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Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils:
Three Successful Primary Schools

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Introduction

1. We are now seeing the third and in some cases the fourth generation of Black Caribbean pupils in primary schools in England. Their grandparents came from the Caribbean from the late 1940s, recruited to work in Britain. Like other black settlers before them, they hoped for a prosperous future for themselves and enhanced educational opportunities for their children. It would be natural to expect those hopes to have been realised by now and to assume that the majority of Black Caribbean children in schools in England are sharing the higher educational standards attained by the most successful pupils in our schools. This is not the case.

2. Obtaining accurate data has been difficult over the years. The evidence that has been available from individual local education authorities (LEAs) has tended to show that the relative performance of Black Caribbean pupils begins high, starts to decline in Key Stage 2, tails off badly in Key Stage 3 and is below that of most other ethnic groups at Key Stage 4.[1] Such data reinforce the findings of detailed studies of schools and LEAs in OFSTED's report, *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: School and LEA Responses.*[2]

3. Black Caribbean pupils also appear to be in trouble in school more often than their peers. The rate at which Black Caribbean pupils are excluded from school has declined over the past two years, but, as the latest figures for exclusions from maintained primary schools demonstrate, they are still over three times more likely to be excluded from school than the average for other groups.

4. Many Black Caribbean parents who attended school in the 1960s and 1970s feel they failed at school, and are determined that the cycle will not repeat itself with their children and grandchildren. Parents in London and the West Midlands interviewed in this study attest to this:

   'The tragedy is that too many schools still fail their charges for many reasons. I let the chance to enhance my own penniless existence slip through my fingers. I still wince at the thought.'

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[1] In this report, the term Black Caribbean is used to identify pupils whose families originate from the Caribbean. Dual heritage pupils with one Black Caribbean parent have been included in this group in analysing school data.

[2] OFSTED, 1999. A follow-up to that report, *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups* (OFSTED, 2001), focused on the use made of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant in primary and secondary schools.

'My English teacher, at a crucial time, continued to say that punctuation wasn't important, despite my asking for his help. This undermined my confidence to write. I don't blame him but it was unfortunate. Then there was Mrs Green, who invited me into the top French class but I was emotionally blackmailed by my friends not to leave them. How I wished - even then - she had made the decision. There were so many of us that failed not because we didn't have the ability but because few demands were made and we didn't realise the importance of qualifications.'

'My son wasn't doing well at his old school. He was picked on all the time and I just felt I wasn't getting anywhere when I went in to see the teachers. In the end, I moved him and he is now doing well, but what will happen to those black kids whose parents don't know what to do?'

The study

5. Most research has focused on the reasons why black and other minority ethnic children fail at school.[3] Set against this picture, however, are examples of schools that provide an environment in which Black Caribbean pupils flourish: they attain above the national average; they have positive attitudes towards school; and their behaviour is good. Three such schools are the focus of this report.

6. The study involved detailed examination of the schools' data, documentation, pupil records and systems. Lessons and interactions around the schools were observed. Discussions were held with pupils, parents and staff.

7. The first part of the report examines the common features of the schools. The case studies that follow exemplify those features in the different contexts of the three schools. The names of children referred to in the case studies have been changed.

8. A report on a parallel study of secondary schools is published simultaneously *(Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Secondary Schools, OFSTED, 2002).*

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[3] An exception is a study of primary and secondary schools commissioned by the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and reported in *Making the difference: teaching and learning strategies in multi-ethnic schools,* Maud Blair and Jill Bourne (Open University, 1998).

9.   The three schools included in this study are very successful. Overall, their attainment is above the national average in National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests. Attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development are good. There have been no exclusions from the schools for the last five years. The schools have all had highly positive inspection reports. They are all beacon schools. Black Caribbean pupils do well in them.

10.   These successful schools have no recipe for the achievement of Black Caribbean pupils that is different from that for the rest of their pupils. This is not to say that the schools are blind to colour and history: far from it. But Black Caribbean pupils in these schools are valued as others are, teachers have high expectations of them and they, and their parents, are treated with respect. They achieve well as a result.

11.   The OFSTED guidance on educational inclusion and school inspection defines an 'inclusive' school as one in which at its heart … the teaching and learning, achievements and well-being of every young person matter' *(Evaluating Educational Inclusion: Guidance for inspectors and schools, OFSTED 2000)*. The three schools in this study epitomise that approach. A positive approach to inclusion and success for all is the foundation on which the policies, structures and actions of the school are built.

12.   While the schools are different in their contexts and histories, there are important common features in their approach. These common features form the main findings of this report.

A clear stand on racism

13.   A strong commitment to equal opportunities is a key characteristic of the schools. Their policies against racism are unambiguous and direct, as shown by this extract from one policy statement:

> *'The staff at Sudbourne Primary School are opposed to racism in any form. We are committed to the principle that all children should be given equal opportunities to fulfil their potential. We condemn discrimination against people because of skin colour and cultural background because it is illegal, offensive and wrong. Our school is multi-cultural and multi-racial and we value this cultural diversity. Every member of the school community should feel their language, religion and culture are valued and respected. In order to achieve this we will use what children know and understand about themselves in our teaching.'*

14.   Such statements of policy are not simply rhetoric in these schools. Any signs of racist attitudes are dealt with swiftly and decisively, having regard to the offence and to the age of the pupils. The pupils respond

well to the schools' clearly stated values about respect for one another. The black pupils in the school are confident that action on any incidents, which are very rare, will be pursued. As one Year 5 pupil commented: 'our headteacher makes sure there is no racism and is brilliant at it'.

15. There are no mere gestures to multiculturalism in these schools. Action to respect and celebrate diversity is concerned with how the school operates through its relationships and interactions, structures and routines and through its daily work on pupils' learning and personal development. It is informed by sophisticated analysis of data to check the participation and the achievement of individuals and groups. In examining the culture and the success of the school, the staff are continually vigilant. As one mature 11 year old volunteered: 'it is impossible to have complete harmony in any situation - but we get as near to it as possible'.

Building an ethos

16. The schools instil confidence. A Black Caribbean Year 6 pupil in one of the schools discussed his ambition to be a pilot. He expressed his aspirations with a mature certainty and was in no doubt about what his school had done for his confidence. He had been entered for the National Curriculum extension test in mathematics and had recently been accepted by the secondary school to which he was keen to go.

17. Within the schools, the sense of community is strong. The pupils know one another well. They accept one another's strengths in a matter-of-fact way and are sensitive to one another's limitations. They support one another so that everyone is prepared to make an attempt in areas that are not their strongest. For example, in a Year 6 literacy session in one of the schools, when one of the lowest-attaining pupils volunteered to read, the rest of the class was clearly willing him to succeed and he read with the security of knowing that. When he finished, there were smiles of approval, with the other pupils taking pleasure from his success.

18. The headteachers of the three schools have a clear and uncompromising vision for their school, communicated with unremitting directness to everyone connected with it. Their vision anchors the structures and systems of the school. As one headteacher put it: 'I am proud of my values and I want them to seep into the very brickwork of this school.' High expectations for all are the foundation; teachers demand much from their pupils and give them support at a high level too. The pupils almost always respond positively.

Leadership and teamwork

19. Staff take their lead from the headteachers not only in establishing academic standards but also in their interactions with one another, with pupils and with parents. The headteachers lead by example; they are authoritative and they command loyalty. Although they are seen by staff as strong personalities, they are also perceived as

valuing the contribution of others, listening to their views, delegating effectively and cultivating a strong corporate approach. Staff in all the schools stressed the importance of working in a team where everyone shares the same values and standards.

20. The three headteachers had all been in post for some years and two of them for a very long time. All showed a strong drive and determination in implementing the aims of the school. All three have faced significant obstacles to achieving their aspirations for their schools. Difficult decisions have not been avoided, although some have caused much anxiety. This has been especially the case in ensuring consistently high-quality teaching.

21. If the drive to implement the aims of these schools comes from the headteachers, it is shared and reinforced by the staff. All the schools go to great lengths to ensure that the staff they employ are not only good teachers but share the school's central ideals. A rigorous selection process is adopted. The majority of teachers employed in the schools in the past few years have been well known to the schools following initial teacher training placements in them.

22. The work of the schools is monitored at all levels. Setting targets is an important feature of the teaching and the approach to behaviour. One teacher described how they were required to monitor which pupils were chosen for prizes in the 'good work' assembly. One headteacher monitors which pupils are asked questions and another regularly scrutinises which pupils are being punished for misdemeanours. There is no sign of any complacent belief that systems designed to promote equal opportunities, once in place, will simply run on unattended.

Tradition and innovation

23. The schools have not invented anything new. Their work is underpinned by conventional values. Pupils are expected to treat one another and the staff with respect; and they are taught to walk around school, line up properly and work quietly. All the schools have a school uniform. The pupils are clear about the standard of work that is acceptable, including such features as presentation and handwriting. Nothing new or remarkable here - but it is consistently taught and highlighted so that it becomes the accepted way.

24. At the same time these schools are forward-thinking. They have a strong culture of reflection and development. Initiatives are embraced if they are thought to be good for the school. New ideas are assessed critically for the contribution they make to raising standards and the headteachers are not afraid to reject those that they feel will not.

25. Willingness to experiment and take things on is seen throughout the schools. Recent developments have become established practice in them before they were common elsewhere. The early use of the approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the national strategies has been one example. The use of information and

communication technology (ICT) has been another, with the schools recognising early on the potential of ICT and the need for pupils to have the skills to use it productively.

Meeting special needs

26. All the schools give special needs a high priority. Considerable resources are deployed to support the pupils concerned. Making sure that they have access to the curriculum and achieve their potential is fundamental to the philosophy of these schools. The progress of these pupils is highlighted in the schools' OFSTED reports.

Enriching the curriculum

27. Very good standards are achieved in English and mathematics in the schools. However, emphasis on these subjects does not deflect from the provision of a rich curriculum in other respects. The experience of pupils is broadened, enabling them to bring an additional perspective and depth to their learning. For example, taking pupils to museums, to the ballet and the theatre is routine. During the HMI visits, one school was busy practising the *gamelan* for a musical performance; at another, a project was being exhibited for which pupils had written poems and created their own sculptures.

Partnership with parents and the community

28. Common to the schools are the quality of their contact with parents and the value they place on their active involvement in their children's education. Building good contacts with parents does not necessarily come easily. Two of the headteachers admit to having been defensive with parents in the early days of their headship. It has taken time and commitment in all three schools to develop good links with parents and other sections of the community.

29. Seeing the day-to-day contact with parents made it clear to inspectors that parents are comfortable in approaching staff. Parents feel welcome and valued and relationships are generally highly constructive. If there are problems with a child, parents are immediately involved. Great tenacity is shown in continuing dialogue with parents until problems are resolved. The degree of confidence that parents have in their schools is marked.

Keeping the momentum going

30. The mix of factors that contribute towards the successful inclusive school is complex. Getting the mix right and then keeping it so is not easy. As one of the headteachers said about making a decision on whether to move on:

> *'I am not sure whether to leave or not. The staff and I have worked hard to develop this school. It's been a hard slog to create that equilibrium and you can't ever be complacent. It is such a fragile thing.'*

Allfarthing Primary School

Context

31. Allfarthing School is in Wandsworth, in an area of rented accommodation alongside large owner-occupied houses. About a third of parents have higher education qualifications.

32. The school has 480 pupils, 23% of them are of minority ethnic heritage. The percentage eligible for free school meals is around the national average, as is the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Baseline assessment tests indicate that the profile of attainment on entry is also broadly average.

33. In National Curriculum tests the school has performed consistently above or well above both similar schools and schools nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving level 5 at Key Stage 2 is well above the national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The performance of girls is slightly better than boys, but the performance of the boys exceeds the national average by two points. Unusually, both boys and girls attained above the national average in English.

34. In 2000, Black Caribbean pupils formed 25% of the Year 6 cohort. Their results in the National Curriculum tests are shown below. None achieved below level 3 in the three tests. Boys performed as well as girls in the three subjects.

Attainment of Black Caribbean pupils in Key Stage 2 tests in 2000

	Level 3	Level 4+	Level 5
	%	%	%
English	12	88	50
Maths	12	88	38
Science	0	100	88

35. The attendance rate for the school was low in 2000, at 89.9%, having fallen below a high point of 95.1% in 1999. Attendance is monitored regularly and the school works closely with the educational welfare service. There have been no exclusions from the school.

36. The school has been awarded beacon status for its strengths in leadership and management, including self-evaluation, and ICT.

Leadership and management

37. The headteacher of the school has been at the school for 33 years and its headteacher for 22 of those. The deputy has taught at the

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school for seven years and was appointed as deputy in 1998. They ensure that a consistent approach is adopted to the implementation of the aims of the school.

38. The school's vision of excellence for all is delineated through aims which spell out the nature of the education that pupils will receive:

-   'a firm grasp of the basic skills through the teaching of the National Curriculum;
-   the stimulus of a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that introduces new ideas and experience to all;
-   respect and consideration for their individuality, particularly background, culture and skills;
-   the confidence that comes when achievements are recognised;
-   the benefits of learning and growing in a friendly, stable and structured environment;
-   an education which prepares them for successful, enjoyable and active lives;
-   an education which gives them high expectations for their future.'

39. These aims are closely identified with the headteacher and are at the heart of the curriculum. Her determination that all children will succeed is apparent: 'I want all the children to achieve and to go out of this school running.' In assemblies she builds the confidence of the children telling them that they 'can be whatever they want to be.' Given the successes of former pupils this is not a mere faint hope. Past pupils are regularly invited back to school to discuss their achievements and talk about their careers; many of these are black.

40. The commitment to working against racism is communicated clearly and it is uncompromising. The headteacher recounts an occasion when a parent came to see her about a residential trip. During the conversation, it became clear that the parent did not want her child to share a room with a particular child; it then emerged that this was because the child concerned was black. The parent was told straightforwardly that her attitude was not consistent with the values of the school.

41. Action on equal opportunities, including race equality, is designed, as the school puts it, to ensure that:

-   'all pupils achieve their full potential;
-   expectations of pupils are equally high;
-   all pupils have access to and can make use of the school's facilities and resources;
-   the school reflects the local community it serves and responds to their needs;
-   all pupils are prepared for life in a diverse and multi-ethnic community;
-   all pupils understand what prejudice means, how discrimination occurs and how they can take a stand against all forms of racism;

- a positive ethos and environment is developed within the school;
- the school challenges and deals effectively with racist incidents;
- targets for different groups are systematically identified and included in the school improvement plan;
- planning and teaching of the National Curriculum interact with the school's policy on inclusion.'

42. Clear direction is given on the way children are treated and it is evident that they approach staff with the expectation that they will be valued as individuals. The headteacher keeps a close eye on interactions in the school, asking questions that challenge the school's practice. If, for example, she finds black pupils over-represented in a low-attaining group, she asks why.

43. Attainment, attendance and punctuality are analysed by ethnicity. If action is required to address issues that arise as a result of this, the school does not falter. For example, when monitoring behaviour, the headteacher noticed that a number of black children were identified as having behaviour problems and that this was particularly true for children who had been in the school a short time and had not been through the nursery. The issue, sensitive as it was, was tackled directly. Parents were invited into school and made aware of the problem. A high level of communication was maintained until it was resolved. As one of the pupils noted: 'You might come to this school not well behaved, but you definitely go out well behaved.'

44. The headteacher ruefully recounted other cases when she had had to be resolute but commented: 'At the end of the day, you can't fight shy of these things.' The following extract from a letter to the parent of a Black Caribbean child, Anne-Marie (not her real name), illustrates the point. The letter followed a series of incidents in which the parent appeared to give very little support to the school and was the culmination of a series of letters:

    'You will not like what I have to say but I feel morally bound to say to you that it is my firm belief that Anne-Marie needs those around her to be singing from the same song sheet. In my experience parents who trust and support the school are likely to see a change in their child's behaviour. I can truthfully say, with hand on heart, that those who don't very rarely see a difference.

    We really want Anne-Marie to succeed. She has some very good qualities and academically she is no slouch. What a waste this will be if you do not listen and act on what I perceive as very genuine advice from someone with extensive experience.'

45. A subsequent meeting with Anne-Marie's mother was difficult but in the end constructive, with the mother deciding to give the school her support. From then on, Anne-Marie has rarely put a foot wrong and is doing well.

46. The appointment of staff is seen by the headteacher and governing body as of key importance to sustaining and developing the values of the school. Successful candidates need to be excellent classroom teachers and all candidates are observed teaching before interview or appointment. The school has very good relations with local initial teacher training providers and this provides the school with the opportunity to make appointments from among trainee teachers who have worked in the school. Equally important is that the candidates share the values of the school. The headteacher stressed the importance of this in relation to equal opportunities:

> *'I always ask a question about race at interviews. I give them a situation and ask them how they might react to that situation. I'm not looking for the same answer necessarily, but I'm looking for a really categorical one. I'm looking for them to come down on one side or the other. I don't want anybody who is going to be airy-fairy about it … I don't want them saying: "that is a difficult situation", because, quite frankly, I don't think it is.'*

Ethos

47. Considerate attitudes and good behaviour were observed at playtimes as well as in lessons. Most social groups were single sex, although the use of space by girls and boys was fairly equitable. The groups were ethnically mixed.

48. Evident in all the observations and discussions with the pupils, parents and staff was a strong sense of community. All the pupils spoken to could explain the values of their school and were proud of the school's achievements and successes. Year 6 pupils were keenly aware that they attended a very good school and 'have to do our bit to keep up the reputation'. The reasons given for this view of the school included:

> *'All the work we do for charity, particularly Action Aid'*
>
> *'The teachers are fair – punishments match the crime'*
>
> *'We go on lots of visits and do exciting projects in school'*
>
> *'The school received a very good OFSTED report although we didn't do anything special'*
>
> *'Teachers involve you and ask you what you think'*
>
> *'People care about each other … if someone is hurt you would help them up and if someone is losing it, you would tell them to calm down'*
>
> *'It's like home really – you feel really welcome'.*

Tradition and innovation

49. The school employs conventional methods of curriculum and class organisation. Basic standards are emphasised in pupils' approach to work and in their behaviour. Pupils' work is clean and tidy; books are cared for and well presented. Good manners are a priority.

50. Alongside this emphasis is an enthusiasm for development and experimentation. The values of the school are brought to life in dynamic ways. The headteacher wryly apologised for being 'one of those people who read research' and reflected on its relevance to the school. Such reflection takes the form of monitoring the school's performance in relation to others. It also manifests itself, for example, in an analytical review of the use of 'setting' in the light of a recent research report that this does not necessarily improve the attainment of pupils in all circumstances.

51. The staff find it energising to be part of this culture. The headteacher does not pursue projects that are not likely to have a direct effect on improving the work of the school: she selects those likely to make a real difference and is confident in disregarding those that will not. Initiatives in which the school is involved include national awards for environmental education, being a centre of excellence for ICT, and Investors in People.

52. ICT is regarded as an important field in its own right and as a tool for developing teaching and learning in other subjects. The facilities for it centre around a well-equipped suite with a good range of software enabling teaching of other subjects such as science and design and technology. In Key Stage 2, the pupils use scanners and digital cameras for multi-media presentations. In addition, the school's commitment to involving the community at all levels of the school's work is apparent in a 'cybercafé' it has set up and to which parents come regularly.

Curriculum

53. The curriculum at Allfarthing is defined carefully and comprehensively. It puts the development of values, attitudes and personal skills at its core. Its structure is designed to:

    • highlight the inter-dependence of people, communities and countries

    • encourage pupils to think and act independently

    • help pupils see the part they can play in changing their community.

54. Four themes thread through the curriculum: careers education; economic and industrial understanding; environmental education; and education for citizenship. All subject policies have a section which outlines the contribution which the teaching of the subject should make to understanding of diversity. Detailed planning identifies the way the four themes are covered each term to ensure progression. The focus on separate subject teaching is greater in Key Stage 2.

55. There is a focus on providing a broad and rich experience for the pupils across the subjects of the National Curriculum. The core subjects are emphasised, but there is much more besides. There is

a very wide range of activities to enhance the curriculum, including drama and art events. The school has a strong musical tradition; its music groups participate in borough and national events and children are taken regularly to see concerts and other performances.

Assessment

56. Pupils are grouped by ability for English and mathematics from Key Stage 1. There is close attention to assessment, including at the end of Year 3, when a test of abstract reasoning is used to help teachers to check the match between potential and performance. Performance is analysed by ethnicity, as well as in other ways, to assess patterns and trends and to inform decisions about support. Support is given, for example, through teaching assistants, staff funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, reading tutors and the special educational needs co-ordinator.

Teaching

57. The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school. Teaching tends to be whole-class, concentrated and conducted at a good pace. It reflects a drive to make sure that the school's high expectations for all continue to be met as pupils progress through the school.

Year 6 Lesson: group of higher-attaining pupils

The group includes three Black Caribbean boys and one Black Caribbean girl. The teacher gives precise outline objectives. The pupils listen carefully and as a result are very clear about the structure of the lesson, the content and the expectations.

The lesson begins with the pupils completing a mental maths test; the questions are challenging and delivered at a swift pace. All the pupils are totally absorbed in the task in hand. The follow-up to this section of the lesson is excellent: the teacher works through the test, requiring the pupils to give answers and explain how they had achieved their answer. The interactive element of this section is used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses. Areas that are not fully understood are reinforced.

All the pupils are engaged. They listen carefully, are keen to answer questions and listen with respect to each other. When pupils are required to explain their answers, they do so confidently. Those who have not fully understood a question are not reluctant to seek further clarification. During the explanation for the subsequent task, making a frequency table, it was apparent that the teacher's subject knowledge is very secure, enabling her to respond effectively to any points raised.

The questions put by the pupils are very perceptive. The pupils demonstrate excellent skills in working independently and thrive on the challenge, while at the same being supportive of one another. All sustain high levels of concentration throughout and make very good progress.

58. In discussion after the lesson, the pupils identified the aspects of the lesson which were important to them: 'we knew what was expected of us'; 'you had to really think all the time so the time didn't drag'; 'it was a bit competitive'; 'no-one messed about'; 'it really stretches you'.

59. During all the lessons observed, the pupils demonstrated a high degree of respect for each other by not interrupting and providing appropriate responses to questions. They were highly motivated and considerate of each other.

60. Teachers identified target-setting as a key to motivating pupils and giving clarity to the learning process. The targets could also cover behaviour. Year 2 teachers talked about using marking as a dialogue, with pupils and parents encouraged to respond to written comments on pupils' work. Year 6 teachers frequently discussed targets with pupils and stressed the importance of them being achievable. The sentiment was captured in this explanation of the process from a teacher: 'Look at each child's individual needs, provide them with the support that allows the child to be at ease with themselves and know they can cope with the work.'

61. Supporting pupils towards success was defined as a form of discussion. Particular emphasis is placed on making sure that pupils with special educational needs are assessed and fully supported. When asked how they knew how to improve their work, Year 2 pupils referred to the teacher talking to them about their work and how they could improve it. One pupil in Year 6 expressed this in the following terms: 'Sometimes, not doing a good piece of work can help you. When the teacher talks about it with you and tells you how to make it better you remember it.'

Parents and community

62. The questionnaires returned by parents at the time of the school's OFSTED inspection reflect the very high level of satisfaction that parents feel with the school. With hindsight, the headteacher reflects that she could have given greater attention earlier in her headship to establishing links with parents and the wider community. These days, she is dealing with the children of children that she taught when she started at the school and is well known in the locality.

63. Talking and listening to parents are seen as vital for staff at all levels, as the only ways to gain their support. The school is willing to listen and has the confidence to do so. For example, feedback boxes are available for parents and pupils to give their opinions privately on any aspect of the school. The contributions are collected by the chair of governors and discussed with the headteacher.

64. One parent of three former pupils – who are now well established in their careers – described how, when her boys attended the school, there were problems with a member of the support staff. The parent was particularly annoyed when her eldest son was continually upset by the way that he was spoken to by this member of staff: 'how is it that my son can be gentle one minute and then leave the house, walk round the corner to school and then be described as a bully?' The mother was unrelenting in her demands that her children would be treated fairly. The headteacher observed the member of staff in her interactions with the children and found that there was indeed a problem in the way they were talked to. The matter was dealt with. Both the headteacher and the parent recall that there were other tensions during the time the three boys attended school. However, the parent is full of praise:

> *'I give thanks that she was the headteacher. She listened to what we had to say and was always fair, even though I wasn't afraid to speak my mind. A lot of black children who went to that school have done well. We really respect the school, so much so that my grandchild, the daughter of my eldest son, will be starting in the nursery in September.'*

Moat Farm Junior School

Context

65. Moat Farm Junior School is in Sandwell in an area of local authority housing. The main estate that the school serves has the highest number of households lacking basic amenities in the borough. Scattered throughout the surrounding area are pockets of owner-occupied houses from which the school draws a few pupils. Only 3.2% of adults in the wards from which the school mainly draws its pupils have higher education qualifications.

66. There are 480 pupils on roll. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language (14%) is high. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is broadly average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is 20%, of whom approximately half are Black Caribbean.

67. The results of Key Stage 2 tests have shown significant improvement over the last few years and, in 2000, those in English were in line with the national average, those in mathematics were above and those in science well above. When compared to similar schools, attainment in all subjects was above average. The number of pupils achieving level 5 was close to the national average and in science was well above it.

68. The attainment of Black Caribbean pupils is impressive. In 2000, nine pupils took the Key Stage 2 tests. Their results are shown below. No black pupils achieved less than level 3. There was very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

Attainment of Black Caribbean pupils in Key Stage 2 tests in 2000

	Level 3	Level 4+	Level 5
	%	%	%
English	9	91	46
Maths	0	100	36
Science	0	100	64

69. Attendance is 94.9%. The attendance of Black Caribbean pupils is higher than that of other ethnic groups. There have been no exclusions in the last five years. As the headteacher says, 'we do have a behaviour record sheet – six strikes and you are out – but no one ever gets to six strikes.'

70. The school has continued to improve markedly. Achievements include becoming a beacon school, receiving a Lloyds TSB Teaching Award for its ICT co-ordinator and being identified by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) as one of the top 100 schools nationally.

Leadership

Leadership and management in the school are excellent and a great strength of the school. Through excellent role modelling, the headteacher, well and ably supported by the senior management team, provides all within the school with a clear shared educational vision of where the school is heading.

There is a clear and appropriate commitment to continuously raising standards and rigorous and effective monitoring of the curriculum at all levels.

OFSTED inspection report,1997

71. The headteacher at the time of the HMI visit has since moved to another post. At the time he became the headteacher of Moat Farm, in 1990, the school was in a depressed state. Many of the boys brought a disruptive attitude into school. The environment was unkempt and uninspiring, displays were untidy and unstimulating, furniture was shabby and much of it was in a state of disrepair. The building was subject to the persistent attentions of vandals and graffiti, much of it racist, was rife.

72. The task the headteacher faced in raising standards was crystallised for him at Christmas in his first year when he received the usual deluge of cards from pupils. The cards were devoid of correct punctuation; names were written entirely in lower case; and handwriting was poor. Only one card was neatly written and correctly punctuated. The card was from a pupil who had recently joined the school.

73. The headteacher set about changing the culture of the school. Improving teaching was the key. The strategies adopted – classroom observation, scrutiny of pupils' work and appraisal – were ahead of their time, although common practice now. After each observation, interviews were held with staff to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of lessons; these exchanges were sometimes very difficult. Most teachers realised after two terms that the changes beginning to happen were for the better. Those that did not see the need for changes eventually moved on.

74. High expectations now permeate the school; it is full of motivated, focused, polite and well-behaved pupils.

> *Throughout the school the pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and they take pride in their work. They respond to good teaching by listening well, displaying enthusiasm and working hard.*
>
> *OFSTED inspection report,1997*

75. A basis of the new approach was the requirement that everybody should demand high expectations in both academic work and behaviour. This was communicated constantly, through school assemblies, staff meetings, and discussions with individual teachers and pupils. These strategies are still used now; pupils and teachers talk, for example, about the role of assemblies as key points for communicating the ethos of high expectations. Role-play is used in the first two weeks of each school year to demonstrate how pupils and teachers should conduct themselves in the corridors, emphasising equal respect and politeness. Assemblies are also used to announce the successes of individuals and the school as a whole.

76. The features of the headteacher's leadership highlighted as effective by staff were:

    • a clear vision of excellence across the range of the curriculum and the rest of the school's work

    • good communication of the vision, ensuring everyone understood as precisely as possible the expectations of attainment and behaviour

    • clear feedback, based on consistent monitoring, about whether the expectations were being met

    • reflection in his own approach of the way he expected pupils to be treated.

77. As in the other schools in this study, authoritative leadership is combined with a valuing of staff. Teachers are confident that their views will be listened to and acted upon so that a genuine team approach is established.

78. Good management is apparent at all levels. Action plans are specific, with the school's mission statement – 'We will be the centre of quality and excellence' – at their core. Documentation sets out clear guidelines for staff to follow. The school development plan is a robust and rigorous document; staff and governors are consulted at all stages to ensure it reflects accurately the needs of the school. Financial planning is targeted effectively at realising the priorities of the school. Timescales are specific, roles and responsibilities for delivery identified and success criteria unambiguous.

Ethos

79. A clear lead against racism is given by the headteacher. His stance is well known in an area where there are a significant number of racist incidents. Incidents of racist behaviour or bullying in the school itself are rare. Where they happen, they involve name-calling. If an incident occurs, the headteacher deals with it. He will send for the parents of the pupil responsible for name-calling and talk to the parents about the values of the school; it is made clear that any sort of racist behaviour is unacceptable.

80. The school has a clear statement on equal opportunities. This is reflected in the curriculum, which provides pupils with the opportunities to learn about and reflect on cultures other than their own and the major faiths.

81. Great pride is shown when the pupils talk about their school. They can all articulate the main points of the mission statement, which is that children are to be:

   'Polite, well-mannered, friendly, welcoming, good-humoured; greet and be greeted; caring, particularly towards younger pupils; against bullying and racism; self-responsible and responsible for the conduct of others; and expected to use the school in a responsible way.'

82. Movement around the school is orderly and quiet, without being regimented. The pupils hold doors open for teachers and each other. Some of the Year 6 pupils explained this in terms of getting respect if one showed respect. They also commented that this expectation of respect improves the learning environment. Pupils also talked about the respect they received from teachers, manifested in the way they encourage them to achieve and take the time to explain the work.

83. The physical environment establishes the school's expectations and style. The main entrance takes the visitor into a well resourced and attractively decorated library, which contains a number of stimulating artefacts. Displays communicate the high standard of work expected and the school's successes. Pupils' individual achievements, or

expectations of their achievements, are connected with the school's. The displays also highlight ethnic and cultural diversity. At the time of the HMI visit quotations from Martin Luther King on ambition and the struggle to achieve it were prominent and there were two listening stations near the main entrance where pupils could listen to his 'I have a dream' speech.

Teaching

84. The teaching benefits from a joint planning system for each year group. This leads to the healthy exchange of ideas and all teachers benefit from a base of pooled knowledge. Training has concentrated on how to improve teaching and discussions held with the headteacher or co-ordinators after lessons have been observed help to pinpoint further areas for improvement.

85. The setting of targets is a strong feature. It is recognised by staff as a way of establishing a consistent approach to defining expectations across the school. The process is driven by careful assessment, ensuring that the targets are matched closely to pupils' learning needs.

86. The pupils are enthusiastic about the process. They were aware of two types of targets: those setting learning objectives in particular lessons and those setting objectives for personal improvement. It was the personal targets that featured most in pupils' discussions. All the pupils saw them as providing routes to improving their work. Often, these targets were immediately achievable, for example learning five words or focusing on work for the next 10 minutes. Some were set for the medium term, such as aiming to move on to the next level of reading books. They were also long term: going to a secondary school; getting a good job, and so on. Year 6 pupils, in particular, were conscious of and able to use the language of targets, for example in relation to achievement in English.

Consistency

87. Pupils and teachers both stressed the importance of consistency in reinforcing high expectations. For the pupils, consistency was experienced through the support their teachers provided for their work and in the teachers' response to behaviour. Consistent approaches to work and behaviour mean that pupils do not have to second-guess what the teachers expect.

88. The teachers defined consistency in terms of the shared expectations of the staff, particularly with regard to behaviour and achievement. The shared expectations provide a framework of mutual support. As one teacher put it: 'Whatever you are demanding in your classroom, everybody else is demanding exactly the same of their class, and the head is backing you up'.

89. This consistency extends to all aspects of the school. The staff and pupils know that books will be scrutinised every half-term, teachers know that the quality of teaching will be monitored, and they are aware that the headteacher expects them to be positive in their interactions with pupils.

90. Some of the consistency is a result of the school's approach to recruiting staff. Considerable effort is invested in the process. The headteacher identifies the process as one of 'looking for a good practitioner rather than filling a post'. A 'good practitioner' is judged in terms of basic competencies but also in terms of understanding and appreciation of the values of the school.

Special needs

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is excellent information technology support provided through the open integrated learning system which facilitates individual learning programmes for pupils thus enabling them to make good progress within the curriculum.

OFSTED inspection report, 1997

91. High priority is given to meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Despite significant improvements in National Curriculum results, a number of pupils are making little progress. Tackling this under-achievement has been a challenging task.

92. The school provides a daily input for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils on stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice are withdrawn every day – pupils in Years 3 and 4 in the morning and those in Years 5 and 6 in the afternoon. The daily input by the special needs co-ordinator specifically addresses the areas identified on each child's individual education plan.

93. The approach is based in part on computer programs. A classroom assistant and parents who have been trained to use them assist regularly. An external evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the use of ICT in this respect. Pupils made impressive gains in reading comprehension and lower-attaining pupils also made significant improvements in their writing. The attainment of boys markedly improved.

94. Special provision is also made for higher-attaining pupils. In 1999, the school established a 'Children's University advanced mathematics class'. Over 40 pupils from schools in the area attended a mathematics session for pupils aged 7–10. Every effort was made to ensure that participation was inclusive. For example, the school negotiated to provide two pupils in public care with computers so that they could access maths programmes via the Internet. One of the pupils was profoundly deaf and the computer assisted him particularly in extending his learning at home.

95. For the last five years, the school has funded from its own budget a summer literacy school for low-attaining Year 5 pupils. As a result, these pupils begin Year 6 having made improvements in their learning and without losing momentum over the summer period.

Information and communication technology

96. The school was a pilot school for the National Grid for Learning and as a result identified ICT as a valuable tool for improving standards. ICT now has a central role in the school's improvement strategy. The computer areas are favourite rooms for pupils to work in. Through a variety of means, including links with business, the school has been able to establish four computer suites with over 60 stations. The other suites are timetabled to ensure that pupils work on specific skills in ICT to support learning in other areas of the curriculum.

97. An interactive whiteboard has added to the range of ICT equipment that the school uses. An outstanding lesson was observed during which the teacher used the whiteboard to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical problems.

Parents and community

98. The school regards liaison with parents as vital to its drive to raise standards. The fact that the headteacher is well known and respected in the community has done much to assist the establishing of strong links. Parents play a full part in the life of the school. They come into school regularly to hear children read and some provide effective assistance for pupils working on computers in the reading unit. They are regularly involved in extra-curricular activities, including football coaching on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

99. Parents expressed great appreciation of the way they were treated. The questionnaires returned by parents when the school was last inspected support this view of the school: 99% of parents felt that they would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems.

100. Some of the interviews with parents or other carers focused on what the school had done for children who had been on the way to disengagement and disaffection. Two case studies are given below. The school was clearly not the only factor influencing behaviour and progress in these cases, with parents and, in one case, grandparents having a vital role. What obviously impressed those interviewed were the school's clarity, sympathy, firmness and consistency, together with its willingness to interact with them on a personal level. That the school was affirmative in its stance on diversity and against racism was of fundamental importance to them.

Craig

Craig was aged 10 at the time of the visit. A Black Caribbean boy, he lived with his mother, brother and two sisters five minutes from the school. Prior to attending Moat Farm, Craig had attended another school, with little success. Craig was demoralised by the experience. He felt picked on and, rightly or wrongly, put this down to the fact that he was black. As far as he was concerned 'black kids got blamed for everything'. His mother described this period as 'nothing but problems. It wasn't fair because, although he is naughty at times, the teachers blamed him for everything. Every single thing that happened in that class, Craig was blamed for it. I think some of it was because of his colour.'

Initially, the teachers at Moat Farm were very concerned about him. He treated the staff with suspicion and his self-esteem was low. Interactions were characterised by one-word answers from Craig; he did not make eye contact and did not have the confidence to read to the teacher. His behaviour was immature: he would laugh at inappropriate times and became resentful when reprimanded.

Gradually, Craig began to gain confidence. This was described by his teacher as a slow process. It involved her laying down very clear parameters about behaviour, while showing fairness and responding to him as an individual. He was required to see the headteacher on a number of occasions. The headteacher reinforced the teacher's approach: 'I had to be pretty firm with him. I told him what was expected, but not in a unsympathetic way. The problem was that he didn't know how to play properly with other children, without injecting some rough stuff. So he had to be told.'

Now, 18 months after joining, Craig was enjoying school. Although not completely transformed into a model pupil, he was positive about school. 'I like this school because it's fair. You get detention if you don't do your work or you get in trouble. If you tell the head the truth, he doesn't shout. I think he's fair. He gives you a chance. He's strict but I like him because he is kind and fair. The teachers are all nice and helpful.' His work had greatly improved and Craig was confident of obtaining level 4 in the National Curriculum assessments the following year.

His mother was equally positive. Although not totally in agreement with all the school's procedures, she had confidence in them: 'I think sometimes they put the kids in detention too quickly. But they are ever so good at that school. The kids behave well and when you look at other schools you realise why they have to be strict, so I'm behind them all the way.' The approachability of the staff, their promptness in contacting her if there were any problems and the manner in which they talked to her were all points that she stressed.

Jonathan

Jonathan's mother is Black Caribbean and his father is white. His mother became pregnant with Jonathan at 16, while still at school. She was living with her father and stepmother, who continued to provide much support for both her and Jonathan. There was no contact with his father. Jonathan did not attend school until he was seven years old. His mother had such a bad experience at school that she decided she would educate him herself.

When he started school at seven, he found it very difficult to settle. Jonathan began to be seen as a problem in the classroom, unable to concentrate and making little progress. His grandmother approached the school on two occasions when she thought Jonathan was insensitively treated, to try to establish a dialogue. She described Jonathan's teacher at this school as 'quite nice but not very approachable'.

His grandmother saw an immediate change when Jonathan moved to Moat Farm: 'He was a different child from the moment he went there. The headteacher and the teachers used to talk to him. He felt part of the school I think.' His grandparents were impressed when they attended their first parents' evening and the headteacher was immediately able to discuss Jonathan's progress with them on meeting them in the corridor. Jonathan's grandmother highlighted the headteacher's presence at the school gates and the fact that 'when you see him with the children, you can tell he really likes them'.

Jonathan had his ups and downs at school but was enthusiastic when discussing it and obviously felt comfortable with the other children and confident when speaking in a group. He enjoyed school because 'the work is interesting and you have to work hard'; 'there's no bullying'; and 'the teachers treat you well'.

Sudbourne Primary School

Context

101. Sudbourne Primary School is in Lambeth. Nearly a quarter of the adults in the ward in which it is situated have higher education qualifications. About half the children are of minority ethnic heritage.

102. The school has 370 pupils; it has a nursery with 50 part-time children. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (38.4%) is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (27.7%) is very high. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is also high, with the percentage of pupils with statements being above the national average.

103. Attainment, as shown in National Curriculum assessments, has been consistently high for many years. The number of Black Caribbean pupils attending the school has always been significant and they have shared in the success achieved by the school.

104. In the 1999 Key Stage 2 tests, 27% of the cohort were Black Caribbean; their level of attainment was well above the national average. The attainment of boys was better than that of girls. No boys achieved less than level 4; the percentage of Black Caribbean boys achieving level 5 was well above the national average. The attainment of the girls, although not as high as that of boys, was also above the national average. No black pupil achieved less than level 3 in any subject.

Attainment of Black Caribbean pupils in Key Stage 2 tests in 2000

	Level 3	Level 4+	Level 5
	%	%	%
English	17	83	47
Maths	7	93	40
Science		100	40

105. The attendance rate for 1998/99 was 94.9%. There have been no exclusions for the last five years.

Leadership and management

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is demonstrated by the consistent quality of provision across the school and her focus upon high standards and school improvement.
OFSTED inspection report, 1999

106. When the headteacher was appointed in 1982, she had been deputy of the school for some years. At that stage, the school was subject to falling rolls and there was much to do.

107. In highlighting reasons for the school's success, the headteacher identified the following:

- 'having a good team that shares your aspirations for the school;
- single-mindedness - the need to plough a straight furrow without being diverted;
- being confident enough to admit when you are wrong;
- involving parents and the community;
- possessing good antennae - being sensitive to all the subtle shifts and knowing what is happening in the school as an institution;
- retaining some of the formal aspects of traditional school life, for example, insisting on good manners, standards in work and the wearing of the school uniform.'

A hallmark of the school is its consistency of approach reflecting a thorough understanding of the school's aims, values and policies by all staff.
OFSTED inspection report, 1999

108. The headteacher's approach has developed over time. After completing the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers, she re-evaluated her style, because the questionnaires completed by the staff for the programme revealed, she felt, the need for a more collaborative style. Interviews with staff testify to her success in this respect.

109. The staff are a mix of experienced and relatively inexperienced teachers. The newer staff talk about 'their school' with the same degree of commitment and pride as their longer-serving colleagues. All staff articulated the same vision and priorities for the school. Staff meetings were seen as forums for ensuring commonality of purpose, discussing problems and moderating assessment: 'We really have heavy staff meetings…we really thrash things out – what are we going to do and how are we going to do it'. A new member of staff described the school as 'motivating': 'this is a school that makes you want to give your all.' Another highlighted the clarity of demands as a particular strength of the school: 'I think it is excellent that we all know what the boundaries are – pupils, staff and parents! I like the routine and attention to detail – although it's hard work!'

110. Management procedures are well structured and precise. The school development plan outlines the relevant priorities, success criteria and timescales. Professional development programmes are closely allied to the school priorities, ensuring that efforts on school improvement are concerted. Funding is carefully targeted to priorities. The school spends relatively more of its budget on staffing than other schools in the LEA.

111. Systems of monitoring apply to virtually all areas of school life and involve accountability and action by all staff in the school and its governing body.

Ethos

112. The clear parameters, organisation and sense of certainty are equally important to pupils, staff and parents. Discussions with black pupils echoed the sentiments of staff:

> *'We're proud of our school. When we got our OFSTED report, the headteacher read some it to us. It was brilliant. I think they got it right. Whenever we go on trips or out of school, people always write us letters to say that we were well behaved.'*

113. When the pupils highlighted what was good about the school, dominant themes were high expectations, high standards and caring for and respecting each other:

> *'Our school is good because there are lots of different races and cultures here. That's good because you can learn from each other. It widens your understanding.'*

'We all know each other – it's almost like a family.'

'The teachers respect the pupils and we respect our teachers.'

'It's fair because the teachers will always listen to both sides of the argument, both points of view and get to the bottom of things. They are not sexist or racist.'

'They phone parents and get them to come in but they tell parents about the good things as well.'

'If there is any bullying it will be nipped in the bud. Our headteacher has a radar for trouble.'

114. The pupils enjoyed the endeavour involved in completing challenging work. They felt that the staff liked them and wanted them to do well. They listened and were even-handed when dealing with problems. The word respect featured prominently in the conversations.

115. Having high academic and social expectations of pupils means, as one senior teacher commented, 'putting pupils in control of their destiny'. High expectations are discussed in terms of the minute-by-minute interactions in the classroom. One member of staff defined the reason for the positive atmosphere in this way.

> *'All children succeed in this school. Everyone is an individual and we want them all to be successful. We do not make assumptions. All children are given the opportunity. If you put them in a position where they will succeed it will bolster them. In a sense the academic part is the easy part; the difficult part is to instil a sense of self-belief whatever their background. If you can manage that, the children and parents are with you.'*

116. The school's equal opportunities policy contains a checklist of 14 points on which staff are expected to act in order to review and improve practice. Strategies for monitoring the policy are set out clearly.

Assessment and support

117. Analysis of data is central to the school's work. The school's approach is methodical and geared to identifying individual strengths and weaknesses and patterns of these across groups in the school. The information is used to set targets based on an expectation that pupils will improve by one National Curriculum level every two years.

118. Use of data has resulted in teachers setting pupils by attainment with greater precision; greater fluidity has been achieved in relation to special educational needs, with pupils moving up or down the stages of the special educational needs register more often. Resources such as learning mentors and booster classes are finely tuned to meet identified needs.

119. Setting by attainment is used to provide challenge and support in English and mathematics. Each 90-strong year group is divided into four sets in Years 1–4, with the classroom support teacher working with the additional set. In Years 5 and 6, five sets are formed, with the special educational needs co-ordinator taking the lowest-attaining set. The organisation means that the sets are small. Support is also provided by teaching assistants and a language support assistant.

Teaching

120. Teaching of consistently high quality is a feature of the school. Behaviour is very good, with the quality of the relationship between teachers and pupils contributing to a calm and absorbed atmosphere. In the lessons observed there was a common stress on encouragement, high expectations and continuous improvement. Teachers were keen to emphasise that excellent behaviour was not easily established or maintained. It required constant watchfulness and action on all significant incidents so that pupils were aware that teachers were alert and consistent in ensuring that standards did not slip.

121. The lessons observed by HMI were characterised by:

- clear learning objectives
- targets that were reviewed and renewed as pupils completed a piece of work, providing clear indications of what pupils should do next
- very good teacher knowledge, used to effect when explaining the content of the lesson and answering pupils' questions
- unobtrusive behaviour management, ensuring pupils are on task at all times
- good use of praise throughout to encourage and motivate, with a high level of responsiveness and enthusiasm evident as a result.

122. In all of the lessons, teachers used the appropriate technical language for the subject with the expectation that the pupils would understand it. Pupils responded to this confidently. They were familiar with targets for learning, able to use a combination of teacher comments and their own knowledge of National Curriculum level descriptions to analyse their own work. They were keen to improve and could see how to do so without the direct presence of the teacher; independent learning skills were fostered and developed. However, there was also a high degree of evaluative feedback by teachers in lessons observed.

Parents and community

123. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. In the parents' meeting which took place in its last inspection the comments made by parents focused on: the excellent quality of the headteacher; the

very good organisation of the school; the hard work of teachers and support staff; an impressive playground culture with good relationships between all age groups; and a sense of commitment throughout the school.

124. Being part of the community is viewed as imperative by the school. During the first year of her headship, the headteacher was confronted by a group of vocal black parents who raised several issues about the school, such as the fact that the books in the school did not reflect the ethnic mix of the community and that parents were generally kept at a distance. The criticisms were levelled primarily at the headteacher. One of the leaders of the group removed his child from the school. Rather than isolating the school further, the headteacher, although upset, took careful stock of the situation. While she thought that the parents may have been expecting change too quickly, she had to admit that they were right in some areas – and action was taken to address the issues they had raised.

125. Based on a willingness to listen, question and respond, the headteacher decided that being central to the community and developing a shared understanding with parents were essential if the school was to move forward. Those aims have been achieved. The headteacher is now involved with the children of those that she taught and is well known in the community. This has assisted her in her no-nonsense approach when dealing with any incidents in school:

> *'I immediately get in touch with parents if there is an issue I need to discuss with them. They might think I am bossy and even irritable at times. But I hope they trust me, know that I am fair and want the best for their children.'*

126. Comments from a group of black parents confirmed this:

> 'We're lucky to have a good school like this near us. It's getting more and more difficult for children to come here because everybody wants their children to come here.'

> 'We have a very good relationship with the school. I think it is good because if anything needs to be discussed, they contact you straight away. You don't have to wait until parents' evening to find out what is happening with your kids.'

> 'The teachers at this school really put themselves out to help you, whatever the problem.'

127. Education is very clearly of great importance to these parents. Many were highly appreciative of the efforts of the school to involve and continue a dialogue with parents. Staff were described as 'very persistent' in ensuring that parents knew about issues in school that might affect their child's progress. Although one or two felt somewhat hounded at times, parents were very positive about the high level of communication.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

128. The OFSTED report of 2001, *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups,* records encouraging signs of improvement in the way schools and LEAs are addressing minority ethnic achievement generally. However, the signs of improvement in this respect do not mean that familiar patterns of differential achievement among ethnic groups are ceasing to exist.

129. The earlier report pointed to the continuing need to analyse and disseminate effective action to address the under-achievement of particular minority ethnic groups. The schools which are the focus of this report provide, from their varying contexts and histories, positive messages about what can be done, not only for Black Caribbean youngsters but for other groups, including white youngsters, at risk of under-achievement.

130. These are schools with strong leadership and strong systems. Central to their work are high expectations and the provision of support so that pupils can meet them. The hope expressed by the schools – that all pupils will do their best – is pursued through practice that is rigorous in design. Teachers value pupils and are responsive to individual needs. Staff take their lead from the headteachers not only in establishing academic standards but also in shaping their interactions with one another, with pupils and with parents. Traditional values are stressed, but at the same time these schools have a strong culture of reflection and development. The work of the schools is monitored at all levels.

131. The schools encourage and value the active involvement of parents in their children's education and communication with parents is a major strength. Parents know and appreciate what the schools do to provide an environment in which their children can give of their best and flourish.

132. How do we help more schools to achieve success like this? There are three broad ways in which more deliberate and concerted action at national, local and school levels could be pursued.

133. The first is **to develop the confidence and sophistication of schools in approaching ethnic diversity.** One key to this is the analysis of data. There is a continued need to prompt the effective use of data to focus attention and resources. Along with this comes the need for open debate in schools and with parents and the wider community about barriers to achievement and responses to schools. What do staff, pupils and parents think about barriers to achievement? Where does 'race' sit in this school alongside the other dimensions of sex, culture, religion and class? What should be done in school to discuss attitudes and responses and to address discrimination? Which strategies are likely to achieve results?

OFSTED's *Evaluating Educational Inclusion: Guidance for inspectors and schools (2000),* provides a way of structuring such an analysis.

134. This is complicated and sensitive territory and many schools in ethnically diverse areas are plainly nervous about opening up such debate for fear of making things worse. The fact that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 expects schools to take positive steps to eliminate barriers to achievement and to promote good relations between ethnic groups is a chance to be taken in this respect.

135. The second issue is how **to integrate specific action on minority ethnic achievement within mainstream improvement initiatives.** One clear, and very familiar, message from the success of these schools is that action on minority ethnic achievement is not something to be pursued as an after-thought or by a few committed people: it needs to be central to the school's basic systems and approaches and made relevant to all staff. Where the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is available, it gives a basis for this development. Aside from this, there is scope for more deliberate signalling, encouragement and exemplification of good practice in responding to ethnic diversity within broad improvement initiatives and within the curriculum as a whole.

136. The third issue – and the one on which work has been least systematic to date – is **to improve connections between schools and other local services in joint action on social inclusion.** The national strategy for neighbourhood renewal highlights the need for more to be done across the public services to focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups as a matter of basic principle and routine. Schools are receiving less help than they need in this respect and many schools in ethnically diverse areas are under great pressure as a result.

Recommendations

137. In summary, the recommendations for schools with ethnically diverse populations emerging from this study are that they should:

- use data analysed by ethnicity to check the participation and achievement of ethnic groups

- gather and debate the views of staff, pupils, parents and the wider community about barriers to achievement and responses to school

- focus sharply in their response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act on what can be done through the curriculum, teaching, assessment and guidance to remove barriers to achievement and to reflect ethnic and cultural diversity

- set clear objectives and targets for improving participation and achievement based on a comprehensive whole-school plan and using the opportunities represented by mainstream improvement initiatives

- provide access for all staff to high quality training so that the needs of minority ethnic pupils can be tackled with confidence.