criteria that are applied to schools. Whether such a policy would raise attainment is a moot point. It could but then it could also break the links between schools and their communities, exacerbate the disconnection of parent from their children's learning, and replace inequalities between places with inequalities between pupils (the policy better serves those who have the means to travel unless there is free bussing from home to school).

An alternative strategy is to ensure schools and local clusters of schools have the resources appropriate to their context, implying differential funding. The continuation of geographical admissions criteria and the development of local partnerships must not mean that some localities have a better choice of schools than others. The recent Government White paper recognises this, noting that,

Children's services authorities are responsible for ensuring there is a pattern of high-quality provision to meet local demands and aspirations. We intend to place a new requirement on them to gather parents' views on the school choices available in their area, and to publish a local plan for improvement if a high proportion of parents are dissatisfied.[18]

But what of competition between schools? Does this hinder partnership working? Not necessarily. As some of our interviewees observe,

Yes, we're in competition but we should not be; it's not in our interests to burden the primary school teachers [by different transition arrangements between secondary schools. (Assistant Head Teacher - Secondary School)

We've had three conversations this week [with nearby schools] that are just about advising and sharing experience; nothing to do with competition. So does it mean it is ruthless competition, as in market place politics? No – it's a bit more subtle than that […] The best interest for this community is for all the schools to be full and for the parents to have real choice. There is no advantage in any of us being half subscribed – it just means the experience of children who go to that school will suffer. That's not good for the community. (Head Teacher - Secondary School).

With specific regard to transition, and on a very practical note, our research found evidence of secondary schools seeking to develop common transition models, jointly timetabling induction days on the same dates for each school and therefore minimising the disruption for primary schools.

Conclusions

Within this chapter we have explored the geography of transition from primary to secondary schools within Bristol. On first inspection the flows appear complex. Closer study reveals a more distinct clustering – of pupils making the transition from their primary school to one of a few (nearby) secondary schools.

Such patterns are not necessarily a consequence of parental or pupil choice. Geographical admissions criteria will shape them. However, they seem to accord with a general preference to attend a local school, and with the schools' own interest in the community within which they are based:

When I meet with other Heads, we all have the same view – what we're actually interested in is building the community that we work in and that revolves around the local school. (Deputy Head - Secondary School)

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[18] DCSF, (2009) "Your child, your schools, our future." Summary document, p. 13

As such, they suggest the value of partnership working, with the role of an enabling authority to facilitate such arrangements locally, encouraging collaborations between schools and other agencies. The authority should also ensure that unintended geographical barriers do not emerge. One concern is for some of the more vulnerable pupils who make the transition over greater distances. Another is in regard to social divisions across the city and giving schools the resources appropriate to the local context.

There remains the uneasy balance between choice and a desire for local schooling that is evident in the application of geographical criteria to manage admissions. The promotion of local partnerships suggests that what matters (at least from a policy point of view) is choice within a community. If so, it is something of a midway position between the neighbourhood determining the school attended and an unlimited choice of schools.

Within any local authority there is the risk that choice is an illusion for some people. One way to ensure genuine choice is available to a community is to avoid a "one size fits all" view of schooling. As the following chapter reveals, multiple forms of governance, organisation and partnership are being developed within and between schools in Bristol, and elsewhere. Some of these arrangements are more obviously community based (including "all-through" schools); others are less so (including some federations and faith schools). And some offer a balance, sharing resources, professional expertise and experience across multiple sites and buildings, with the potential to generate benefits within *and* across communities.

Key findings

— The complexities of school choice should not be exaggerated when considering the transition from primary to secondary school. Although some schools are less geographically bounded, a typical secondary school receives the majority of its pupils from five or six local primary schools (in Bristol).
— These local patterns of transitions are not unexpected. They reflect the use of geographical admissions criteria, the preference for local schooling and the role of schools in serving their local communities.
— It therefore makes sense for schools to operate within geographical and community based partnerships, provided those partnerships do not create unintended barriers or perpetuate social divisions across the local authority.
— The local authority can encourage and support schools to work in local partnerships where the ways the schools are grouped together reflect patterns of admissions to primary and secondary schools, and the movements of pupils from primary to secondary school. Such partnerships can be nurtured from the "bottom-up".
— Competition between schools does not prevent collaboration, especially when it is in the joint interest of schools to work together. The local authority can review

and help strengthen the transition arrangements within local partnerships, encouraging the involvement of parents and also the wider community.

Chapter 4: Governance and transition

Summary

Encouraged by Government policy, schools within England are in the process of establishing new forms of federated and collaborative governance to support each other in improving the quality of overall provision. Our findings show that there is a great deal of bottom-up development. New build campuses and changes in governance within the secondary sector appear to have acted as a stimulus for new beginnings and creating new forms of partnership. These initiatives have impacted on the provision of schooling in, and brought a new energy and focus to the links between primary and secondary schools, especially at the point of transition from Yr 6 to Yr 7. However, our research has also pointed to the complexity of the Bristol landscape with its unique mix of school types and collaborations, and drawn attention to areas where the City might like to concentrate on higher-level co-ordination to support all learners.

Academies, trusts, federations and collaborations

….no school can do it alone.

Partnerships are at the heart of the 21st Century Schools vision and are essential to: extend the breadth and quality of provision; respond better to pupils' wider needs; widen the impact of our strongest school leaders, teachers and governors; widen opportunities for collaborative professional development; and deliver greater value for money.[1]

The school landscape in England is changing. Within the maintained sector, this has largely been the result of two important strands in Government policy-making seeking to improve the quality of provision.

The first has been the desire to increase diversity of provision and extend the choice of parents in selecting the school that would best suit the needs of their child[2]. In 2000, the Academies Programme was introduced to allow the involvement of external partners, especially in areas of deprivation where the quality of educational provision and the level of academic attainment were poor. Academies are publicly funded, all-ability, independent local secondary schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working with partners from the local community. The purpose has been to allow schools greater autonomy, to inject alternative thinking from areas other than education, and to provide parents with choice. It was hoped

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[1] DCSF website 24/11/09, www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/federations/21century/
[2] DFES Diversity and Choice

that such changes would also introduce competition, improve standards and, as a result, improve the life chances for those in disadvantaged areas.

Such diversity, and the inclusion of other partners, was further extended through the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Act placed a duty on all children's services authorities to both secure diversity in the provision of schools and increase opportunities for parental choice. It enabled local authority community schools to set up Trusts (charitable foundations) to help them draw on local expertise to help improve standards. Trust partners can be drawn from local businesses, charities, the public sector, higher and further education institutions, or community groups. While trust schools remain local authority maintained, they have additional flexibilities to manage their assets and admissions criteria, in accordance with the Admissions Code, and employ their staff directly. One existing Trust and one proposed Trust were included in the sample for this Project.

In addition, a second, more recent, strand in Government policy builds on the 'choice and diversity' model of provision by encouraging individual schools to, *'Look beyond the pupils on its roll and work in partnership with other schools to ensure education in the local area is as good as it can be*[3]. This focus on the community as a whole is because, it is argued:

> No school can meet the needs of all its pupils alone. Delivering the Pupil and Parent Guarantees will require schools to work in partnership with other schools and with wider children's services in order to offer more by working together than any one partner could alone and to provide better value for money. At the same time, federation and other partnership solutions will become central to tackling underperformance and extending the reach of the best leaders.[4]

As a result, through various legislative tools – the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003; the Collaboration Arrangements (Maintained Schools; Further Education Bodies) (England) Regulations 2007, and Schools Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2007 – schools have begun to create a diversity of partnerships to support each other in enhancing the quality of provision and raising standards. At the most formal end, this has created 'federations' where two or more schools and their governing bodies have agreed to pool their powers under one federated governing body. The schools remain separate legal entities for reporting and funding purposes but, typically, would have one leadership and staffing structure, thereby making a strong entity to engage with local services. An example of such a federated group of three Academies within Bristol was also included in the study sample.

> The Federation's role is very much about adding value to what the academies do, sharing the really good practice, creating opportunities that schools don't

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[3] DCSF (2009) page 8
[4] Op. cit.

have the capacity to deliver themselves. What I really want the parents to get is real choice here. So I'm not trying to create a model where these schools are all clones of each other. If you're a parent and you visit all three schools as many of them do, you will see three different models of education. And that's quite deliberate, so the parents have got a genuine choice. And from the professional point of view we've got some genuine things to share. So you know at School A for example science and technology is the best here of the three schools, and probably will be for some time, because of the legacy with it. At School B the work they do around ethos, around mentoring, around inclusion is outstanding. I would defy a school in the country to show me they do it better. At School C I think the work they do with languages is outstanding. You know French, German, Spanish … they've got Arabic, Urdu and Polish – 12 different GCSEs are taught in languages there … which outstrips anything that School A and School B can offer. So my role is to recognise that these schools do things really at a cutting edge level in a very very inspirational way and to try to share those packages elsewhere. (Executive Head - Federation of Academies)

Less formal arrangements have created 'collaborative partnerships', which allow for a degree of joint working between two or more governing bodies that may either share elements of governance, or establish a joint strategic committee with delegated powers. However, under such an arrangement, they also retain their individual powers. Such initiatives have also allowed for a growing interest in the establishment of 'all-through' schools where multiple phases (primary through to secondary) are combined with one governing body and funded as a single institution. The Bridge Learning Campus in Bristol, which has trust status, has been active in developing such as model. As has the West London Academy which formed part of the Project sample.

As a result of such developments, by 2009 there were approximately 200 Academies and 240 Trust schools established throughout England, with many more planned. In addition, 50% of children's services authorities had existing, or planned, all-through schools, federations or other collaborative school structures, and over thirty-five all-age academies were either open or in consultation. Thus, government policy has been very clear in its intention to extend the powers of strong governing bodies to allow them to directly sponsor Academies and propose new schools. It is important to note that many of these models also represent a shift away from direct local authority control. In addition, some fee-charging schools are becoming sponsors of academies. For example Wellington College is a sponsor of Wellington Academy in Wiltshire, with four members of staff from Wellington College being on the governing body of Wellington Academy[5]

The Government has also announced its intention to 'develop and promote a system for accrediting good education providers who wish to run groups of schools – Accredited Schools Groups – so that the best schools and school leaders can spread

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[5] http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6029902, accessed Jan 14th 2010

their excellence around the system'[6]. It is intended that this should include the creation of multi-agency teams within schools to bring together the various professionals who work with children and their families and co-locate services, such as specialist child health clinics, youth centres and sports facilities around schools, children's centres and other community facilities. In addition, Ofsted, the schools' inspection body in England, is introducing a revised grade for partnership working and will carry out more co-ordinated inspections for federations of schools.

At the same time, the DCSF has promoted the extended schools initiative, in which schools are required to offer a range of activities beyond the school day to pupils, their families and the wider community. Extended schools are part of what is called "extended services", a key mechanism for delivering the government's Every Child Matters Agenda. In Bristol, Extended Services are organised around the idea of one city, three areas and ten localities[7]. Within each of the localities there is an extended school partnership which brings together all the schools from every age group with other local providers to support children's needs[8].

It is clear then that this is a period of major change in relation to the governance of schools and the developing relationships between them. This has been reflected in the City of Bristol which is currently supporting major innovation within the education system. By September 2009 just under half of the maintained secondary schools in Bristol had become Academies. Of the remaining schools two had become Trust schools and three are Faith schools. There is a richness and diversity to the primary/secondary school transition and partnership models that are being developed in Bristol and this is reflected in our Project sample which included:

- all-through schools (both private and trust)
- academies working to re-establish local community connections
- an independent school moving from fee-charging to academy status
- a group of secondary schools working together in a clearly defined federation
- a secondary school and partner primary schools working towards becoming a co-operative trust.

Evidence shows that both fee-charging and non fee-charging schools in the Bristol sample take partnership and transition seriously and invest considerable teacher – time and student-time in the processes involved. Until relatively recently the vulnerability of Bristol's maintained secondary schools worked against transition between Year 6 and Year 7. To a certain extent this vulnerability was exploited by out-of-county secondary schools and there is evidence that such schools developed strong relationships with potential Bristol feeder primary schools.

At present primary heads in Bristol are largely positive about the changes to secondary schools and aware of the increasing diversity in the system.

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[6] DCSF (2009) Chapter 3 para.18
[7] refer to map in Chapter 3
[8] http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/schools/extended-services.html, accessed Jan 14th 2010.

I think there seems to be a sense of urgency in the secondaries to get a handle on transition. We're talking to a Trust; we're talking to a LA secondary; we're talking to an Academy; we're talking to a secondary out of the authority. What are the things that we can all do similarly, regardless of the type of the secondary, because, apart from the primary school of the all-through school, all the rest of us are LA primary schools. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

Emerging contexts for transition

Such changes in governance and collaboration have also had an impact on the context in which transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 takes place. These contexts can provide both specific opportunities or challenges. The project has documented models of transition at two levels. The first is at the level of institutional governance and structure, and the second is at the level of individual initiatives for pupils, parents and teachers. The second level, which includes a focus on curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the flow of data and the sharing of practice is discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

The various contexts which have emerged at the level of governance and structure are represented in the five models below. Such models are, necessarily, simplified abstractions of the major elements found in the sample schools. For this reason they do not map easily onto specific types of school governance (i.e. fee-charging, Academy, Trust, Foundation, Voluntary-aided, Federation) but must be regarded as idealised, composite representations. Their intention, rather than reflecting the complexity of the various individual contexts, is to draw attention to the main elements that schools have to take into consideration when planning for the movement of children between institutions. They are based on interview data from case study schools in the City of Bristol but are also informed by evidence gathered from various examples in other parts of the country.

Model A – Secondary School working with local cluster
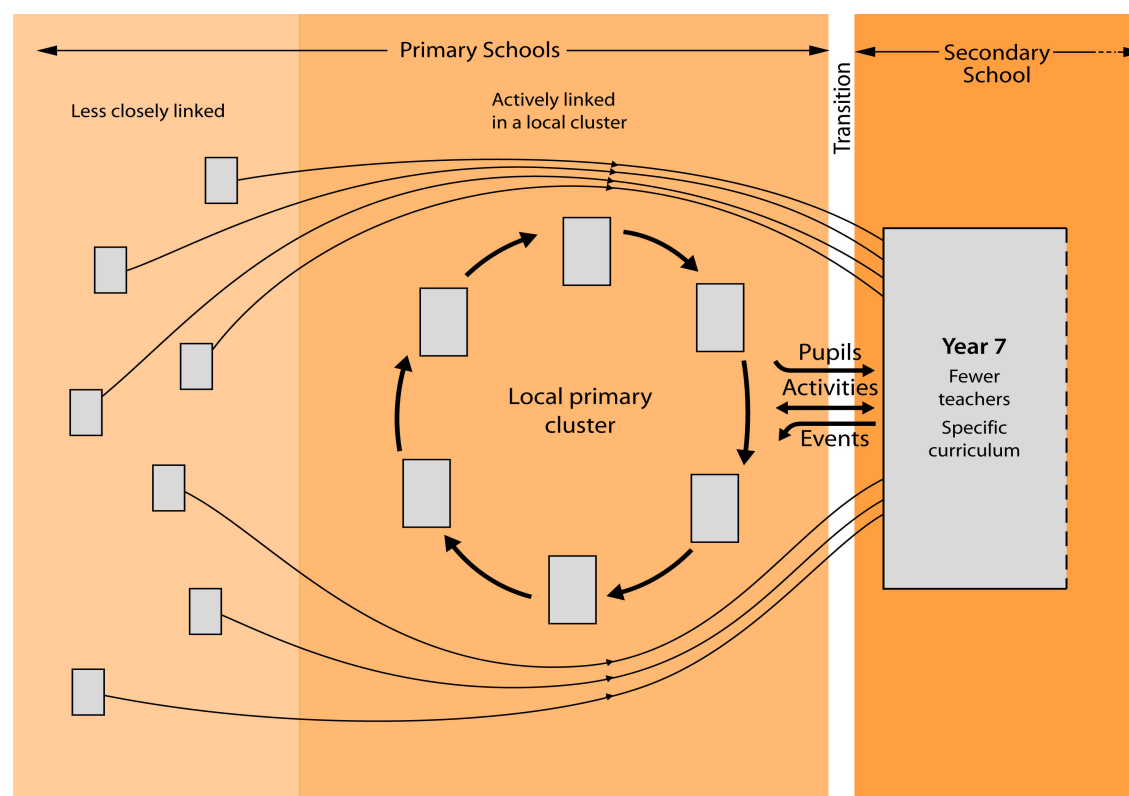
This model is perhaps closest to a general assumption of how transition from primary to secondary school takes place. It represents the situation where a secondary school, located in a clearly defined community, receives children from a group of local primary schools located within the same community. This is a common context for some rural secondary schools but the model is also represented within the City of Bristol where both a newly-established Academy and a longer established local authority community school demonstrated this pattern. Typically, a member of staff from the secondary school, with a responsibility for transition and community liaison, will work closely with the local cluster of primary schools. The secondary school will often make staff and facilities available to the primary schools, and pupils from the primary schools may well attend events put on by the secondary school. Close liaison will ensure that joint planning can take place around transition and the transfer of both 'hard' and 'soft' data can be easily facilitated electronically, on paper, or by visits from staff. Though the secondary school will receive pupils from more distant primary schools, the large majority, typically over 80%, will come from the cluster schools, giving the potential for a high degree of continuity and progression. This is illustrated by the quote below, in which a primary school head is discussing the developing links with a newly built academy.

This year, we have spent a lot of time at Merchants' Academy, whole classes have been there for teaching. My Year 6 and my Year 5 have taken part in various lessons at the academy in all sorts of curriculum areas. We've gone for sporting things throughout the year. We've gone for music events - and this isn't just my Year 5 and Year 6 – up from Year 1 have been there and we've done evening events with the choir so, actually, the children are really familiar with the building because they've spent a lot of time there as part of their primary schooling really. Even the children who aren't going to be going there have spent time there. So, that's helped enormously. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

Model B – Secondary School with large catchment
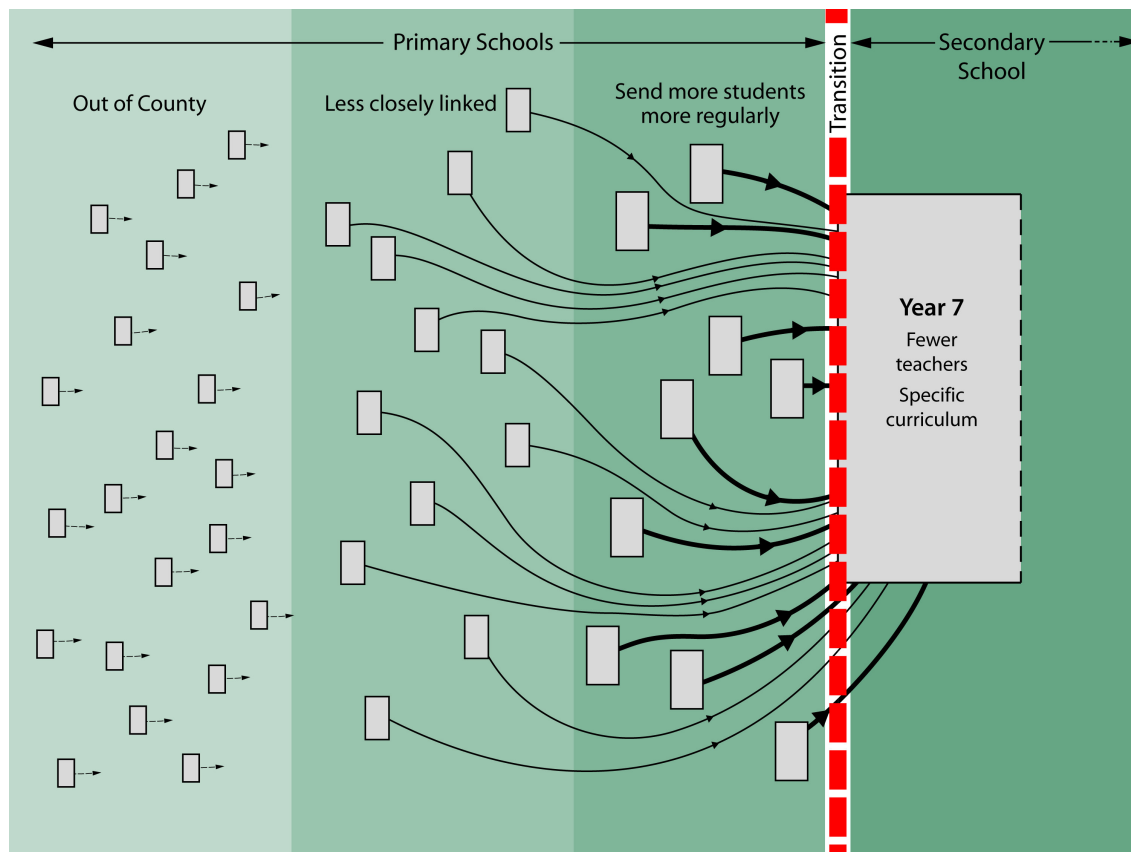
This type of pattern is most typical of popular, over-subscribed schools that may have a particular subject specialism or faith ethos. This will enable the school to select up to 10% of its pupils, which can mean that it receives pupils from a much larger than average number of primary schools. The specific primary schools from which it receives pupils may also vary from one year to the next, as admission involves a small element of selection. This can create particular problems in terms of preparing pupils prior to transition when the receiving school has to cater for pupils from many

different schools in ones and twos. It can also make the exchange of information and teachers more of a challenge because of resource implications, though the connection with parents may be strong because of the commitment to the school. However even schools with very large catchment areas can develop systems for supporting pupils in the transition process, as illustrated by the example of St Mary Redcliffe School in Bristol.

> With primary schools it's quite difficult for us because we have over 70 partner primaries which is very unusual because we're a faith school and because our catchment area, if you like, is the Diocese – so it's huge. So we take from Portishead and some students from as far away as Weston-super-Mare. So we don't have the sort of close working partnerships that a more local school would have. You know, often most local schools would have four or five main partner primaries – we don't have that. We do though go around and almost every student was visited last year, which was an enormous undertaking because we take in 216 students and we managed to visit all of them. (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

As we discuss in Chapters 5 and 6 schools with large catchment areas often place considerable emphasis on building relationships with parents of Year 7 pupils.

Model C – Secondary School with associated Lower School
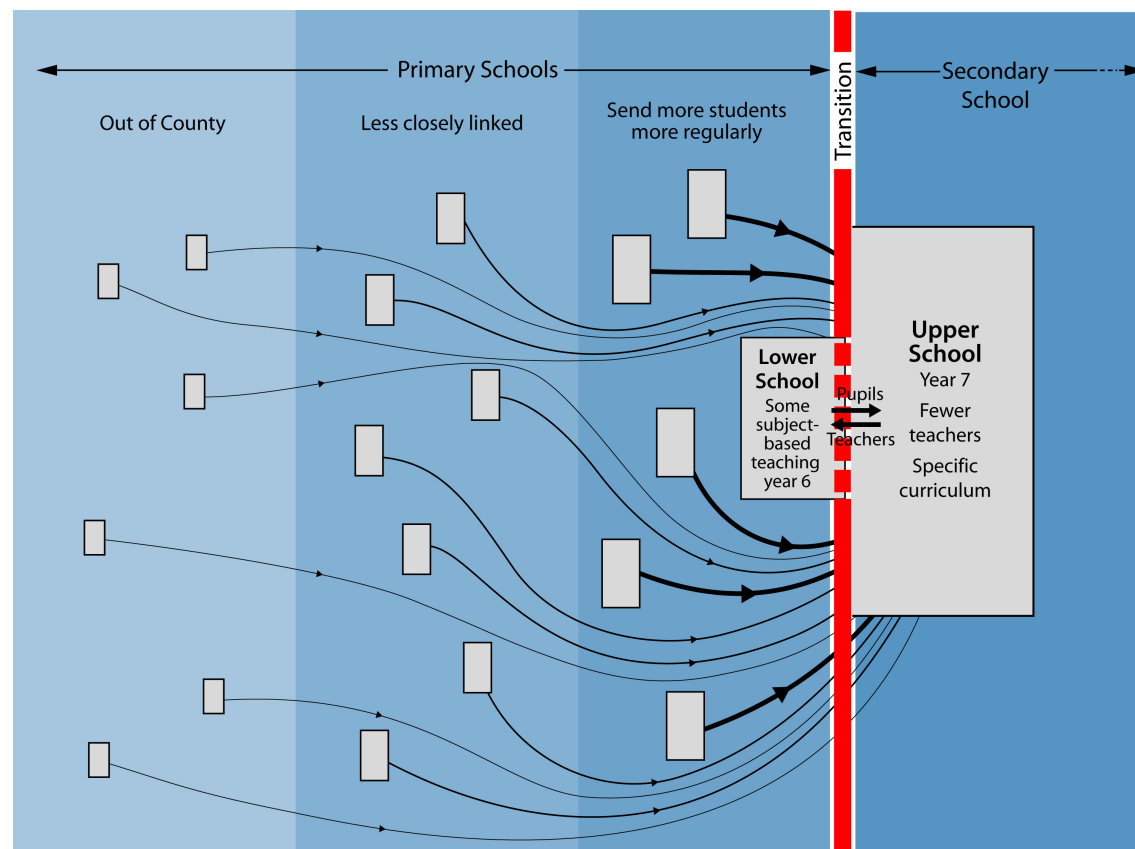
This model is most typical of individual fee-charging schools where there is a lower school on the same site, or situated close by. Here up to 50% of the secondary school's intake will be drawn from the lower school and the link between pupils, parents and teachers may be established long before the transition process. The transfer of both 'hard' and 'soft' data can also be easily facilitated, teachers from the secondary school may teach in the lower school, and pupils may go to the secondary school on a regular basis to use some facilities. However, if the school is selective, it may also draw pupils from a wide range of other primary schools. Some of these may be geographically close to the secondary school and send several children each year. Others may be further afield, or outside the City, and may only send an individual child on an irregular basis. The pattern of these schools will also vary depending on the number of parents electing to enter their children for the entrance exam. Contact with such schools and pupils can be more difficult to sustain and costly in terms of time and resources. However, given the selective nature of the school, parental commitment is usually strong and the ongoing connection with parents and families highly valued by the school, as illustrated by the following quote from the head of Year 7 at Colstons' School in Bristol.

> I always try and phone parents – just to say that they're settling in. So, it's a purely social call, just to say 'they've had their first couple of weeks and it all seems fine' or 'they've struggled a little bit at the beginning but I think now they're on the mend.' Again, I think if you can get in with the positive contact first, that really works to build the relationship and that's all you need to do really. If they know that they can find you and that you're trying to be fair with their children, then that's all they really want to see. (Head of Year 7 - All-through School)

Model D – Secondary School with cross-phase provision

Model D – Secondary School with cross-phase provision
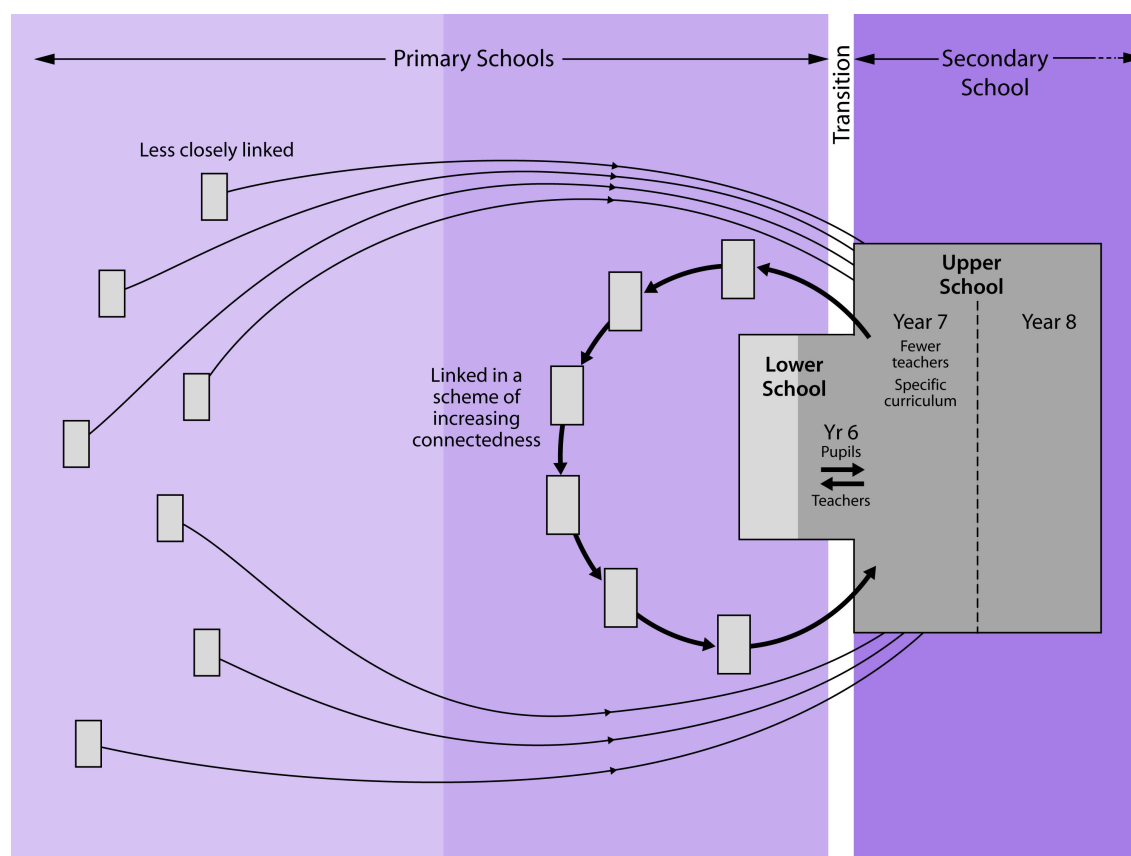
This model represents the situation in schools where there is an all-through provision, from primary to secondary age, as above, but there is an additional initiative to combine existing year groups into various phases through which pupils move in a 'stage not age' way. This means that the point of transition is more fluid, with a curriculum and pedagogy that draws on the strengths of both primary and secondary cultures. The movement of pupils and teachers in such a model is freer, with teachers working across the phases and pupils attempting work when they are ready, rather than according to their age and year group. Such a model opens up additional possibilities in terms of curricular and pedagogical innovation. The project saw examples of both Academies and Trusts using this model though, in both cases, the all-through element accounted for only 30-50% of their intake at Yr 7. This meant that, like the schools in model C, they continued to have the challenge of receiving pupils from other primary schools in the area and of needing to find ways of integrating both sets of pupils, both socially and academically.

> I think for the other children, coming from other schools, there's much more of a cultural shift because our children speak the language, know the culture, know the expectations; they're completely comfortable with it because they've been in it since the age of three. But what we do notice is that, when they come in at Year 7, that our children are incredibly, you-know, this is their

home … and there isn't any dip and they all tend to make the top sets because there's no great culture shock….So we are having to really look at how we manage the outside people coming in to what are a lot of very confident children who already know the school. (Head Teacher - All-through school).

Model E – A Federation of Secondary Schools
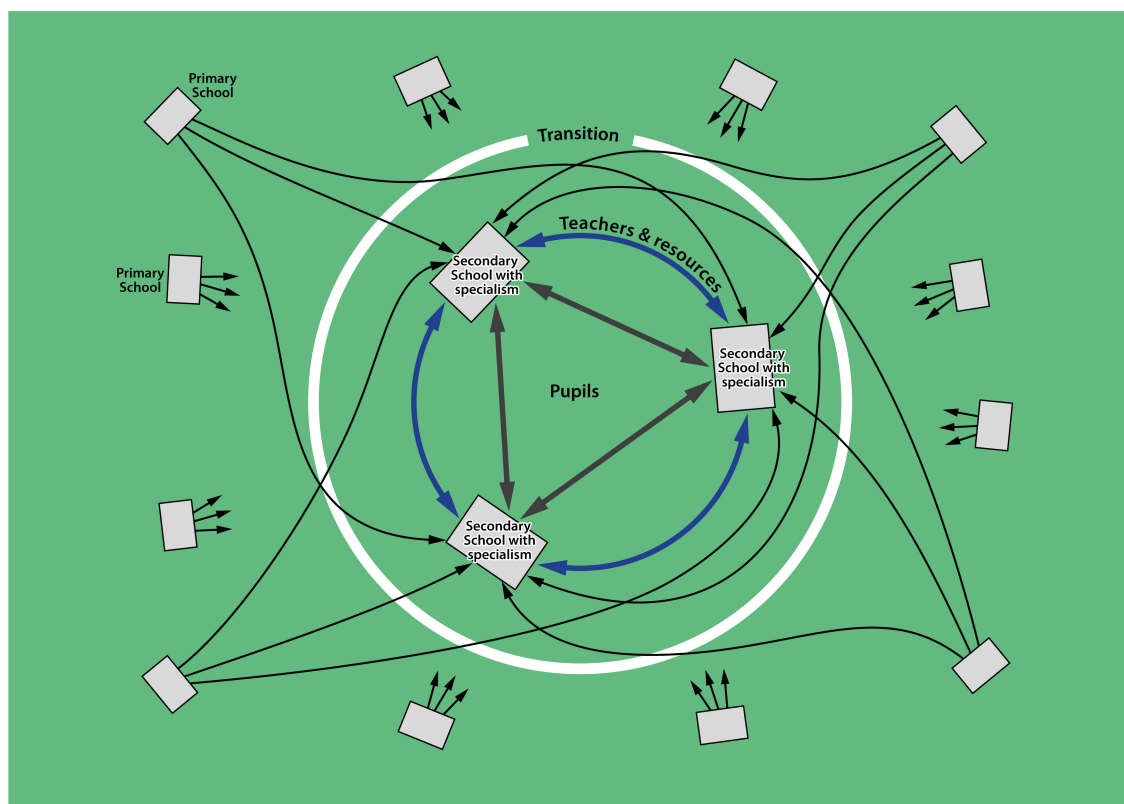
This model represents a federation of secondary schools operating with one governing body, sharing both staff and resources. Typically, such a federation is located in a community with a range of educational needs. The aim of the federation is to act in concert to offer a range of strengths and specialisms between them so that parents can choose the provision that they consider best for their child. This is a complex system to manage but it opens up the possibility of choice and diversity contained within a single geographic area. The intention is that parents and children will be well served and choice can be facilitated within the community. Ultimately, it is a system which could see a single admissions procedure for all secondary provision. The Project sample included an example of a federation of three academies (The John Cabot federation), led by a chief executive who had overall responsibility. As the chief executive explains below, such a federation creates capacity for collaboration with local primary schools.

In the part of the city there are approximately 12 primary schools plus nursery schools that are part of the extended school partnership. And within the

federation I have appointed a primary deputy head, an AST, to work what I call our primary partnership hub programme. And his job is to work across the whole of those primary schools across the extended school partnership to make and create with the primary schools a Year 5 to Year 8 transition group. I hope that the kids will visit our academies and enjoy their experience and they may come there, but it's not been set up in order to create that particular goal. (Chief Executive - Federation of Secondary Schools)

Some Implications

So, what does all this mean for the schools involved? The evidence shows that there is a richness of diversity to the primary/secondary school partnerships being developed across England and such partnerships impact on transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools. However, secondary schools in challenging circumstances, may well find it difficult to pay attention to transition.

> I think what happened 5 or 6 years ago, and I'm not just talking about School F here, I think with the budget crisis, all the inspections, exam results, secondary schools just pulled the drawbridge up. They did a human thing, but essentially it was completely the wrong thing. (Head Teacher - Secondary School)

Within Bristol a proportion of primary pupils transfer to secondary schools in neighbouring LAs and to independent fee-charging schools. Overall, Bristol had one of the largest ratios of independent fee-paying school to maintained schools for a local authority in England. But, with the establishment of a new build trust and several new-build academies within the City, together with the change of two previously fee-charging schools to academy status, the balance is changing.

In general, primary school teachers and heads are both concerned about and are aware of the quality of the secondary school education for their 'transferring' pupils.

> Children would often come back in the first few weeks of term unhappy. Come back and see us. Whereas, year-on-year…. this year particularly – the children that have gone to School P have made a very good transition and they have really listened to those individual needs and given us ongoing feedback. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

However, there is also some evidence that the out-of-county secondary schools give considerable attention to the transition process and that this may influence the choices made by parents.

> School X (from out of county) are always very good. We've only got one child going this year but, I have to say, of all the schools - they've always consistently … they always come early. Whatever has been said about that child, they remember. It's noted properly. Those children go in the right tutor groups. The children get an individual letter from the Head teacher and are

invited to reply and if they reply, they get a reply back and we are contacted early in the Autumn term to let us know how they're getting on. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

Primary teachers and heads are also aware that there is sometimes a lack of understanding by secondary teachers of primary school education:

And then for staff, I think it's fair to say there's an ongoing frustration. When we see what our children can achieve and the standards of their learning here, and that this isn't necessarily replicated and that there isn't the mutual respect from secondary. I think there's still a bit of a blame culture. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

Evidence suggests that primary schools would value more strategic involvement in decisions about partnership and transition, as the current situation is very much driven by secondary schools. Some partnership arrangements, such as all-through provision, have the potential to allow for a more equal balance of power between primary and secondary teachers.

Conclusion

All this brings dilemmas and tensions for the local authority. Recent government policy makes it clear that children's services authorities need to use their commissioning role to ensure the provision of high quality education for children, young people and their families. At the same time, children's services authorities also have a responsibility to challenge and support existing schools in their continuing efforts to improve provision. The DCSF sees the relationship between children's services authorities (as leaders of Children's Trusts) and schools as a mirror of the relationship between children's services authorities and the DCSF. The Department is also clear that it is incumbent on children's services authorities to facilitate the best school leaders to be innovative, to take on wider system leadership roles and to lead school partnerships. This may include the continuing development of head teachers becoming 'consultant leaders' or 'executive heads', providing strategic leadership across a number of schools operating in partnership. Such developments have contributed to a landscape in which lines of governance and authority are more varied and the role of children's services authorities, in terms of an oversight and coordination of transition, more complex.

Key findings

— Changing patterns of school governance have injected new energy and ideas into issues of transition from Yr 6 to Yr 7.
— Primary schools currently consider that they have less of an input in the mechanisms of transition and need to prepare pupils for different, and changing, contexts.

— Changing governance patterns have reduced the ability of children's services authorities to have direct control over transition.

Chapter 5: Involvement of parents, pupils and other stakeholders

Summary

This chapter examines the involvement of stakeholders in transition, namely, parents, pupils, governors and other agencies. Whilst the active involvement of all parties is generally viewed as a key indicator of successful transition, in practice the involvement of different parties varies widely. The involvement of parents, which is generally acknowledged as central to the smooth transfer of children from primary to secondary, is problematic and specific measures need to be taken to ensure active parental participation. There are, by contrast, many examples of successful pupil involvement in transition – both as recipients of transfer activities and, for older pupils, as mentors and school 'ambassadors'. The involvement of other key stakeholders is patchy and varied. In terms of governor involvement and wider community engagement with other agencies, there is still some way to go with respect to the Every Child Matters agenda and a joined up system of working across agencies.

Involvement of parents

It is widely recognised that if pupils are to maximise their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents…. It is anticipated that parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and the democratisation of school governance. The European Commission, for example, holds that the degree of parental participation is a significant indicator of the quality of schooling.[1]

Research into school effectiveness and school improvement has shown that in the drive to raise standards parental engagement in children's education is a key factor. Parental involvement is a key factor in minimizing the number of underperforming children, which is an increasingly important factor in today's competitive market (as described in Chapter 2). Schools are judged by many factors including children's academic results and other indicators of active participation in school life e.g. involvement in after school activities such as sports clubs. Parental involvement is often crucial in ensuring such activities are supported and viable. Schools therefore come under great pressure to 'prove themselves' to parents, and win their approval and loyalty.

Parents' active support has also been found to be important in easing pupils' transition from primary to secondary school. However, this is a time of changing relationships between teachers, parents and pupils and this can compromise the secondary school's ability to foster strong connections with parents. Not knowing

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[1] Desforges, C & Abouchaar, A (2003) p.7

who to contact in secondary schools exacerbates the problem for parents:

> I think for parents it's such a different role that you have with a primary school and the relationship you have with secondary school staff. And I think it's sometimes assumed that parents will know how to deal with certain issues at secondary school and I don't think they do because it's such a less personal system whereby, you know, you might go to Head of Year, rather than the class teacher. And I think, initially, that's really difficult for parents because at primary school most of them are used to seeing staff every day and, if there's a problem, the staff are most likely to approach them. I think that once you get to secondary school it's the other way around. Parents are more likely to be approaching staff and, often, parents don't know how to do that. It's quite anonymous – you-know, going into a secondary school – you get to Reception, you don't quite know who you want to see about a problem your child had in Maths the day before….what's the protocol? And I think that parents find that quite difficult and I think, certainly from talking to parents, the fact that they don't have that daily contact with staff is quite difficult for them. You don't know how your child's doing until you go to Parent's Evenings and, often your children don't tell you about Parent's Evenings anyway so contact is limited. (Head Teacher - Primary School)

In the transition between primary and secondary school, parental involvement with school almost invariably declines. Moving to secondary school is a key stage in pupils' increasing maturity and independence, and one aspect of this is a reduction in parental involvement with, and knowledge about, secondary school. Factors such as children's independent travel to school mean parents no longer visit school regularly or meet each other in the playground, and the opportunities for informal discussion with teachers no longer exist. Trying to re-establish close communication and parental involvement is an uphill task for most secondary schools.

Secondary schools operate in a competitive market, and parents tend to judge schools according to various criteria, the most important and ubiquitous being academic achievement and personal care and support. Schools' marketing activities emphasise their strengths in these two complementary areas. Schools are also not immune to today's 'risk averse' culture, and any research into, or consensus of what constitutes, best practice is likely to be seized on and reproduced.

In some cases, all-through schools have managed to avoid the disruption of primary/secondary transition and have a long record of success in sustaining parental involvement throughout the secondary phase of schooling.

Parents with little experience of the English school system or with negative experience of their own secondary schooling can be 'hard to reach' or involve. Such parents are likely to be from lower socio-economic groups, and their lack of engagement in secondary education is likely to have a negative effect on their children's attainment. In this way, parental lack of engagement becomes one of the mechanisms reinforcing socio-economic inequalities. Schools serving more economically deprived areas face a more difficult job in changing community perceptions about secondary education and engaging positively with parents. Other

schools with large catchment areas face different issues with parental involvement, linked to geographical spread.

However, there are many examples of schools with wide catchment areas whose programmes for community and parental involvement are successful and kitemarked through a national award or government inspection. For example St Mary Redcliffe secondary school in Bristol was rated as outstanding in a recent Ofsted report related to parental engagement. The school was praised for its regular and helpful communications with parents through email and school planners; for its sessions showing parents how to support their children and raise attainment. The report specifically applauded the high commitment of parents to working in participation with the school and sharing its Christian ethos.

In a recent Ofsted inspection report, the City Academy in Bristol was commended for its work with families[2]:

> As a specialist sports academy, the school makes a very strong contribution to community cohesion. Leaders and staff, alongside many other agencies, have travelled that extra mile to forge strong partnerships, especially with harder-to-reach families, in order to maximise equal opportunities for all. The specialism brings benefits in terms of both the students' personal health and their well-being; it strongly promotes participation and interaction between students, parents and staff in support of mutual understanding and students' achievement. (Ofsted Inspection Report, The City Academy Bristol, January 2009)

As the Principal explained, an important factor in achieving this community cohesion are the family engagement workers who work with children, throughout their school experience, on attainment:

> So what happens with those workers is that they visit the families in the home, they are people who live locally – they live in the same street, they speak the same language. And so they are people within the community and …..[ ] so they're not teachers. And I think that's quite important actually, so they're quite a good intermediary, in that they talk a language with the parents which … for a parent to walk in here and come into the head teacher's office has still got quite a traditional 'this is a serious issue' type of stuff. …..We focussed our project work … because of lack of attainment if you like … on ethnic minority groups. And it's only in the last year we've started project work with white communities because we're suddenly … actually there has been … because of the success of some of that engagement work, we've seen a change in attainment.

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[2] Ofsted inspection for the City Academy, January 2009 see
http://www.ofted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/(id)104793

Within the schools in our sample there is a wide range of personnel working with parents and their remit for parental engagement may vary. In some schools there is a parental engagement/liaison worker often supporting disengaged families. Larger schools such as the City Academy and the Bridge Learning Campus may have a parental engagement team which works across the whole school and ensures continuity of contact across families and siblings in different year groups, in addition to an attendance team working across the phases. In other schools (particularly primaries) the Home-School worker may be part of extended services supporting a number of schools within an extended school partnership.

Where the school is part of a cluster or federation, more workers can be engaged on targeted work. The Cabot Learning Federation for example has a Student Development and Community Liaison hub and a Primary School Partnership hub for transition work. Other schools are using parents as an additional resource for increasing parental involvement:

> Wherever possible, we've tried to engage parents. But it's difficult and the primary has got a good reputation of engaging parents, so our primary parents are then beginning to bring in parents from secondary school. (Head Teacher, Primary phase - All-through School)

Parental involvement takes many forms and can have a number of foci. Evangelou et al (2008) report that one of the features of a successful transition is a process which is 'managed smoothly – with parental choices received on time, most parents getting their first choice of school and few appeals' - and there is much to suggest that parents who are engaged in choosing schools are also likely to be engaged throughout their child's school career. A recent piece of research indicates that when middle class parents have chosen even averagely or below-averagely performing secondary state schools, they were assiduous in monitoring the transition and subsequent schooling of their children[3]. It tends to be the primary rather than the secondary schools who are most involved in guiding parents in making their choices, although there is evidence of some secondary schools making huge efforts to involve parents in discussing school choice as early as Y4 or Y5. However, the policies of neighbouring primaries can be different so that,

> …some see their role as being neutral and others see their role as actively supporting your school...They have a difficult role, because they have, to a certain extent, check us out and take what we say in trust and they've been really supportive. (Head Teacher - Secondary School)

In general, there is much evidence of exemplary practice by primaries supporting parents through the transition process. In one primary in south Bristol the Head teacher described the school's role in supporting parental choice:

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[3] James, D & Beedell, P., (2009)

[Parents] fill in a form to say, by October, which school they would like. In the past, we've had a least a fifth of the Year group complete no form. This year we only had two children who haven't completed and that is a series of letters; phone calls home. We have one where myself, the teachers and the office staff do a drop-in session so if people want to do it online and are not sure how, we do it for them.

For our parents that can't read, we do one-to-one sessions and then eventually at the end of that we only had two this year who didn't apply and they were late applicants. But that comes from us as opposed to a drive coming from the parents necessarily. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

Other foci for involving parents centre on the post-transition phase and can involve creating a forum for parental input e.g. the formation of a Parents' Council with representatives from the community; learning opportunities for parents such as adult numeracy and Information Technology courses run at the school; or creating social opportunities for parents to meet each other. Parental involvement can be promoted for example by well-targeted information and celebration events, or on social occasions such as regular coffee mornings for ethnic minority parents at school, introducing parents to others in their child's tutor groups, as well as numerous opportunities to meet school staff e.g. fortnightly open meetings with the Head of Y7. Some schools have introduced sessions that show parents how to support children in their learning.

There is increasing and innovative use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to engage parents. Schools already make good use of email for contact between the school and parents, but some schools in our study illustrate how much this could be developed. John Cabot Academy[4] provides an example of how ICT can be used to establish effective communication with parents:

Community cohesion and equality of opportunity are fundamental to the vision of the academy and to the federation as a whole as they strive to make a positive difference to the life chances of young people across Bristol and South Gloucestershire. The academy has many productive links with an impressive range of partners in business and education in local, national and international contexts. It also works exceptionally closely with parents and is close to achieving its goal of enabling every parent to have online access to information about their child 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (Ofsted inspection report, John Cabot Academy, Nov 2009)

At Bristol Brunel Academy enhanced parental involvement is being piloted through a parental portal or Learning Gateway which allows parents and carers to see information about their children online 24 hours a day. Through a school scheme, all

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[4] Ofsted inspection for the John Cabot Academy, November 2009 see
http://www.ofted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/(id)114328

Y7 and Y8 pupils have their own mini-laptops with internet access and parents can use these laptops to access the portal if they have no computers at home. Each parent/carer has their own username and password to gain access to the site, where they can see information on attendance, assessments and behaviour reports. As soon as information is entered by staff in the Academy, it becomes available online. Another example comes from West London Academy, an all-through school whose Online Reports website provides a graphic summary of progress information and access to the regular assessments carried out by teachers. A similar use of ICT to allow parents to view pupils' work is being planned at the Bridge Learning Campus. Some schools are developing this further by exploring how the ICT system can be used for collecting parents' and carers' views. These systems give parents opportunities to take a more frequent and active role in children's learning.

However, there is little systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of all these approaches. For this reason, it may be useful for schools to validate the strength of parental engagement through the national award of Investors in Families[5]. Pursuit of the award can help clusters of schools to focus and evaluate their involvement of parents since the award promotes the importance of family-friendly approaches which many schools are already developing. The process of evidence collection can be undertaken by the Local Authority, or by clusters working together with parents to ensure wider ownership. One of the schools in our sample was the first Academy in the country to obtain the Investors in Families award and described the process as positive and fitting in well with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda:

> Well it's a bit like Investors in People but the focus is on families and it's based around the School Evaluation Form and the Every Child Matters agenda. So, it looks at activities across the whole school that support families, not just individual students. So, towards the outcomes of Every Child Matters and saying that, basically, if you're doing Every Child Matters properly and the Children Plan properly then that should benefit the whole family and it shouldn't just be the isolation on the student because obviously if the student's doing well, the family hopefully get benefit from that but also they'd get drawn in themselves because a lot of our problem in this particular area is not just deprivation but our indigenous white population often came to this school in a former guise, certainly to the High School and are fairly disenchanted still and it takes quite a … and probably were done a disservice to be honest and there's still quite a lot of history to sort of break and re-mould but it is changing.

> And the Investors in Families, what they do is they interview people – they don't just interview staff or children – they come in and they get parents to come in and talk to them about it. And we had I think five or six parents from across the Academy who came and spoke quite passionately in fact – it was tear-jerking about the change since the Academy has become the Academy and

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[5] See www.investorsinfamilies.org.uk

how that's impacted on them. (Head Teacher — Primary Phase, All-through School)

Involvement of pupils

Pupils are the focus of transition, and the stakeholders most directly affected by transition arrangements. As such, they possess a wealth of experience, and transition arrangements that use older pupils as 'buddies' or mentors build on a rich store of knowledge. There are several examples of schools in this study proactively engaging with pupils to smooth the transition process.

Pupils are involved in transfer both as recipients of transfer activities and as mentors, friends, coaches and school 'ambassadors'.

> The older years are pretty good, the older like kids. They were actually pretty helpful… they made us feel welcome. Like they like talked to us a lot…. 'cos if you like get a kid in your [vertical tutor group], you get to know them even better. And then you like start to be like proper good friends with them. And then if you're ever in trouble you just go to them. (Y7 pupil - All-through School).

In general, pupils report feeling well-prepared for transition and are able to provide examples of a range of approaches from primary schools e.g. simulating the secondary environment and preparing pupils for the social and emotional aspects of transfer through SEAL[6], circle time and school assemblies.

There were class discussions about 'harder work' and behaviour expectations in addition to visits to secondary schools accompanied by the Head or other school personnel. Nonetheless, many pupils described the first week of secondary school as 'scary' (usually stemming from rumours and insufficient information about the receiving secondary and its expectations) although the majority of pupils then settled in well and found it 'fun' to be part of a larger school environment with more freedom, better facilities and new subjects.

Pupils wanted more opportunities to visit the receiving secondary and longer induction periods which would give them time to meet more tutors, to sample lessons and experience the organisation of the secondary school structure where the length of lessons, the range of subjects, the facilities and variety of sports and clubs are at variance with the primary school. Whereas primary school was 'cosy', some pupils felt that they would have been more prepared for secondary school had they been given more responsibility and independence in Y6 e.g. via lessons in how to organise themselves, using lockers instead of drawers, etc. Of particular value were the visits

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[6] Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). A curriculum resource and a comprehensive approach to improving behaviour and learning by promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, and the emotional health and well-being of pupils learning in schools. http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/inclusion/behaviourattendanceandseal.

of secondary staff and pupils, and learning about the standard of work at secondary school. In most cases teachers at all-through schools understandably appeared to have greater knowledge of primary and secondary standards and were able to transmit this information to pupils. For one Y7 pupil this was the most useful transition activity,

> I think the most helpful thing was that most of the teachers at the Lower School had knowledge of what was going on in the Upper School so we did a lot of PSE[7] lessons with our teachers just talking about what it was going to be like because almost everyone in the Lower School went up to the Upper School. So you could just talk to the teachers about what was going to happen.

In the focus group data there was a clear call from pupils for greater curriculum continuity and more teacher exchanges from secondary into primary school. Pupils wanted reassurance and to experience the changes in curriculum and teaching methods in the safety of their primary school:

> I reckon it could have been easier if they, for example, a couple of teachers came around to our school and maybe gave us a few lessons just so that in that type of manner so we'd be able to get used to lessons. (Year 7 Pupil – Secondary School)

Pupils interviewed felt that much could also be learnt from older pupils whose views have greater resonance and authority. One Y7 pupil recalled a visit of secondary school pupils to the primary school:

> I think it was good because when you bring in a Year 7 and we learnt more about the school because they'd experienced being here and hadn't been long since they experienced it. (Year 7 Pupil – Secondary School)

Pupils in general appreciated transition activities involving older pupils and there are many exciting innovations in our sample: one school matched older pupils as 'buddy counsellors' for new pupils on their first visit to the school in Y6 so that they were available for email support during the summer holidays as well as in Y7; an all-through school used its own Y7 pupils to support pupils entering from other primaries because '*if you've got Year 7s helping Year 7s it's great, because it's their peers*'; another school used email to facilitate primary-secondary pupil links but also mentioned as a factor, the differences in IT capacity between schools:

> The difficulty is in that way we are now a very IT-rich school and not all of our partner primary schools are as IT rich or have the expertise. But certainly emailing children before they come… Well, it's about actually getting the child into the mindset of what the Academy's about isn't it?... And if they've got regular contact with a child who's here …. And then, on the induction days…those 30

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[7] Personal and Social Education (PSE)

[older pupils] were leaders…. they looked after a designated group of children; they took them around for the two days…[and started emailing as well]   (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

The Quartet Foundation report[8] on transitions for vulnerable children argues that the key to effecting change and addressing a 'poverty of wellbeing' is emotional support through '*building a consistent relationship with another – a trusted adult or a peer mentor*'. Within our sample of schools, there were many examples of older pupils fulfilling this role: Bristol Brunel Academy has a system of Outside Peer Mentoring where primary pupils at risk or at the request of the primary school, are mentored by secondary school pupils. The school's Y9 pupils are being trained as Rights Respecting Trainers and will be trainingY5 and Y6 pupils in two of the partner primaries on rights, responsibilities and respecting other people's rights. Other schools involved pupils through the active citizenship curriculum, work experience or sports programmes where older pupils worked with the community and partner primaries. For example, the School Sports[9] programme at Ashton Park School works with its cluster primaries, linking with the school's specialism and using older pupils from the school:

> We've got some Year 10s going with one of the PE teachers to do a Cheer Club at X school which is a primary school with the Year 5s and 6s and when we had the Open Day a few weeks ago the first thing the PE teacher got asked by some parents is "Will there be a Cheer Club if they come to Ashton Park?" because they want to carry on doing Cheer … And it's little things like that that sticks in people's minds and it just creates … you-know parents, obviously, it gives them a good impression…. [In addition] We've just set up a Dance company for Years 5 and 6 so they come up here once a week and a Year 13 pupil takes them. So hopefully then they know when they're going to come in Year 7 they're already looking forward to being in the Dance already in Year 7. (School Sports Co-ordinator, based in secondary school)

There are also pedagogic benefits to be gained from older pupils participating in projects with younger pupils. For example, at one school, there are cross-phase projects with shared activities and shared school trips:

> …we've taken children from the primary and our Year 10 and we've taken them off and they've done trips and then they've put on a show; an Art project etc. All of those sort of activities are so beneficial, because our older students learn best when they're teaching younger children. (Head Teacher - All-through School)

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[8] Gulati, A. & King, A. (2010)
[9]The aims of the School Sports programme are to improve the quality and quantity of after-school sport and inter-school competition, as well as raise standards and provide opportunities for pupils to try more diverse sporting activities. There are a wide range of partners involved, including children's services authorities, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and local sports development officers. SSCo partnerships are based around families of schools with a team made up of a Partnership Development Manager (PDM), School Sport Co-ordinator's (SSCO's) and Primary Link Teachers (PLT's). This Team enhances opportunities for young people to experience different sports, access high quality coaching and engage in competition

There is considerable potential for extending the involvement of pupils in transition and partnership work. Younger pupils enjoy drawing on the experience of older pupils, whether in person as mentors, coaches or guides, or virtually, through email contact. Secondary schools in turn may wish to consider formally accrediting the work of their older pupils in transition, either through the citizenship or Humanities curriculum or other awards.

Involvement of governors

Previous sections have demonstrated good practice for parents and pupils. Governors, by contrast, are often neglected as a key stakeholder in transition arrangements. However there are some examples of good practice, demonstrating that targeting governors as a key partner in transition yields beneficial results for all parties.

In the majority of schools in our study governors do not tend to play a major role in transition. There are examples of governors who have an indirect role e.g. an all-through school in our sample has a link governor between the primary and secondary schools with occasional contact with outside agencies; at another school there are two governors involved through CAF[10] meetings in their governor roles, one who has a responsibility for 'looked after' children and child protection, and one who has a community role; in the south of the city, the coincidence of a secondary school Home-School worker who also sits as a governor in the local primary school has been useful as a conduit for information sharing.

In schools which are their own admissions authority there is the potential for governors to play a very prominent role in the transition process. For example, in St Mary Redcliffe and Temple CE VA School in Bristol governors are responsible for allocating places at the school in accordance with their published criteria and the governors' Admissions Panel also hears appeals. But in general in the study, few schools have a governor with responsibility for transition although the above model of a link governor with an oversight of both the primary and secondary phase could be useful in building another layer of links for primary secondary transition. Other models may include partner schools sharing governors which, as one primary head teacher recalled, promoted the focus on transition:

… my Vice-Chair of Governors was also a Governor at [the secondary school] and we used to talk quite a lot then about transition…But, generally, Governors don't ask about transition arrangements. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

In preference to a link governor, the more focused appointment of a governor with responsibility for transition may help to bring all interested parties together and promote conversations which are in the interest of all stakeholders, including pupils, parents and other agencies.

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[10] The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a standardised approach to conducting assessments of children's additional needs and deciding how these should be met. It aims to provide for a holistic assessment of children's needs and to improve integrated working by promoting coordinated service provisions.

Involvement of other agencies

> Well I mean you know … there's a huge number of community groups here you know that support the students, and we don't know who's accessing what. The only way I know who's accessing what is they've had a CAF etc. But… we need to know about all of those other opportunities that are out there that are being used and get out there and you know find out you know about the students in that way as well. Just building those links. (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, based at a secondary school)

Current policy initiatives emphasise the need to have co-ordinated partnership working to secure the best outcomes. Every Child Matters specifies that, in order to achieve the best results for children's development, there needs to be cross-sector working across education, health, social care and voluntary sectors. The Quartet Foundation report cited above, links in with the ECM agenda in promoting a co-ordinated approach to agencies working to support vulnerable children at transition. It recommends that the support is 'linked closely to the processes of managing transition within the educational system at both primary and secondary levels…. targeted on those young people most vulnerable to the impacts of transition… set within the context of family – parents and siblings, and/or close relatives and friends, and recognizes the importance of linking the experience of the young person with that of others who surround them.'

Transition arrangements still predominately take place within the education sector, with little active involvement of health or social care agencies. However, the recent introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) provides an ideal opportunity for engaging in partnership working for all professionals involved in the care and support of children and their families.

In our sample of schools, the support given at transfer to more vulnerable children, including looked-after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, appears to be well targeted and effective, but much of this work is undertaken by school staff rather than the ECM agenda of multi-agency involvement. Special Educational Needs (SEN) teams and Learning Mentors play a central role and liaising across services appears to be at the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) level where opportunities to discuss work with families can be taken at school or area level. In most transition arrangements,

> The SEN team get very involved at an early stage. Just to make sure that we can provide for these children really and to make sure that when they are here that everything's ready for them. (Year 7 Co-ordinator)

The range and depth of SENCo work at transition is clearly illustrated in the following example from a primary Head teacher:

Another thing that is very important to us is that we've got a SENCo who works part time but she's not class based … and so she will pick up vulnerable children. We have groups like social skills groups and we have groups to help EAL[11] children with their English, with their vocabulary as well, so that you know transition comes in all the way through our school to a certain extent. …

Now I think that that was because whoever awarded it recognised that transition was coming up. And the other one was a little EAL boy who actually had special needs as well and probably we hadn't identified that early enough. so what they did was they worked with an LSA[12] who is actually … she's now an LSA but she was a secondary school teacher … and she met with them and asked them the kind of things that they were good at and what they were looking forward to with the new school … also what worried them. And then they explored the things that worried them … and maybe there was some behaviour, some anger management stuff that had to be done with one of the children. And then [the secondary school] liaised with us, the SENCo was very good there. We have … they send three members of staff, and two members of staff will take the class while the class teacher was released to talk to the other member of staff. And the SENCo liaises quite often with [the teacher] who's the SENCo there. The SENCos then visit vulnerable children. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

This primary school head teacher also described how vulnerable children had made extra visits to the secondary school where they worked with a teacher who encouraged them to be independent.

She made them say who they were, why they were there, and she took a back seat, she really stepped back, so it was kind of gradually building their confidence and independence.

But even with the close liaison of primary and secondary school SENCos, there are institutional adjustments which can jeopardize the transfer for vulnerable pupils. The need to match up models of care is vital and requires intensive links and information sharing between institutions. One primary head teacher of a school with challenging EBD children emphasised their importance for successful transition:

… if they're going to a school which we don't know, it's very difficult to make real provision … The transition for EBD[13] children...is very traumatic for them and it needs a lot of work and a lot of careful work. And it's trying to improve the communication between the secondary and ourselves and the way we work. Because I think a small establishment works quite differently to secondary

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[11] Pupils who have English as an Additional Language (EAL)
[12] Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping pupils to get the most out of their learning. Most learning assistants/teaching assistants in secondary schools work as special needs assistants
[13] Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)

although, again, the Academy has got in place stuff which is much more similar to our model of care and so it's much easier. But if you're sending to a less adaptable school, that's when it can fail because they just won't be able to … or they won't make the provision that we have. We might put quite intense provision, built up relationships, huge relationships and then you've got this massive … particularly for EBD children, insecurity and that's when they fail and they fail quite quickly.

…it is about having identified people in small environments and lots of support systems and understanding that they need to learn how to behave and they need to learn and they need a lot of support and that they're not just malicious children. They have enormous problems and need a caring and nurturing environment which I think primaries are used to doing and I think secondaries find it hard because of the size of them, as much as anything else, and the organisation. So, I think that's trying to look at that model and I think the Academy are much more moved towards that small unit model where they have that small unit which will actually cater for children with those needs.' (Head Teacher – Primary School)

Despite the importance of a co-ordinated and systematic approach for the transition of vulnerable children, the involvement of other agencies tends to centre around individual children on an ad hoc basis. For example, at one primary the involvement of a social worker was,

the first time she's done it [moved up with a child] as well. We thought it would be a good idea and she got the go-ahead from her manager so she was very pleased to do it. I mean social workers stay with families and things like that but that hasn't happened before.' (Head Teacher – Primary School)

Part of the problem of interprofessional working can be attributed to the difference in professional cultures. This can lead to problems with communications and co-ordinating services although in the opinion of one secondary head teacher, these problems could be eased by the co-location of services on the same site:

… the reality is that being able to contact social services is extremely difficult, - you make a phone call, you may not get a reply. Same goes with some of the other agencies … in the police in particular if there's an incident where the person is allocated to that incident, if that person isn't there you have to wait until they return to pick it up and be able to deal with it. If they've moved from during day time to doing night time we are working when they're not working … those things are extremely difficult. It would seem to me to make complete common sense if in the BSF programme we looked at these provisions that can actually engage with young people and their family … I mean that's the development. It's you know children, schools and families, so I mean let's pool those agencies together. Because by and large, we do the very very very very

best job of any of these agencies I would contend in terms of engaging. Schools have got good records of having you know the individuals in here and by and large if you need a parent to come in they will come in. If someone else needs to deal with them then they can deal with them there. Other agencies are not as good as schools are at getting people there. So if you've got that and you build all that provision around a school – to me that would make an awful lot of sense … an awful lot of sense.   (Head Teacher – Secondary school)

There is evidence of inter-professional involvement - some secondary schools have referred to meetings with the Educational Psychology Service, Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS), etc and some schools in our sample host multi-agency meetings on a regular basis. Even then, there is a question over the lead role in multi-agency working and the practical issues around co-ordinating transition plans when professional cultures are at variance:

… at the Heads network we have people like CAMHS[14], we have some people … you know Ed Psychs coming in … and they talk … mainly primary, but they do relate to me because obviously you know I can raise issues. Also any looked after children, do a PEP[15] meeting ..primary, however that's led by social services and sometimes you know some social services that we need to do a PEP with … they go on holiday for the last 3 weeks of term - it can be very difficult. (Head of Year 7 – Secondary School).

Other forms of partnership work do not focus on vulnerable children. The School Sports Co-ordinators at Ashton Park School for example are,

partnership working now and we don't just work independently now, we have to be aware of the joint improvement plans now and if we're not, then we've got no clout with the LEA. That's how we've got to get ourselves out there. So, yeah, it's linking with Healthy Schools, Extended Schools, the City Council, Community Sport, National Governing bodies of sport.

In general, there are few examples of other professionals involved with transition. However, the recent introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) with a lead professional taking responsibility for overseeing a child's needs may address this and provides an ideal opportunity for engaging in partnership working for all professionals involved in the care and support of children and their families.   There is still a long way to go before the establishment of multi-agency work does not just mean the School Nurse on site. There is little involvement of voluntary groups or community groups at transition although there are examples of schools employing drama or theatre groups for group cohesion activities soon after transfer. Overall, the

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[14] Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

[15] Personal Education Plan (PEP). All looked-after children have a personal education plan (PEP), which is reviewed as part of the statutory review of the child's care plan. Responsibility for the initiation and maintenance of a PEP lies with the pupil's social worker but the educational content of the PEP is developed in conjunction with the school's designated teacher for looked-after children and other education professionals.

progress with multi-agency work is very varied and greater links will need to be made to progress the ECM agenda. More attention should be given to the potential of using multi-agency partnerships (MAP) to engage a range of voluntary and statutory organisations in easing transition for the most vulnerable young people.

Conclusion

The involvement of stakeholders in the transition process is patchy. Parental involvement activities are a key priority in all schools but there is little systematic evaluation of their effectiveness. When pupils are involved in the transition process they can play an important role as mentors or ambassadors. By contrast, there is little evidence of governor involvement in transition and progress with involving other agencies in the process has some way to go.

The transition process needs to become more open and transparent, allowing other interested parties and agencies to become involved and work in unison.

Key findings

— Schools are making extensive efforts to increase parental involvement and this takes many different forms. There is increasing use of ICT to give parents opportunities to take a more frequent and active role in children's learning.
— There is little evidence of the systematic evaluation of parental involvement but applying for Investors in Families status could be a way for schools to focus and evaluate their family-friendly approaches.
— Secondary pupils are successfully involved in mentoring and other partnership work; some of this work is through the citizenship curriculum or other awards and could be accredited.
— Governor involvement at transition is limited. The appointment of a governor with responsibility for transition would ensure that transition remains a focal point within the governing body.
— There is little evidence of multi-agency involvement but use of the CAF may address this.

Chapter 6: Two-way exchange between primary and secondary schools

Summary

This chapter focuses on the various exchanges that relate to transition between primary and secondary schools. This includes exchange of information about pupils, exchange of pupils, exchange of knowledge related to curriculum and pedagogy, and exchange of teachers. We also discuss continuities and discontinuities of culture, ethos and learning across primary and secondary schools. We suggest that the dominant education system in England has resulted in the creation of "two tribes", namely primary teachers and secondary teachers.

In general there is very little understanding and valuing of the diversity of experience and expertise across these "two tribes". We suggest that the tribe mentality works against the development of a coherent educational experience for pupils across the transition from primary to secondary schools. We argue that the new partnership possibilities discussed in Chapter 4 present a real opportunity to draw on the capacity within the system to address both academic and pastoral transition, thereby enhancing attainment, standards and wellbeing.

Information about pupils

All secondary schools invest considerable time in obtaining information about their Year 7 pupils, prior to them starting secondary school. Some of this information is in the form of standardised assessments and is usually obtained via the local authority. Other information relates to teacher assessment, Special Educational Needs (SEN), interests of pupils and more confidential information such as family background.

In general the system for gathering information about primary pupils is managed in a relatively ad hoc way by each secondary school, and much of the information is obtained by secondary teachers talking to primary teachers about individual pupils. However there is variability in the way information is collected by secondary schools and from a primary teacher's perspective it can seem that such information is relatively superficial.

> So some schools might just want you to write the levels and a little summary and other schools will come and visit and have an afternoon with the teachers or meet them after school and also introduce themselves to the children, tell them how it's all going to work. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

There is clearly scope for a more coherent system to be developed, possibly at the level of a partnership of schools, or at the level of the Local Authority. Such a system would allow for more time to be spent on the individual needs of particular pupils.

I think that if we were better organised on a basic level of the handover of data and information, then there would be less of a scurry and less of a rush at the other end and we would be able to spend more time now, talking about individuals, rather than talking about the cohort. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

All-through schools in the sample have more efficient methods for obtaining information about primary pupils who transfer from the primary phase of the school. Importantly they already know the families of these pupils, something that was considered to be very important by the head of a maintained all-through school.

The data isn't what it's all about. It's also about the families. I mean we know the families of the primary children; we've worked with them, we know the issues and it would be good if we could know a little bit more about the families [of pupils who come from other primary schools]. And I think that is something that independent schools do quite well. They get to know the families and what the strength of the families are and they get buy-in from the families. We need to be able to do that with all the families, because for us it's so much taking the whole family on – it's not just about the children, because of the type of school we are. (Head Teacher – All-through School)

The view expressed above, that independent schools are good at getting to know the families of pupils was also supported by the evidence from the two independent fee-charging schools in our sample, and also the fee-charging school that had recently become an Academy.

The success of what I've done in the past 6 years at the school that I'm at has been built up on that personal relationship [with parents]. And don't forget now I'm seeing pupils that are going out of the top of the schools that started with me. So I'm seeing the product of my work – and that's how I run it — I run it very much on trust. And when things go pear-shaped I often need to trade in a few of those Brownie points that I've got through meeting and greeting and through seeing them on parents' evening, meeting them in the car park, having a chat to see how things are going … all those interactions you can have before something goes wrong allows you to be a little firmer... it's that personal capital that I trade on when things get tough. (Head Teacher – Secondary School).

The system used by the two fee-charging schools in the sample is somewhat different from the maintained secondary schools in that both schools expect primary teachers to write a report/reference for Year 7 pupils. This report asks for information about Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) results, any concerns or problems with regard to progress, information about SEN or exceptionally able or talented pupils. It will also pick up extra-curricular activities and pupils' interests. We were told that whereas private sector primary schools were able to provide such reports, maintained primary schools were often reluctant to do this.

I have to say that primary school references are woeful. I might be being very unfair but primary schools seem to feel very reluctant to write or invest any time in

referencing. But, I also think that there is a fear – for want of a better word – or perhaps misgiving – about writing any detailed references about kids. Whereas I do all the time because that's what I do. Any reference requested for a member of this school – I write it. Obviously, with input from the Head of House and the Form tutor but the reference goes out in my name and it would be very unusual that I didn't know the boy or girl. (Head Teacher – Secondary Phase, All-through School 1)

There is some variation in the quality of data received from partner primaries but the greatest concern is the lack of information about behavioural issues which, it is conjectured, may be a product of primary teachers concern for a "fresh start" for their pupils.

The reluctance of primary teachers to provide written reports/references for their primary pupils possibly relates to a view that "judgements of the feeder school teachers might unfairly label certain pupils and give rise to expectancy effects".[1]

The majority of secondary schools in the sample made very little use of ICT for exchanging information about pupils and this was often explained as being related to concerns about confidentiality.

In general we found that secondary schools do not trust Key Stage 2 SATs results and use their own forms of assessment when students enter secondary school, a result that is consistent with the findings of previous research.[2] This is probably one of the major factors that contribute to a lack of trust between primary and secondary schools.

I think one of the disheartening things as a primary is that you do your SATs tests and so on and you have your levels, but I think some schools re-test and use different systems to use end of year targets or end of Key Stage targets. I don't know how much it's changed with Key Stage 3 SATs not being statutory any more so I'm not sure. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

Finally the 'transfer' of information between primary and secondary schools is predominantly one-way that is from the primary school to the secondary school. Several primary head teachers told us that they would like to be kept informed about their pupils as they progressed through secondary school.

I don't know what happens to my children in Year 7, we don't actually get any feedback on that... whereas we think we're sending up some confident young people we're not sure how well they do... and thinking that we're actually sending up children who may be in a cohort that's got 88% Level 4 and you know how is that translating into a GCSE results. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

Some pupils we've kept contact with and some we haven't. That's the one part of transition that I think people forget. It's all about preparation for the next stage. But

[1] Galton et al (2002), p 359
[2] See for example Galton et al (2002) and Evangelou et.al. (2008)

there's also the feedback and that, to me, is key and it's quite sad that over the years, we've had very little feedback from secondary schools saying 'your children have achieved this' or 'your students are doing that'. I think that that is the part that has really motivated us most here about all-through education - it's about the ownership. A Year 7 tutor should feel as motivated by Year 3, Year R, or whatever. And, at the same time we want to see what's happening at Year 10, Year 11 and post-16…. and unless we're getting that feedback, we will always be thinking 'well, that's it - we hand them over' and I don't believe in that. (Head Teacher – Primary Phase, All-through School)

Clearly a lack of feedback to primary teachers on pupils' progression throughout secondary school does not support primary teachers to reflect on their approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. We also suggest that a lack of two-way communication between primary and secondary schools related to both academic and pastoral transition gets in the way of finding solutions to minimising the dip in learning and attainment related to transition. New partnerships between primary and secondary schools, and the establishment of all-through schools should allow for more productive two-way exchanges of information about pupils.

Exchange of pupils

All secondary schools in the sample arranged opportunities for primary pupils to visit the 'receiving' secondary school prior to transfer. This always involved induction events at the 'receiving' secondary school in the summer term. In many schools such events continued into the autumn term, with some schools, for example the Merchants' Academy Bristol, organising special events such as 'camps'.

> We go and camp, doing map reading and other outward bound activities. And I think that is so important, and I will fight everything I can to make sure it happens. And they change so much in that time. It's the social skills, getting to know each other, getting to know me. And also dealing with conflict as well, you know they might have an argument with someone, but actually how we deal with it in secondary may be slightly different to primary, so they need to get used to the way we deal with conflict. (Head of Year 7 – Secondary School).

However as discussed more fully in Chapter 5 pupils would like more opportunities to visit the receiving secondary schools and a longer induction period would afford opportunities to meet the teachers and experience school life prior to transfer and familiarise themselves with the organisation of the secondary school structure where the length of lessons, the range of subjects, the facilities and variety of sports and clubs are at variance with the primary school.

One secondary school studied within the project, Oasis Academy Grimsby, has organised the transition from primary to secondary school in June as opposed to September. This school reported less of a 'transition dip' in key subjects such as mathematics and English.

> We started it as a pilot and we've got the evidence to say that this has an impact and that it's a really positive experience; the parents like it; the partner primary schools

like it; we like it – why don't we spread it and why don't we move it across the authority, I think that would be workable. *(Head Teacher, Secondary School)*

This school, together with 3 'feeder' primary schools has appointed a Learning Mentor. The Learning Mentor works in each of these primary schools, and also works with pupils when they arrive at the secondary school.

I've been here two years, and they took me on to work with the three feeder schools that feed the bulk of our children and then when they moved them up, I came up with them and I stayed for the first half-term and then I go back into the primaries again and get to know Year 5, until February, then I get to know Year 6 from February onwards. (Learning Mentor, Secondary School & 3 'feeder' Primary Schools).

As discussed in Chapter 5 some secondary schools involve secondary pupils in both the induction events held at secondary school, and also in visits to primary schools. Such involvement of secondary pupils is very well received by primary pupils.

Subjects, knowledge and skills

A range of new curricula models are emerging at Key Stage 3, aimed at raising achievement, with a particular focus on literacy. In general, schools that have been designated as National Challenge schools are more likely to experiment with new forms of skills-based curricula at Key Stage 3, for example the RSA's Opening Minds curriculum[3]. Arguments being made for adopting such skills' based curricula relate to supporting students to 'learn to learn' and become independent and critically minded students.

By contrast the results of this project suggest that schools with a long track-record of good results at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level are less likely to change their curriculum, maintaining a more traditional subject-based curriculum at Key Stage 3. Interestingly the two all-through fee-charging schools studied as part of this project introduce subject-specialist teachers in the primary phase. Whereas it can be understood that different schools and different student bodies have different needs, there is a real risk that a 'social class divide' with respect to the curriculum is being developed in England.

The recently published Cambridge Primary Review[4] draws attention to the importance of sorting out the confusion that surrounds the terms subjects, knowledge and skills, all key aspects of the curriculum. There is a tendency in England for discussion about curriculum to be polarized into two opposing positions, one related to subjects and the other related to skills. On the one hand there are people who defend subjects as representing culture, continuity and standards, and on the other hand there are people who argue that subjects are traditional and irrelevant to the needs of the 21st century.

What has happened here is that discussion of subjects has become entangled with a distinctly ill-informed discourse about the nature of knowledge [ ] A subject is not in

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3 See http://www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds, accessed 21st Jan 2010 and also http://www.openingminds.org.uk/Site/Opening_Minds_Welcome.html
4 Alexander, R. et al (2009)

itself old-fashioned just because subjects have been taught as an organizing device for over a century. If as enacted in the classroom a subject is irrelevant, it is the teacher who makes it so.[5]

The Cambridge Review goes on to argue that the terms subjects, discipline and knowledge are not synonymous. A subject is an organisational segment of the curriculum, which may or may not be linked to a discipline such as mathematics or science. For example a 'school' subject such as citizenship is not linked to a discipline, whereas a school subject such as mathematics is. Knowledge is central to every discipline and knowledge should not be confused with 'mere facts and information'.

> The most serious problem here is the equating of knowledge with facts and information. Propositional knowledge is but one kind of knowledge and it is the essence of mature disciplines that propositions must be tested, whether through the assembling and examination of evidence which marks out the methodology of the physical and human sciences or by tests of authenticity and artistry which may be applied in the arts, or simply in relation to honestly-assessed experience.[6]

What is being emphasised here is that domains of knowledge are "distinct ways of knowing, associated with understanding, enquiry and making sense, which includes processes of inquiry, modes of explanation and criteria for verification"[7]. Sutherland, one of the authors of this report, has also argued for some time that a confusion between knowledge and facts is at the heart of much of the rhetoric related to schooling within the 21st century, where it is often argued that because information is readily accessible via the internet, much of subject-knowledge is now irrelevant[8].

The Cambridge Primary Review also suggests that whereas England's National Curriculum was originally set up to encourage enquiry and the assessment of evidence, curriculum over crowding and an emphasis on high-stakes testing in the past decade has forced teachers to use a transmission mode of teaching which almost inevitably reduces the curriculum to facts and information.

By contrast to knowledge a skill is defined as "the ability to make or do something, especially of a practical kind; requires knowledge but is distinct from it". The Review argues that skills are important in education, but that they must complement and not replace knowledge. It also argues that in the current discussions about the primary curriculum knowledge is being downgraded to information and facts, whereas everything else within the curriculum is being elevated to a skill.

The above discussion is highly relevant to this study because issues related to subjects, knowledge and skills seem to be at the heart of what could be called the transition curriculum across the primary/secondary phase of education. Many of the secondary schools

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[5] Op. cit. p 246
[6] Op. cit. p 247
[7] Op. cit. p 258
[8] Sutherland et al (2009)

studied as part of this project have introduced what they call a skills-based curriculum into Year 7 and sometimes across all of Key Stage 3.

There seems to be a dominant view that shifting towards a more skills-based curriculum at Key Stage 3 will address the perceived lack of continuity and progression in terms of the curriculum and approaches to pedagogy. Several schools that we looked at were working on creative solutions to improving provision at Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) to take account of these concerns. Specifically, there were concerns that curricular, pedagogical and, particularly, assessment models common at the primary level were not being capitalised on by secondary teachers. In some cases schools that are introducing skills-based curricula are part of a large project that incorporates an evaluation component.[9] In other cases the very experimental nature of the new curriculum is not being systematically evaluated. An analysis of the Ofsted reports for schools which have introduced a radically different Key Stage 3 curriculum reveals a variety of 'gradings' from Ofsted. For example the competency curriculum of John Cabot Academy is highly rated by Ofsted.

> The Cabot Competency Curriculum is an example of an innovation that has had an excellent impact on students' attainment and progress. The curriculum overall is very responsive to students' aspirations, enabling them to follow courses and vocational options that suit their needs, make progress at their own pace and gain qualifications when ready. Students participate in an extensive range of activities outside of the classroom, and lead some after-school clubs themselves[10].

John Cabot Academy has relatively high GCSE results, with two thirds of pupils gaining five good GCSE passes, including English and maths in 2009. For schools with GCSE results below the national target, there could be a potential tension between a skills-based Key Stage 3 curriculum and success in mathematics and English at GCSE level.

Head teachers of some of the schools in our sample voiced concerns about a skills-bases Key Stage 3 curriculum.

> I worry that for the children that actually do need factual rigour, they are now in this sort of soup, because if it's not rigorous enough the curriculum could I think be very damaging for the average, to the good and to the very good. (Head Teacher – Secondary School).

> Now what's the best way forward? I've heard other Principals argue very articulately that it's all about skills. I've heard others argue that if you actually ditch the subjects that is damaging as well. When you actually look at the data at 14, particularly regarding pupils' mathematics skills … many students might have other skills but they've often gone backwards in mathematics. We've come up with a hybrid for the

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[9] For example, Enquiring Minds This is an approach to teaching and learning, developed by Futurelab, that takes students' ideas, interests and experiences as its starting point. See http://www.enquiringminds.org.uk/, accessed Jan 21st, 2010.
[10] Ofsted Inspection for John Cabot Academy, Nov 2009. See
http://www.cabot.ac.uk/DL.php?SOURCE=File&FILE=OFSTED_Final_Report_Nov_09, accessed Jan 21st 2010.

time being, which is that we keep subjects, but we then try to integrate some of those competencies through the subjects. (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

Interestingly some schools focus on skills, whilst at the same time maintaining a more traditional subject-based curriculum. For example the Year 7 curriculum at St Mary Redcliffe School in Bristol is subject-based, but the school's Christian ethos and identity is also supported in each year group through an 'ALIVE Model of Learning', based on a programme of learning skills and personal development attributes. Every two weeks an ALIVE theme is followed in tutor time and assembly time. Themes can be educational e.g. "I am organised", or spiritual e.g. "I value faith."

To add to this discussion it is important to present the view of a head teacher from a new Academy in the North of England, who has introduced the RSA's Opening Minds[11] curriculum to pupils at Key Stage 3.

> Now, in many ways – I know it's too simplistic to say this – but parental choice has actually driven that agenda, because the more discerning parents who want the traditional, who think it's suited to their children because their children are bright children, choose the schools and, therefore, I know those schools will never change their curriculum to vocational and never consider diplomas because they don't think it's appropriate for their children.
>
> So I, personally, think that the starting point for anything is the needs of the children. If the children that come to my school have a specific need, then I think it's up to me to provide that need. If I was in an independent school and had children who were all capable of 10 grade A stars at GCSE, would I be thinking of going down this route? Well, not if it wasn't appropriate for them. (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

This head teacher argues convincingly that for the first time pupils at her school (which draws from three council estates and has 50% of pupils with special needs and 40% Free School Meals) are beginning to learn independently.

> You see, I would argue that what we haven't been good at in this country is actually producing children who can learn independently. And that was one of my big issues here and I tried lots of things - how do I change these children into independent learners? And Opening Minds is the only thing that we've ever really had any success in. (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

Although this secondary school is working in partnership with 'feeder' primary schools to develop a coherent transition skill-based curriculum and has appointed a learning mentor to support this work, many primary teachers appear to find it difficult to understand the cross-curricula skills-based approach that is being developed in some secondary schools, viewing this as a 'repetition' of what students have already experienced at primary school.

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[11] http://www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds, accessed 21st Jan 2010

Having seen you know this lovely work on the board [at the secondary school] I'm thinking 'Yeah but my Year 5s are doing this now' … and I think, is it being repeated. And meeting some of the Year 7s recently, they were taking baby photos in, and that's fine but we've done that here many times, probably several times, and we're very careful not to repeat these things...are they being switched off by that.   (Head Teacher – Primary School).

What all of this suggests to us is that there is not enough critical discussion about skills-based and knowledge-based curricula and particularly in relation to issues of 'transition' curricula across the primary/secondary school phases. Within this project we did not study teaching and learning at the level of the classroom and the detail and nature of this is likely to be much more important in terms of pupils' attainment than espoused curricula models. It is also possible that some schools have introduced skills-based curricula as a mechanism for changing teachers' approaches to pedagogy at Key Stage 3. Here it is important to re-iterate the point made by the Cambridge Primary Review that "If as enacted in the classroom a subject is irrelevant, it is the teacher who makes it so". We should also admit that two of the authors of this report are invested in particular knowledge domains, namely Sutherland and mathematics and Harris and geography.

Analysis of case study data suggested that issues of teaching, learning and pedagogy are very rarely the focus of attention in the transition from primary to secondary school. As we will discuss in Chapter 7 issues of assessment, and in particular teacher assessment are very important in terms of 'academic' transition between primary and secondary school. Again there was very little evidence from the interview data that this was a focus of teachers' attention across the transition phase, with several notable exceptions:

I'm hugely anxious that we actually build on what they're (incoming Year 7s) are capable of doing...and that's why I'm very keen to develop APP (Assessing Pupils' Progress) in Key Stage 3 in particular … more as a planning tool. To look and say, 'Right, this is the level that a student's actually at, and this is what they as an individual need to be doing in order to move them on to the next level'.   (Head Teacher — Primary Phase, All-through School).

Literacy and numeracy

Of major national concern is the dip in attainment with respect to literacy and numeracy across the primary/secondary transition, and in particular for pupils considered to be vulnerable. This is a huge issue for schools that are designated National Challenge Schools[12], which is the case for many of the Academies in our sample. Literacy and numeracy tend to be thought of as skills, although literacy is related to the knowledge-base of English and numeracy is related to the knowledge-base of mathematics.

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[12] The measure used for the National Challenge target in England, five or more GCSE or equivalent passes at grades A*-C including English and Maths GCSE (level 2 including English and Maths), was introduced into the school performance tables in 2006. See http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/snsg-05062.pdf

Despite the work of the National Strategies in English and mathematics[13] there is very little evidence of coherence across the primary/secondary phase in literacy and numeracy. In particular evidence from this study suggests that issues related to literacy and numeracy seem to exacerbate the 'divide' between primary and secondary teachers, with secondary schools teachers questioning the reliability of Key Stage 2 assessments in these areas. Although secondary teachers are anxious not to blame primary schools for what are often low levels of literacy of their transferring primary pupils, they then tend to shift the blame onto parents and families. We suggest that any form of 'blaming' potentially avoids working in partnerships (primary and secondary teachers and parents) to both understand and tackle low attainment.

The interview data suggest that when primary and secondary teachers do begin to work together on literacy and numeracy across the transition, then they can begin to understand each other's perspectives.

> We have had many teachers from the Academy visiting us this year and, particularly looking at my Year 5/6 teachers in literacy and numeracy, and I think that's very positive because I do think it helps to see what the children are learning and I believe that in all cases, they came back and said they couldn't believe that in one class – in one of my Year 6 lessons, they were doing Year 7, Year 8 maths. Well, that's really important that they should know that those children are capable of being pushed that far, otherwise they'll get very bored when they get to secondary school if they're repeating the same stuff over and over again. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

> We did do 'Raising the Bar' with the Education Action Zone which is very much numeracy focused. Within this programme a secondary numeracy maths teacher came to the primary schools and taught maths to our Year 5 and 6 classes and also to small groups of children. And that was part of the 'Raising the Bar' initiative and, actually, was extremely positive – certainly in the learning that children did. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

Overall in numeracy/mathematics and literacy/English there seems to be very little understanding of the complexities of learning these subjects/knowledge domains and an over-reliance on discussion about 'levels of attainment' for individual pupils, as opposed to more detailed discussion about pupil's conceptual understanding. Research in mathematics education suggests that professional development in mathematics should focus on pupils' conceptual understanding of specific areas of mathematics (for example multiplication, early algebra), and that teachers need to find a language to express such conceptual understanding[14]. There is some evidence that when primary and secondary teachers start to work together they can begin to look at progression in mathematics and English which begins to transcend mere level descriptions.

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[13] See http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/, accessed Jan 21st 2010
[14] See Nunes, T., Bryant, P. and Watson, A. (2009) Key Understandings in Mathematics Learning: a report to the Nuffield Foundation. Nuffield Foundation.

Culture, ethos and learning

All schools consider it important to develop a particular school culture and ethos. Well established schools have built this up over years, whereas new Academies that have replaced National Challenge schools work hard to develop a culture and ethos which supports learning as illustrated by the values statement of City Academy in Bristol.

> The Academy aims to develop young people through four core values: Learning comes first; Learning about learning; Learning to live together; Learning today about tomorrow. The ethos is developed through eight conditions needed to raise student aspirations: Belonging; Learning Heroes; Sense of Accomplishment; Curiosity and Creativity; Fun and excitement; Leadership and responsibility; Spirit of adventure; Confidence to take action[15].

We suggest that the culture and ethos of a school is inextricably related to both pupil learning and approaches to teaching and learning. For example one of the schools studied aims to create a culture and ethos which is 'big on family values' and where younger and older students support each other through a range of House activities.

> Now, if you walk around this school and you talk to our pupils, all of them will look you in the eye; all of them are very used to talking to adults. So, we encourage through the tutors – so the Year 7 tutors are key players. (Head Teacher – Secondary School)

Although as discussed already we did not study interactions between teachers and students at the level of the classroom we conjecture that such interactions are likely to be influenced by the overall culture and ethos of the school.

A recent monitoring report for a newly formed academy Colston's Girls' School, with exceptionally high GCSE results for the predecessor school, reported that:

> The whole academy community has a strong sense of identity with shared values and aspirations and students feel that all are valued and cared for equally. They are not concerned about bullying and say there is no racism. One student said how much she appreciated belonging to a community with such a wide diversity of backgrounds and ability[16].

The report went on to say that:

> Students enjoy their lessons, especially when they can be active and can take responsibility for their own learning. Relationships in classrooms are good with an atmosphere of trust and respect, so all feel confident and able to contribute.

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[15] http://www.cityacademybristol.org/?_id=558, Accessed Jan 21st 2010
[16] http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/(id)/113764/(as)/135581_343129.pdf, accessed 21st Jan 2010

Although we do not have evidence that the reported good atmosphere in lessons relates to the reported strong sense of identity and shared values, we suggest that both aspects of a school are inextricably linked. We can find similar connections in the Ofsted reports for City Academy and John Cabot Academy.

The issue of 'school identity' is also very important, yet hard to pin down as described by the Head of the primary phase of the new all-through Haberdashers' maintained school, Hatcham College[17]:

> I was in Sorrento this summer and there was this group of girls getting a train to Herculaneum and on the train station these girls starting talking in English and they happened to ask me a question because I speak some Italian and they asked me something and I translated it for them, and I just started talking to them about what they were doing. And they said "oh, we're Habs girls" and I went "oh, I'm a Habs girl" but I'm not, I'm just a teacher in a Habs school and they were from Elstree and it was like this automatic bond between us that we were Haberdashers. And there's just something of being part of that brand. And I think that's really what they're talking about, about the behavioural thing. It's about parents who are proud now that their children come here. They're proud and we talk about them letting the Haberdashers down, "do you think that's what the Haberdashers would have wanted". (Head Teacher — Primary Phase, All-through School)

School leadership clearly plays a substantial role in creating the culture and ethos within a school, although with well-established schools the culture and ethos can transcend changes in school leadership. However as the quote above suggests the 'brand' of a school can also influence culture and ethos.

All-through schools are able to develop a culture and ethos that goes across the primary and secondary phase.

> If you are an all-through, then everything is seamless isn't it? Because the ethos that the primary school has and the secondary school has is actually completely at one. And, even if it's only 30% of the children, it's 30% of the same experience. Because, no matter how closely you work with another school, you will get some things which are very similar, but there will be a lot of other things that aren't. (Head Teacher – Secondary School).

Interviews with head teachers of all-through schools suggest that even when only 30% of pupils transfer between the primary and secondary school this can still effect the culture, ethos and learning within the new Year 7 group. However as far as we know there has been very little research into this aspect of transition.

Secondary schools recognise that the culture and ethos of primary schools is likely to be different from the culture and ethos of secondary schools and that this can impact on pupils

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[17] http://www.haaf.org.uk/index.php?hatcham/welcome, accessed 21st Jan 2010

at transition and particularly the more vulnerable pupils. One of the social and emotional issues which can have an impact on more vulnerable pupils at the point of transition from primary school to secondary school is the palpable change of school culture and ethos. Pupils find themselves moving from the relatively small environment of their primary school, where they are well known by their teachers and are relatively secure in their knowledge of their surroundings to the larger and more fragmented environment of the typical secondary school:

> The [primary] environment will be more colourful, more warming and homely….there was one school I visited where they all wore slippers to protect the carpet. Whereas, that's not the case here. So, I think the concern here really is about …there's a different structure of what it means to learn. And it's one where the kind of more maternal, nurturing, colourful environment that you expect in primary tends to change into something that is more assertive and where it's independent. There is clearly lots of opportunity for communal learning and paired learning, etc. But there's very much a focus on you have got all this amazing potential, it is up to you to untap it.   (Head of Year 7, All-through School).

At the same time, there is a comparable changing relationship for parents from one where they have a regular, informal relationship with teachers, often when picking their children up from primary school, to one where they can feel excluded from easy access to the secondary school.

However, the picture is complex because this change of context can also be regarded as positive for young people who feel that they can now be more independent in travelling to and from school, in choosing their friends and in a more distanced relationship with many teachers, instead of one primary class teacher. But it can present a dilemma and particular challenges for secondary schools in ensuring an ongoing relationship with parents, as explained by the Head Teacher of Bristol Grammar School.

> Also, the other thing is that children are becoming individual adult human beings, so they don't talk to their parents as much about things. And that's a healthy thing, it's not something you want to force to happen. So then..we as a secondary school have to work harder at getting our messages across to families. But, again, it's about reassurance and confidence and the family being know by staff. We have a House System…the Heads of House will know the families, they'll know the older sister or daughter who came through and, in many cases, they'll know the parent who came through…..There's no replacement for the personal contact, letters are important, newsletters, emails, but it's no replacement for personal contact. (Head Teacher - All-through School).

The House system at Bristol Grammar School is regarded as a particularly important vehicle for building ongoing relationships with parents and families, and ensuring that insecurities are addressed. Focus on this relationship will start early. When parents pick up their children after a 'taster day' organised by the school, members of staff will talk to them:

> And partly that's about seeing a face, you the parents meeting the Heads of House…..or the Deputies…and, yes, we give them information, but it's more….. you can see this human being and what they're like. I'm going to trust my son or daughter to this

human being's care for the next….7 years, and they are a decent, upright sort of person. The Heads of House are very good at it…. they will know the names of the children, they will already have seen them do something, and they're straight in there with parents saying, 'Yes, I saw Jenny this morning doing such and such'. And it's fundamentally about reassurance. (Head Teacher - All-through School).

Concluding remarks — two tribes?

Results from the project highlight the multiple ways in which the educational system in England exacerbates the divide between primary and secondary education. This includes: a divide between primary and secondary schooling for the majority of pupils: a divide in the curriculum between Key Stage 2 and 3; Key stage 2 assessment that is not valued by secondary teachers; a divide in the provision of initial teacher education; a divide in the allocation of School Improvement Partners; a divide in the provision of in-service teacher education and a divide in governance of primary and secondary schools. Such a divide is mirrored in the majority of children's services authorities, which organise their school support into separate primary and secondary structures. We suggest that this dominant system has resulted in the creation of "two tribes", namely primary teachers and secondary teachers. In general there is very little understanding and valuing of the diversity of experience and expertise across these "two tribes". We suggest that the "two tribe" mentality works against the development of a coherent educational experience for pupils across the transition from primary to secondary schools.

The results of the project indicate that there is a great willingness on behalf of both primary and secondary teachers to work across the primary/secondary school divide, together with some interesting local initiatives, although the dominant system does not currently support teachers in this respect. However as discussed in Chapter 4 the school landscape in England is changing and this, together with the abolition of Key Stage 3 SATs, provides a real opportunity for change that could support educational coherence across key stages 2 and 3.

Exchanges between primary and secondary school teachers as part of a partnership arrangement would help to reduce some of the tensions and lack of understanding that exist between secondary and primary school teachers. This would involve recognising the range of expertise of each group. Professional development across a Local Authority that involves primary and secondary school teachers learning together would also help develop respect and understanding between the two groups.

What I would really, really love to happen is for the secondary teachers to come in and see my teachers teaching; not at the end of the year - in the middle of the year when they're under full flow; understand how they work and my current team, I know, they could go to School P and hold their own and I would just love to give them the opportunity to show … because they have to be experts in seven, eight, nine subjects and I know they would hold their own in a Year 7 class and I think there's a tremendous amount to be learnt. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

I think one of the biggest problems and I say this as somebody who has worked in both and has an overview is that there's a feeling amongst Primary staff that Secondary

staff rather look down on them and feel that they play a lot and don't do real work and there's a feeling I think amongst Primary staff that they do a lot of supervision and a lot of things that Upper School staff don't have to do and that they [Upper School Staff] get more free time and I think that there's a sort of suspicion between the two sectors. Yes, and I think that's something that if that were addressed would make people work more effectively with the children's needs in mind instead of being so defensive about their own territory. I don't feel particularly defensive but that's because I've worked in a senior setting as well and I know how they both work, but I do think that there is that feeling. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

The Head of the Primary School at The Bridge Learning Campus in Bristol explains how their new All-through School is providing the structures for regular exchanges between primary and secondary teachers, exchanges that focus on teaching and learning.

One of the key things is we actually have meetings about learning – so, not staff meetings but meetings about learning which tend to be a weekly occurrence but those are cross-phase and it's about staff owning their own learning. So, the exchange of AFL practice; there's a common expectation and it's fascinating to see how different parts have permeated … so we've learnt that from them – but they've learnt this from us. So, there's no difference there. There is a culture and the culture is about staff learning.' (Head of Primary Phase — All-through School)

Key findings

— Exchange of information about pupils between primary and secondary schools is predominantly one way, that is from primary to secondary school. Primary teachers would value a two-way exchange of information about pupils.
— A new range of skill-based curricula models are emerging at Key Stage 3. There is an unhelpful polarisation of skills-based and subject-based curricula in the discourse about Key Stage 2 and 3 curricula.
— Very little attention is paid to issues of teaching, learning and assessment with respect to transition.
— Literacy and numeracy are key areas of concern with respect to academic transition, but there is very little evidence that teachers pay attention to the substantive issues of learning these subjects (for example what it means to learn multiplication, or what it means to learn to read). Instead they are preoccupied with 'levels of attainment'.
— The culture and ethos of a school is inextricably linked to approaches to learning and pedagogy, and is influenced by school leadership and school 'brand'.
— The dominant educational system in England exacerbates the divide between primary and secondary school and gives rise to a two-tribes mentality between primary and secondary school teachers
— The school landscape in England is changing and new governance and partnership possibilities could lead to transition arrangements, thereby enhancing attainment, standards and wellbeing.

Chapter 7: Evaluating the process of transition

Summary

Despite the growing diversity within England, the schooling system continues to be largely split into two different sections, primary and secondary, in terms of institutions, inspection, teaching and assessment norms, and local authority responsibilities. For this reason, any evaluation of the transition process tends to be partial and lack an emphasis on continuity and progression.

This study provides evidence of an increased understanding of the ways in which a wide range of stakeholders can be involved in ensuring successful transition. Such stakeholders include, not only teachers, but parents, families, community workers and other professionals working with children and families. However, there was little evidence of any inclusive, comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the processes of transition by those involved. This was exacerbated by an absence of any commonly accepted set of criteria for success, or ways in which these could be measured.

Self-evaluation model

Though the study has demonstrated the existence of a great deal of sound, developing, practice with regard to transition, there was less evidence of any clear or unified policymaking in relation to what constitutes 'successful' transfer or how that might best be organised and evaluated, either at the school, local or national level.

Many innovative examples often relied on the initiative of individuals to create appropriate links and relationships, which raises the question of sustainability. It can be argued that this also contributed to a limited evaluation of the process which consisted largely, if it occurred at all, of asking for informal feedback from those involved. As this Head of Year 7 put it:

> We have asked for feedback from all those members of staff who've been involved. We haven't asked the children yet to give us an insight into how it was for them…and I think that will be something to do. (Head of Year 7 – Secondary School).

However, there was also some evidence that secondary schools have a growing awareness of the potential problems caused through the unequal partnership between primary schools and their receiving secondary schools, and a consequent lack of knowledge and understanding. A deputy head in another secondary school, outlined his evaluation plans as follows:

> I will talk to the Primary Heads and the Primary staff about what they felt about the process. We set up a little group (within the secondary school), one of the members of the group….. is the teacher we employed who came from a Primary school because I want his input into what he felt like when the transition was being done to him and, in

terms of what we're doing this year and what would make it better. But I also talk to the children. (Deputy Head – Secondary School).

So what can be drawn from previous research and the findings from this current study that might help in developing more systematic forms of evaluation?

A recent National Strategy paper, *Strengthening transfer and transitions – partnerships for progress* [1], has drawn evidence from action research in 47 schools across 7 children's services authorities and many of its findings reflect both previous research and the findings of this study. While recognising the importance of partnership working, the document claims that:

> Every transfer between schools or transition between key stages and year groups is a potential barrier to progress. Where transfers and transitions are at their strongest, the social, emotional, curricular and pedagogical aspects of learning are managed in order to enable pupils to remain engaged with, and have control of, their learning. (DCSF (2008) p.5)

This is further supported by another recent DCSF research report[2] which analysed survey responses from children and their parents across six children's services authorities. The report argued that most children (84%) felt prepared for entry to secondary school, that parents played an important role in easing this transition, but that there were vulnerable groups for whom it was more difficult. A detailed analysis of the responses from children and parents identified five aspects of successful transition:

- children had greatly expanded their friendships and boosted their self-esteem and confidence once at secondary school;

- they had settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents;

- they were showing more interest in school and work in comparison to primary school;

- they were finding it very easy getting used to new routines; and/or

- they were finding work completed in Year 6 to be very useful for the work they were doing in Year 7

DCSF RR019, pp ii-v

It should be noted that these aspects relate not only to the social and emotional wellbeing of the pupils but also to the curricular and pedagogical aspects of learning, as highlighted by the National Strategy paper.

The National Strategy paper goes on to indentify six useful pre-requisites for successful transition, as outlined below which, again, are supported by the findings from this study. The first three relate to issues of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on a common

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[1] DCSF (2008) The National Strategies, Strengthening transfers and transitions: partnerships for progress, p.5
[2] DCSF (2008) Research Report RR019 What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school? pp.*ii-v*

model of assessment; the need to protect pupils' self-esteem and facilitate active learning; and the need to draw on and include the strengths of both primary and secondary practice:

Firstly, the paper argues that:

> **Assessment for Learning (AfL) principles underpin progress across transfers and transitions –** The principles behind effective learning and teaching are the same for transfers and transitions as for other aspects of education. The challenge is to apply them in more complex and disparate conditions[3]

This emphasis on the need to ensure a common understanding and language with respect to the process and purpose of assessment highlights one of the pedagogical differences between primary and secondary teachers which can be counterproductive at the point of transition. As one primary head teacher in our sample put it:

> One of the challenges is continuity of learning because of the way the curriculum is structured and timetables and so on…even within our school. Obviously, we've got the junior school and the senior school and, it's not for lack of wanting to do it, it's just actually making it happen….I mean, I think all teachers at every phase are still working on the whole Assessment for Learning, where you're actually using assessment much more proactively in planning for teaching and I think that's still got to happen more effectively across the Year6/7. (Head Teacher – Primary School).

This theme was taken by the head of the primary phase in an all-through Academy where a common assessment scheme (APP) had been devised by teachers in the primary phase and applied across the lower secondary phase in the expectation that this would support learning and attainment:

> We have now adopted APP which is interesting and that's gone through … we led, so primary led on APP and now the secondary are starting it this year for the first time and I'm hopeful that APP and working with the secondary on APP - because we're informing them on how to do it - I'm hoping that will prevent that dip [in pupil attainment]. (Head Teacher – Primary Phase, All-through School)

Secondly, the paper argues that:

> **Pupils need the confidence, understanding and skills to advance their own progress across transfer or transition** - Effective transfers and transitions happen inside the minds of pupils. Their ability to engage with, and take control of, their learning remain critical elements[4].

Findings from this study suggest that from the primary perspective, Year 6 pupils who have developed a degree of independent learning can have this compromised in the larger, more

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[3] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.,* p.5
[4] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.*p.5

complex and threatening environment of a secondary school. Here the need to relate to many different subject teachers, who may all have different ways of working and different demands may create more dependency and inhibit their ability to take control of their learning. As this secondary head teacher in our sample put it:

> .. I think the most important thing a school can do is understand the demands being made and we're, in fact, reviewing Year 7 provision because I'm firmly of the opinion that sometimes requiring these kids to study so many discrete subjects with so many individual teachers is, in itself, unsettling. Not because any one teacher – and it's exciting to have all these different experiences – but all teachers want things done their way and there are variations and I think sometimes the proliferation and variation lends itself to making the experience more confusing. (Head Teacher – Secondary School).

Thirdly, the paper argues that:

> **Partnership working requires mutual understanding through shared experiences and a common language –** Different approaches to learning and teaching have evolved in the different phases of education. An understanding of these is needed if partners are to provide the right conditions for continued pupil progress. Professional discussions relating to pedagogy, progress, levelling of work, and expectations can contribute to this, as can teachers visiting each other's schools, observing practice and working with the pupils[5]

Again, evidence from this study suggests that there is a growing understanding of the benefits that can be gained from a combination of the strengths from both primary and secondary practice to ease the process of transition. But more work is needed in finding the time and space for teachers from both phases to work together to gain a greater understanding of each other's strengths. However, the value of finding such time is evident in this comment from a teacher in an all-through school.

> One of the key things is we actually have meetings about learning – so, not staff meetings but meetings about learning which tend to be a weekly occurrence but those are cross-phase and it's about staff owning their own learning. So, the exchange of AFL practice; there's a common expectation and it's fascinating to see how different parts have permeated … so we've learnt that from them – but they've learnt this from us. So, there's no difference there. There is a culture and the culture is about staff learning.' (Teacher – All-through School).

The remaining three principles identified in the National Strategy paper relate more to governance and structure and suggest an active role for all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community workers, and other professionals involved in the lives of children and their families. The final principle also suggests a role for the local authority in supporting evaluation.

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[5] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.*p.5

Fourthly, the paper argues that:

> **Partnership working is essential for effective transfers and transitions for progress –**
> The stronger the partnerships between stakeholders, the greater the potential for
> progress. The pupils experience one learning journey and only through working
> together can schools and children's services authorities establish conditions for
> continuous learning.[6]

The recent introduction of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) provides an ideal
opportunity for engaging in partnership working for all professionals involved in the care
and support of children and their families. The CAF is a key part of delivering frontline
services which are integrated and focused around the needs of children and young people. It
offers a standardised approach to conducting assessments of children's additional needs
and aims to provide a simple process for a holistic assessment, taking account of the roles of
parents, carers and environmental factors on their development. The expectation is that its
use should improve integrated, multi-agency working by promoting coordinated service
provision. A head teacher in our sample talked of the gains to be had from the newly formed
Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST) working in his area:

> …I think the opportunity to have a more area approach to things and the role of the
> MAST being more integrated into the working of schools…would be key and
> important…all the agencies are there. Now what would be ideal would be that they are
> - all of those - are built into schools within the community if at all possible…So you've
> got people working in those teams across phase (primary to secondary). I mean that's a
> huge positive that it's all brought together and there is now a MAST manager. …We
> used to have cluster meetings and that was meetings of the secondary schools with the
> primary schools ..but now we have MAST meetings, so it's the secondary schools, the
> primary schools and all the leaders of those agencies. (Head Teacher – Primary School)

Fifthly, the paper argued that:

> **Effective partnerships are built on a common vision, shared responsibility and trust –**
> High levels of mutual professional esteem are essential. Partners need a clear
> understanding of the priorities, issues and scope of the work being undertaken. There
> can be no sense of hierarchy, and all partners are responsible for the progress of the
> pupil before and after the transfer or transition.[7]

Evidence from this study suggests that there is a common concern on the part of primary
teachers that the current structure allows them little opportunity to be involved in the
development of pupils after they have transferred to secondary school. There is a clear
frustration that the detailed knowledge and understanding of their pupils that they have
been able to build up over the previous six years, both socially and academically, is often not
drawn upon appropriately by their secondary colleagues to ensure that pupils continue to be

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[6] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.* p.5
[7] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.* p.5

appropriately supported and challenged in their future learning. As this primary head teacher in our sample said:

> And then for staff, I think it's fair to say there's an ongoing frustration. When we see what our children can achieve and the standards of their learning here, and that this isn't necessarily replicated and that there isn't the mutual respect from secondary. I think there's still a bit of a blame culture.   (Head Teacher – Primary School).

And finally, the paper argues that:

> **Sustained collaboration requires structures and systems that support formal and ongoing links between partners** – Structures and systems provide a framework for consistent partnership working that can be evaluated each year. They work best when responsibilities are identified in job descriptions and expectations are agreed by all partners.[8]

This study has highlighted how the structure, organisation and governance of schooling in England is changing. This has created an environment in which new initiatives can flourish but there is also a danger that such change can also cause uncertainty for individuals which can inhibit and constrain much of the good work that we have documented. As this Year 7 teacher in a secondary school put it:

> ….we were really positive about things that we could do for the future, things that would benefit both parties (primary and secondary schools). That just sort of needs to be built on really, I think.

> Interviewer: Right, and what will that take? You said time…

> There has to be time, and I think there's got to be commitment from the powers that be really. You feel like you're sort of just doing these things without any part of the school (system), without it being sort of formalised by the school's design. You wonder constantly, are you doing the right thing. I'm not sure if anybody actually knows…..

This is an area of potential action for children's services authorities and schools working together to develop guidelines for the establishment of roles and responsibilities associated with the process of transition, and providing a set of guiding principles about what good transition should look like

It is suggested that the six principles, outlined above, could be distilled into the following dimensions of transition: common assessment practices; support for independent learning; shared practice across phases; stakeholder partnership; shared vision and responsibility; common framework for sustained collaboration and evaluation

The spider diagram below, (fig.7.1), shows how these dimensions could be used to create a self-evaluation tool to help identify areas where performance in individual contexts, or the

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[8] DCSF (2008) *op.cit.* p.5

system as whole, could require more work. Those involved could be encouraged to use such a tool for the purposes of self-evaluation, to quantify the extent to which their current practices match on to the various elements, as described above.
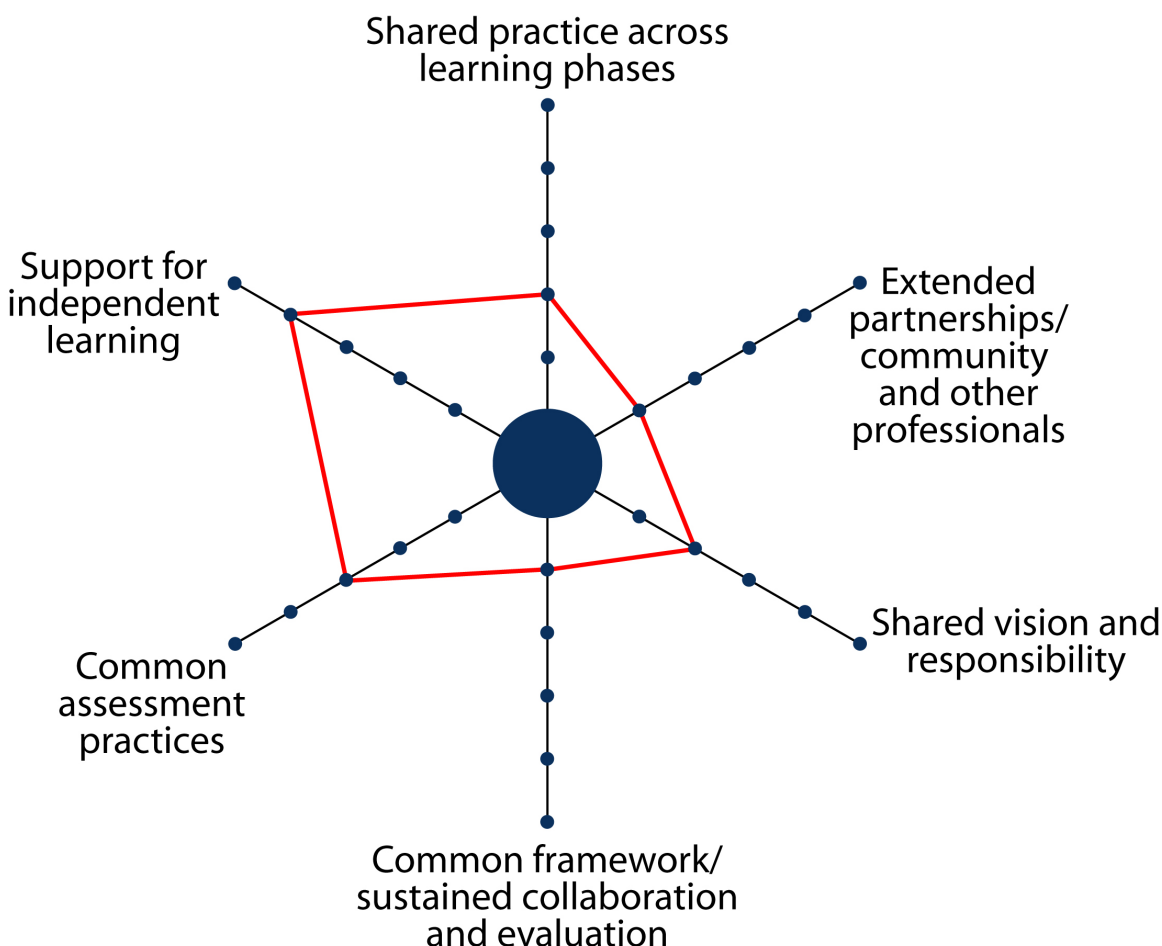
Figure 7.1. A Self-Evaluation Model

Conclusion

Evidence from the study suggests that evaluation of current transition arrangements is patchy. A lack of common criteria to describe successful transition hampers this process. Drawing on what research has to tell us about successful transfer, there is an opportunity to develop self-evaluation tools which help those involved to build on strengths and create strategies to improve weaknesses. Such development work needs to involve all stakeholders: pupils, parents, primary teaches, secondary teachers, local authority officials, community representatives and other professionals who work with children and families to ensure optimum efficacy.

Key findings

— There is currently a lack of common criteria for successful transition
— There is little evidence of any systematic evaluation of the transition process either at local authority or school level
— A common tool for the evaluation of transition between primary and secondary schools could help to identify good practice and focus on current weaknesses

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks

For this project we have worked as an inter-disciplinary team, bringing together expertise from social geography, economics, sociology and education. We have worked with the common purpose of identifying models of best practice that will support the transition from primary to secondary school. The way the report has been written reflects what it has also uncovered – partnership working.

Yet, it is easy to romanticise partnerships whilst being blind to the barriers that hinder them. Those barriers are often the product of society – of particular ways of working that have become hegemonic over time but are also products of their time. When so, they need challenging.

Whilst undertaking this research, we were surprised to discover the extent to which the dominant system has continued to re-inforce what we call two-tribes, the tribe of secondary teachers and the tribe of primary teachers. As long as these two tribes persist transition between primary and secondary schools is likely to continue to disadvantage those pupils who most need support from the educational system.

However, we have also been encouraged to find an emerging focus on the middle-years of schooling that is shared by many within the educational system. Although it is too early to evaluate the successes (or otherwise) of new forms of school organisation, governance and partnership, if the enthusiasm, energy and goodwill we have found in schools and supporting agencies is indicative, then the new models of schooling provide a real opportunity for change, addressing the education problems associated with the transition between primary and secondary school.

Helpfully, the renewed focus on transition does not see it merely as an academic matter – it is a pastoral transition, too. The issues of teaching, learning, assessment, knowledge and curriculum must not be separated from issues of wellbeing – not just in the broad and important sense of supporting students from more vulnerable backgrounds but also in the much more personal and individual sense of a pupil's move towards adulthood and the forming of their own identity and emotional wellbeing. A parallel if separate issue is what actually we, as a society, want from our schools. In Chapter 3 we identified the mixed but not necessarily conflicting policy ambitions that have shaped the educational system in recent years. In particular we noted how the rhetoric of school choice seems, in practice, to be muted by a less spoken desire for community based schooling. If this is so, perhaps it is time to shift the rhetoric and talk much more about schools and their role in their communities. This should not signal the end of school choice. But perhaps a language of collaboration and cooperation better serves the needs of our society than one of competition. It might, for example, encourage pupils, parents, schools and communities as partners in education and diminish the tendency for complaint (or withdrawal from school) when something appears to go wrong.

The findings in our report welcome the shift in the 2009 Government White Paper (Your child, your schools, our future) towards more local involvement in curriculum planning and development. We see this as a real opportunity for locally-proposed programmes of study that have relevance for local communities. Similarly, the role of assessment is important. As we move towards more teacher assessment and less 'central' assessment it is essential that ways are found for primary and secondary teachers to work together to develop practices that cut across the primary-secondary divide. This is particularly important in subjects such as English and mathematics, because distinct primary and secondary school cultures have resulted in very little common understanding between primary and secondary teachers in these areas.

We also suggest an enhanced role for Higher Education Institutions in the development and evaluation of innovatory practices aimed at improving learning and attainment across the transition phase between primary and secondary schools. There is an element of self-interest for HEIs to do so: if particular groups of students are disproportionately affected by the transition from primary to secondary schools then there may be adverse consequences in regard to the Widening Participation agenda for Universities.

In closing, we note and agree with the statement in the 2009 White Paper that "Schools have responsibilities for children across the area as well as those on their own roll".[1] If what is expressed is a commitment to pupils, to places, to communities, and a recognition that education can never be a standardised product that can be measured against simple indicators of success, then the continued underachievement, disengagement and disaffection of a significant minority of especially vulnerable young people could yet be avoided.

[1] DCSF (2009)

Appendix 1: Data collection and analysis

The research was primarily qualitative, supported by quantitative analysis of educational micro-data. The sample included a variety of schools.

Types of schools	In Bristol	Beyond Bristol	Total
LA Primary schools	7	1	8
LA Maintained secondary schools	1	1	2
LA Maintained all-through schools	0	1	1
Trust schools – all-through	1	0	1
Fee-charging all-through	2	0	2
Faith secondary school	1	0	1
Academies	5	3	8
Academies in federations	2	1	3
Academies – all-through	0	2	2

In relation to federations, in one case the sample included two of the three academies in the group and in another case, one of the three academies in the group.

Overall, the sample represents the following types of school organisation: eight academies, six all-through schools, three schools in federation, one trust school, one faith school, three maintained secondary schools and eight primary schools. The total is greater than the number of schools because some schools fall into more than one category e.g an all-through academy.

Data collected

Three types of data collection were used in this study: interviews with headteachers and school staff who have responsibilities for transition; focus groups of Year 7 pupils and quantitative analysis of micro data from Bristol schools.

Qualitative Data

In depth interviews formed the core of the data collection. The semi-structured interview schedule illuminated the different models of transition between primary and secondary through an exploration of the following areas:

- existing school partnerships

- the management of transition

- the challenges of transition

- the impact of transition on learning and associated programmes of support for pupils

- information transfer between schools

- school ethos and culture

- the involvement of parents and other stakeholders in transition

- evaluation of practices

Concluding questions asked respondents to comment on their ideal models of transition.

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, secondary headteachers, the headteachers of their partner primaries and other staff with a particular responsibility for transition including heads of Year 7, special educational needs co-ordinators, learning mentors and curriculum co-ordinators. The final dataset comprised forty-five in-depth interviews with school personnel and two local authority staff. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and sent back to respondents for validation.

Focus groups of six Y7 pupils in thirteen of the schools explored their experiences and views on secondary transition and their perceptions of any special programmes/support given both at primary and secondary school. At the request of the project team, the pupil groups were selected by the secondary school to be as representative as possible in terms of the distribution from different partner primary schools. In some schools this resulted in a group of pupils from six different primary schools; in all-through schools, a typical focus group included two or three pupils from the school's primary phase; on average, each focus group was able to offer examples of transition activities from at least four different partner primary schools.

The focus group sessions were negotiated to fit in with the school's timetable. Although the core questions centred on primary and secondary school transition activities, we were also

interested in pupil perceptions of the differences between primary and secondary school. This open-ended question led to comments on the different ethos and cultures of primary and secondary, the personal relationships between teachers and pupils and the curriculum disjuncture. Pupils were asked to recall their first week of secondary school, and thereby reflect indirectly on their own experiences, by considering the advice they would give to Y6 pupils about transition. Finally, pupils were asked to suggest improvements to the transition support offered at their primary and secondary school.

In total, thirteen focus group sessions were held and the views of eighty Y7 pupils were recorded.

Data analysis involved a systematic and iterative process of building categories and themes, informed by both the literature and the data. Case studies were developed for each secondary school individually and sent back to the headteachers for checking on accuracy and interpretation. In addition, case studies were developed around schools in federations.

Quantitative data

The study made use of 2008 and earlier National Pupil Data (NPD) matched to the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census data (PLASC)[1]. This is micro-data of pupil records, showing their progression through state funded primary and secondary schools. It is anonymised and in this report, presented only in aggregate form but uses individual level records. Similar data for pupils in fee-charging schools were unavailable and, therefore, omitted from the analyses.

The entire analysis and the visualisations were undertaken in R[2], a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics. The study also has a spatial regression model, specifically a lagged y model[3].

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[1] There is a PLASC/NPD users' group with further information at http://www.bris.ac.uk/cmpo/plug/.
[2] see: http://www.R-project.org/
[3] For an introduction to this method see Ward and Gleditsch (2009) Spatial Regression Models (London: Sage).

Appendix 2: Meetings with stakeholders

During the Project two stakeholder conferences were held in order to 1) inform stakeholders about the interim results of the project and 2) gather further views of relevance to the project. The following people attended one or both of these conferences.

Caroline Aspden	Colston's School Lower
Nick Batchelar	Bristol City Council
Alison Bolster	Graduate School of Education
Gillian Camm	Society of Merchant Venturers
Clare Campion-Smith	Children, Young People & Skills, Bristol City Council
Lynette Carter	St Ursula's School
Mark Davies	Bridge Learning Campus
Armando Di-Finizio	Bristol Brunel Academy
Lesley Evans	Redland Green School
Richard Fudge	Governor of Bristol School
Kate Gough	Young Bristol
Tom Hood	Society of Merchant Venturers
Nicholas Garrett	Cabot Learning Foundation
Sheelagh Hiley	Year 6 - The Red Maids' School (Junior)
Sandy Hore-Ruthven	Kingswood Foundation
Annie Hudson	Strategic Director Children, Young People & Skills, Bristol City Council
Lesley Jones	Colston Girls School
Fran Jones	Quartet Community Foundation
Trevor Jones	Young Bristol
Anna King	In Perspective, UK
Stephen Kings	Merchants' Academy
John Laycock	Society of Merchant Venturers
Guy Martin	Bristol Grammar School
Peter McCarthy	Society of Merchant Venturers
Alice Meason	Quartet Community Foundation
Richard Morris	Society of Merchant Venturers
Andrew Nisbet	Society of Merchant Venturers
Alison Primrose	Bristol Grammar School
Lynn Raphael Reed	University of the West of England
Caroline Reynolds	Compass Point: South Street School Children's Centre
Trevor Smallwood	Society of Merchant Venturers
Murray Stewart	Quartet Community Foundation
Stephen Stokes	Bridge Learning Campus
Sally Thomas	University of Bristol
Anthony Welch	Compass Point: South Street School Children's Centre
James Wetz	University of Bristol

Appendix 3: Advisory Board

An Advisory Board was set up to give critical feedback to the project. The Members of the Advisory board, which met in May and November 2009, were:

Simon Burgess	CMPO & Economics University of Bristol
Kate Hawkey	University of Bristol
David James	University of the West of England
John Morgan	University of Bristol
Richard Morris	Society of Merchant Venturers
Andy Noyes	University of Nottingham
Marilyn Osborn	Graduate School of Education
Murray Stewart	Quartet Foundation
Pat Triggs	University of Bristol
James Wetz	University of Bristol

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