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National College  
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

# Managing pupil mobility to maximise learning

**Full report**

Resource

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

Meeting the learning needs of pupils in England who join and leave schools at various points in the year - termed mobile pupils here - is a significant challenge which has important educational leadership implications. The research reported here was carried out to learn about good practice in managing pupil mobility successfully and to enable the research to inform the practice of others.

## The research

The research project sought to identify:

- factors leading to high levels of pupil mobility
- how schools manage mobility successfully
- the leadership behaviours and approaches that are important in managing pupil mobility

The project team undertook the research between November 2009 and March 2010. In the first stage, we reviewed relevant literature and policy-related documents. In the second stage, we researched case study schools in regions of high pupil mobility which we had identified by scrutinising Ofsted reports for references to high levels of pupil mobility combined with grade 1 ('outstanding') judgements for leadership and management, personal development and the effectiveness of teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs. We chose six case study schools which were widely dispersed throughout England.

During the data collection, we:

- scrutinised relevant documents
- interviewed governors, headteachers, members of senior leadership teams, teachers, pupils, parents, directors of children's services and other agency personnel
- observed classes, playground activity and other parts of the schools

The case study accounts were validated by respondents and then analysed for emergent themes. The outcomes of the literature review and the themes were synthesised and the implications identified.

## Main findings

### **The successful management of pupil mobility requires high-quality educational leadership.**

The leadership and professional authority of the headteacher (or equivalent) were particularly significant. The school leaders had a sophisticated, wise and thoughtful approach to organisational change. They created a sense of collective educational leadership among their staff, who understood, and were committed to managing pupil mobility to maximise learning.

### **Supportive school-local authority relationships were important.**

These helped schools to manage pupil mobility effectively. Supportive relationships were based on high levels of trust. Service directors felt comfortable providing schools with the resources and the freedom to respond to the challenges posed by mobile pupils.

**Governing bodies need to be effective.** The members of the governing bodies understood the challenge their schools were facing. They supported the school leadership and sought to ensure that the school was functioning appropriately.

**It was important to work with mobile pupils and their families together.** The schools felt they were working with families - not just pupils and their parents - in the management of pupil mobility.

### **Schools that manage pupil mobility successfully are responsive to the challenge that pupil mobility presents.**

Being responsive in high-mobility settings entails:

- recognising that there is a matter to respond to
- taking the initiative
- becoming expert at receiving pupils who enter school at non-standard times of the academic year
- being flexible but within the constraints of what it means to run a good school
- developing the capacity to work with a wide range of agencies

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**Schools that manage pupil mobility successfully are professionally generous.** Professional generosity is the commitment of a school's educational resources to enhance a pupil's learning. The resources were committed without regard to a beneficial return for the school itself.

**Leaders of schools that manage pupil mobility successfully have high expectations.** They have high expectations of themselves, their staff, the pupils and their parents, and all those connected with the school. High expectations partner professional generosity: the two go together.

**Responding to the individual learning needs of mobile pupils is important.** The learning needs of mobile pupils are likely to be complex and multifaceted. Responding to the individual learning needs of these pupils is therefore the most appropriate approach.

**Addressing the affective learning needs of mobile pupils and ensuring their emotional wellbeing are of paramount importance.** Mobile pupils may have experienced substantial disruption of attachments and relationships that are significant to them. These have to be addressed before the pupils can learn successfully.

**Schools in high-mobility settings need to be safe, secure and stable.** Mobile pupils benefit considerably from attending such schools. It enables them to explore their feelings and reflect on them, and to learn successfully.

**A high level of financial expertise is required to manage pupil mobility successfully.** Managing pupil mobility is both difficult and expensive. It is unpredictable, and pupils need individual attention. Often resources have to be deployed before funding is in place.

**The schools from which mobile pupils depart have a significant responsibility for managing pupil mobility.** That responsibility includes the transfer of information to the new school or college and also responding to the affective experience often associated with leaving a school.

**Managing the learning of mobile pupils requires systemic educational leadership.** Systemic leadership is the way in which people in the wider system with links to the school use their influence for the school's benefit. People in the wider system include parents, members of local communities and community leaders, local authority personnel and those of other educational institutions, local employers and members of public services. Headteachers have a responsibility for engendering systemic leadership.

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# Introduction

Meeting the learning needs of pupils in England who join and leave schools at various points in the year - termed mobile pupils here - is a significant challenge which has important implications for educational leadership. In recent years, a growing number of educational leaders have found themselves having to react to the issue of mobility for the first time. As might be expected, some leaders have responded to this new challenge very effectively, have learned lessons and have led the development of good practice. The research reported here was carried out to learn about that good practice and to enable it to inform the leadership practice of others.

Our intention in writing this report is to give an account of the research we undertook, report the findings, and highlight the most significant aspects of good practice in leading and managing schools that experience high levels of pupil mobility.

The report has five sections followed by references and bibliography. Following this introduction, the second section presents a literature review on the topic. The third section explains the research methodology. The fourth section explains the key findings and presents case studies of the schools we studied. We summarise the particular mobility issues they faced, and say how these schools managed pupil mobility to maximise pupils' learning. This section also includes good practice themes that emerged consistently throughout the study. The fifth section of concluding comments is followed by references and bibliography.

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# Literature review

## Introduction

This literature review is in two parts: that relating to pupil mobility, and a second section linking educational leadership and pupil mobility.

## Pupil mobility

### What is meant by pupil mobility?

Pupil mobility, which is often referred to as ‘turbulence’ in the literature, is defined as:

**a child joining or leaving school at a point other than the normal age in which children start or finish their education at that school, whether or not this involves a move of home.**

Dobson & Henthorne, 1999:5

### How many pupils are highly mobile?

Pupil mobility is in fact a substantial issue for all schools and its significance is often underplayed (Dobson, Henthorne & Lynas, 2000). Nationally, Goldstein, Burgess and McConnell (2007) report that 43 per cent of pupils who started Key Stage (KS) 1 in 2000 had moved schools by the subsequent KS2 test date. This high proportion does include changes of school between KS1 (perhaps an infant school) and KS2 (possibly a junior school). Importantly, however, they report that within-key stage mobility, where pupils move during a key stage, was also surprisingly high. They report that 15 per cent of pupils (about 1 in 7) who started KS2 in 2002 had changed school at least once by the end of the key stage. About 1 in 100 pupils moved schools at least twice during that KS2. Goldstein et al (2007) consider these figures, which some would regard as surprisingly high, to be underestimates. The underestimation has a number of explanations (for example, because the census data does not include pupils who move to private schools). Furthermore, these national figures mask considerable variation between different local authorities.

For example, Goldstein et al (2007) found that 39 per cent of pupils in Northamptonshire, 25 per cent of pupils in Staffordshire and 9 per cent in Hampshire moved schools during KS2.

### What are the reasons for pupil mobility?

There are several reasons for pupil mobility. Typically, pupils change schools because their parents or family relocate or are relocated, or they are moved to different schools to meet their educational needs. The effects of mobility on pupils are complicated by their socio-economic status. Children experiencing high levels of socio-economic disadvantage are likely to incur a more substantial educational penalty than mobile pupils in relatively advantaged circumstances.

### Parent or family relocation

Children in this group are from:

- economic/social migrant families that are moving to escape hardship of some kind (Strand & Demie, 2006)
- families seeking to further advance their circumstances; so-called lifestyle migrants (Knowles, 2003)
- relatively advantaged families that are required to move perhaps because the work of the wage-earner - typically the father - demands it. These families are the so-called ‘reluctant movers’ (Sell & DeJong, 1983; Mongeau, 1986)

Traveller families (Levinson & Sparkes, 2006) and military families (Jeffreys & Leitzel, 2000) are in the parent and family relocation group. Neither of these sub-groups is homogenous. These authors respectively record various and different levels of mobility among Traveller children and military families.

### Mobility to meet educational needs

Pupils who are moved to meet their educational needs may be transferred because of learning or behavioural concerns identified in their previous school. These concerns may have been identified and responded to by the pupil’s school.

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For example, a pupil may be permanently excluded from a school or have educational needs that cannot be met by the school he or she is attending. The concerns may have been identified by the pupil's parents who then choose to withdraw their child from the school and arrange for her or him to attend another school.

### **The educational penalty that may be incurred by mobile pupils**

The educational penalty resulting from mobility is lower than expected levels of attainment. The size of the educational penalty varies. Studies in the US and the UK (Pribesh & Downey, 1999 and Goldstein et al, 2007) show that many children who move schools achieve less well than those who remain at the same school. However, the effect is complicated by the more general effects of socio-economic disadvantage and/or migration (Strand & Demie, 2006).

Explanations of the sources of this educational penalty are founded on the notion of social capital, which is the relationship between the family, the community and the school. Social relationships between peers can also be a significant source of social capital. Coleman (1988) observes that the social connections between child and adult in different contexts can:

*provide the child with support and rewards from additional adults that reinforce those received from the first and can bring about norms and sanctions that could not be instituted by a single adult alone.*

Coleman, 1988:593

Coleman (1988) found that pupils who moved school were more likely to drop out of high school because of this disruption to the social capital of their family and community. The loss of social capital and the opportunity to draw upon it result in the educational penalty.

Pupils may experience grief, a sense of loss and anxiety associated with the severing of significant relationships when they move. Thus attachment theory (Fonagy, 2001; Bowlby, 1969) may be valuable in explaining the disruption that can be experienced by mobile pupils and the educational penalty incurred.

### **Responding to the issue of pupil mobility**

In recent years, central government has engaged with the growing pupil mobility issue by undertaking a number of in-depth studies. These studies have focused on how schools can best respond to the needs of turbulent pupils and their families. Examples include the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003; 2004) and Dobson and Pooley (2006). The New Deal for Communities survey (Blank, Ellis & Goyder, 2004) supported previous studies in recognising that turbulent families lack social capital. Dobson and Pooley (2006) provide recommendations to service providers which include: sharing information between boroughs; supporting access for services; and building strong links with the local community. Guidance has been provided for schools through the New Arrivals Excellence programme published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007). The guidance uses case studies to make practical suggestions for induction programmes for newly arrived pupils. The significant educational leadership issues that are part of the development of induction programmes are not addressed directly in this guidance. Indeed, the educational leadership aspects of managing pupil mobility to maximise learning have not been addressed specifically in any policies or guidance.

### **Educational leadership and pupil mobility**

#### **Leadership and management**

Educational leadership requires both leadership, which is an organising process of social influence, and management, which entails taking responsibility for ensuring the functioning of a system (Cuban, 1988; National College, 2006). The educational leadership of schools with high levels of pupil mobility requires a high level of leadership and management capability.

#### **Educational leadership for the management of pupil mobility**

High levels of pupil mobility represent a challenge for schools (Keys, Sharp, Greene & Grayson, 2003). The key point about any challenging circumstance is not that it is present but how the school responds (James, Connolly, Dunning & Elliott, 2006). The headteacher has a significant role in shaping this response.

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Schools that manage the learning of mobile pupils successfully can be said to be effective because the pupils progress further than might be expected from a consideration of its intake (Mortimore, 1991). Headteachers have a significant role (albeit perhaps an indirect one) in ensuring effectiveness in this regard (Hallinger & Heck 1998; 1999). Several studies have illustrated the nature of headteachers' work in effective and successful schools, for example, Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995); Harris and Chapman (2002); Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2004); James et al (2006); National College (2006; 2010).

What headteachers of effective schools do is important but the way they do it is also significant. James et al (2006) identified the features of the mindsets of headteachers and staff of successful schools in disadvantaged settings which underpinned their overall approach. The mindset included:

- an empowered and proactive optimism
- a high level of reflectivity
- an accept-and-improve approach, which is an acceptance of various givens in a non-judgemental way, coupled with a drive to improve matters
- a both-and mentality, which is an ability to hold together apparent opposites without experiencing a sense of contradiction
- motivation by ideals and aspirations for the pupils
- high expectations of the pupils and themselves
- a willingness to praise
- a sense of pride in the school
- a powerful ethos of care



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# Research methodology

The research project questions were as follows:

1. What factors underpin high levels of mobility among children?
2. How do schools best manage mobility to ensure positive outcomes for the children and families involved?
3. What leadership behaviours/approaches are important in promoting the effectiveness of these strategies?

The project team undertook the research between November 2009 and March 2010. In the first stage, we reviewed the relevant literature and policy-related documents. In the second stage, we researched case study schools in regions of high pupil mobility, which we had identified by scrutinising Ofsted reports for references to high levels of pupil mobility combined with grade 1 ('outstanding') judgements for leadership and management, personal development and the effectiveness of teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs. We chose the following schools (names are anonymised), which were widely dispersed throughout England.

- Joan of Arc School: inner-city Sure Start nursery school
- Bees Hill Children's Centre: inner-city children's centre
- Kimber White School: inner-city primary school
- L S Lowry School: primary school on a military base
- Phoenix School: special needs school
- Esperanza School: inner-city secondary school

Research question 1 was answered by the review of the relevant literature, supplemented by the case study findings. Research questions 2 and 3 (in part) were answered by the analysis of the case study data. Research question 3 (in part) was answered by our interpretation of the case study findings.

During the data collection, we:

- scrutinised relevant documents
- interviewed governors, headteachers, members of senior leadership teams, teachers, pupils, parents and directors of children's services and other agency personnel
- observed classes, playground activity and other parts of the schools

The research was undertaken in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research. The case study accounts were validated by respondents and then analysed for emergent themes. The outcomes of the literature review and the themes were synthesised and the implications for school leaders, directors of children's services and their senior teams were identified.

The members of the project team, who were all members of the Department of Education, University of Bath were:

**Chris James:** Professor of Educational Leadership and Management (project co-director)

**Hugh Lauder:** Professor of Education and Political Economy (project co-director)

**Ceri Brown:** Researcher and consultant

**Harry Daniels:** Professor of Education: Culture and Pedagogy

**Geraldine Jones:** E-learning officer, web designer and consultant

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# Key findings

There are two parts in this section. The first comprises case study accounts that summarise the ways the schools manage mobile pupils in order to maximise pupil learning. The second summarises the main themes to emerge from the data. We focus in particular on the aspects of the practice in these schools that were particularly germane to the management of pupil mobility.

## Case studies

### Case study 1: Bees Hill Children's Centre

#### Background

Bees Hill Children's Centre serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The pupils come from varied cultures and backgrounds and nearly all the pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school provides a wide range of extended services. At the time of writing, there were 162 pupils on roll but only 76 nursery pupils were on site at one time. The number of pupils in the day-care centre varied; there were 32 when we visited. The ratio of adults to children was 1:4 for the under-fours and 1:3 for under-twos. The members of staff, including teachers, early years practitioners and teaching assistants, and the children, were ethnically and culturally very diverse.

Bees Hill Children's Centre has developed from a highly successful nursery school, graded 1 ('outstanding') by Ofsted in 2008, and a social day-care nursery that was in need of considerable improvement. The current headteacher and her two deputies had been the leadership team of the successful nursery. The amalgamation had presented the school leadership with considerable challenges.

#### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

The nursery mainly serves the Somali community and to a lesser extent the Punjabi community. This composition contrasted with the intake of the day-care unit, which predominantly comprised children from white, middle-class backgrounds whose parents were both working.

High pupil mobility was particularly associated with the Somali and Punjabi communities.

Four or five years ago, there was a large influx of Somali children from families who were new arrivals to the UK. Since then, fewer Somali families and a growing number of Punjabi families have arrived. Mobility continued to be associated with these communities. However, admitting local children into the nursery was complicated by a number of factors such as large family size and the local authority admissions procedures, which gave little choice to parents on school placement. Families were often moved frequently because of the nature of social and temporary housing. This frequent movement was in part because the children's centre was situated in the most deprived area in the city. A number of children, including Somali children, were living in social and temporary housing, typically apartments. Frequently, the size of the apartment was insufficient for family needs and the state of repair sub-standard. As a result, families were frequently rehoused. Incoming parents often did not see their young children as learners. According to their cultural norms, the place for young children was in the home, so nursery education was not highly valued.

About 90 per cent of the centre's intake of mobile pupils had experienced severe disruption and had behavioural problems associated with low self-esteem. A teacher specialising in child self-esteem spoke positively of the model pioneered by Elizabeth Morris (2006), which views self-esteem as influenced by: sense of self, belonging and personal power. This teacher considered that these aspects were often absent in mobile pupils because of the disruption of routine, the severing of relationships and lack of control over the choice to move:

**Low confidence and self-esteem are associated with irregular patterns of events, unpredictable circumstances. Routine is essential. These children have had no choice about coming here, and therefore they try to exert control in other areas - unhealthy eating patterns or going to the toilet is their way of asserting control.**

Teacher

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The majority of mobile pupils used English as an additional language which compromised their ability to communicate and express their needs.

Many of the children suffered from poor health because of the social and economic disadvantage they experienced and poor living conditions. This poor health contributed to higher than usual school absence. Another teacher at the school observed the impact of attendance on self-esteem and difficulties in forming friendships:

*The number one thing is about getting attendance right. The most insecure ones are the ones who are frequently away and don't have a good relationship with any one member of staff and the children.*

Teacher

## **Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos**

### ***A passionate commitment to families***

The headteacher described the centre's approach as relentless in terms of expectations for both staff and the approach to ensuring the wellbeing and achievement of pupils. Staff modelled their passion and commitment to children and parents by being available and involved in all aspects of the centre's daily routines.

### ***Building a learning community***

*One thing I would say is that leadership has to be pedagogical, coming from a nursery school so [Bees Hill] is a learning-led community.*

Headteacher

The headteacher and the senior leadership team (SLT) emphasised the importance of creating a learning community for both staff and children. Members of staff were encouraged to be open with each other and to benefit from mutual learning. They were also encouraged to engage in formal learning: one was undertaking a middle leadership course, three were pursuing foundation degree courses, and eight were working on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at Level 3. An experienced teacher spoke of the "tangibility of a transparent learning environment", which struck her when she first joined the centre.

In part, the emphasis on staff learning was concerned with making a virtue of necessity. The centre had experienced difficulties in recruiting staff and often appointed parents as teaching assistants on the understanding that they would engage in formal training and development.

Pupils were encouraged to be reflective and thoughtful learners. They were regularly and frequently asked about what they had learned. This approach was common practice across the centre and was at the heart of its philosophy and values. Staff kept parents fully informed about children's learning.

### ***Creating a stable, secure and routine environment***

The core staff of the nursery school had worked together for a long time. The headteacher had been in post for nine years and the deputy headteachers for four years in leadership roles. They knew the community well and many of the staff were mothers of former pupils in the school. These factors proved a significant advantage in terms of understanding the needs of the local community. The recent merging of the nursery with the day-care centre had been challenging, particularly in transmitting the values of the successful nursery into the new children's centre. Middle managers in the children's centre who came from the day-care centre had received little professional training and development. However, training and encouragement had brought the day-care team into line with the vision of the former nursery. As a result there is stability and a common, shared approach within the centre.

### ***Building relationships***

Relationship building was the key to success for Bees Hill. Parents are seen as the starting point for building relationships with pupils. The school emphasises communicating with parents in their home languages. For example, signs around the school are in three languages. There are three Somali speakers on the staff. These Somali speakers:

- explain to parents why children younger than seven years, which is the age of entry to school in Somalia, should be seen as active learners
- visit the pupils' homes and made it possible to share the centre's expectations in relation to learning
- translate stories into Somali so that parents can read to their children

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- teach their colleagues elements of the Somali language and culture so that when Somali parents come to the centre they can communicate to some extent in Somali and as a result the parents feel more comfortable

### **William's family's story**

William and his family moved to Bees Hill as refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and lived in a nearby housing association flat. During the induction, members of staff noticed the impoverished conditions of this flat. Building materials blocked the stairwells and the flat was cold and damp. There was one double bed to house William, his brother and his parents. The floor space was "the size of a rug" (headteacher) and there was a hole in the kitchen ceiling. The initial visit enabled William's key worker to gain a better understanding of his background and develop a positive relationship with his parents. Staff at the centre noticed that William had been coming into the centre tired, late and unwell. When William was picked up from the centre in the evening, his key worker spent time chatting to his father about the family's home life. On the third day, his father had revealed that the boiler in the flat had been broken for several weeks and the family had no hot water or heating. A member of staff at the centre immediately contacted the council and helped to secure a new flat for William's family which was better suited to their needs.

### **Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice**

#### ***Building relationships through key workers***

Key workers are central to building trusting relationships between the centre and families. Key workers each have 10 children and families under their care. Before pupils start at the centre, key workers visit their homes and meet the families and children. When the children arrive, the key worker is the first point of reference. Key workers run 'greet and welcome' registration time at the start of each session. They write up progress reports, keep records for each child and set targets. They are also involved in multi-agency meetings concerning their children. The key workers are effectively a one-stop-shop linking families with the centre and external agencies.

### **Abdikaphi's story**

Abdikaphi is from Somalia and lives with his father and his brother who has autism. Abdikaphi was starting to copy his brother's behaviour. The father was invited to the centre and his concerns were addressed by those responsible for social security and family issues. The father stayed and watched as centre workers related to Abdikaphi. He was able to learn new ways of interacting with his son. The father has since started attending a Family Feelings course, where members of staff share strategies of behaviour management and learning with parents. Abdikaphi's behaviour has considerably improved.

### ***Engaging parents as partners in children's learning***

The strategy for building relationships with parents is based on the need to understand their cultural background. It aims to educate parents so they can become partners in the education of their children. Parent/carer learning programmes are provided regularly and include:

- baby massage
- a parenting course
- behaviour management
- PEEP, a learning together programme for parents/carers and young children
- a Family Feelings course, where the centre shares strategies for successful behaviour management and learning

There are cultural issues relating to these groups and sensitivities to address in respect of the education of adults. For example, family music drop-in sessions for parents and children to develop literacy through song did not achieve a high take-up from the Somali community because for some members music has negative cultural associations. An appreciation of such cultural differences has enabled family services to be tailored to appeal to families in the community. The education of parents is extended informally, particularly with reference to enhancing understanding between different communities in the locality. For example, as part of the centre's racial equality programme, a Black Champions initiative heralded successful and inspirational black leaders as part of the centre's drive to raise the aspirations of children from black and minority ethnic heritage.

### **Close monitoring of pupil progress**

There is close formal monitoring of the pupils. They are assessed three weeks after coming to the centre. Initial concern forms are used to give an early warning of any pupil developing inappropriate behaviours. Group screening by gender, free school meal (FSM) entitlement and ethnicity ensure that all these groups progress as well as possible.

### **Learning diaries**

Learning diaries are used to record children's progression in the six key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They are very effective in tracking children's progression. The diary is maintained by the key worker and is a useful tool for ensuring that new pupils' needs and development are attended to. Information-gathering involves note-taking and photos of the child at play and is an important part of the monitoring of free-play activities. The centre does not give teachers and other staff formal observation time but the nursery nurses offer ad-hoc support if key workers need to track particular children in an activity. The diaries are also useful for discussing the needs of pupils with their parents. Parents are invited in to discuss their children's progress during termly learning diary weeks.

### **A long and well-structured induction programme**

The centre invested heavily in an induction programme for new pupils. The programme included the following.

- Invitations to visit the school are sent to the child's parents in English and in the parents' mother tongue.
- There are two centre visits where parents meet members of the SLT and see the children at play.
- Visits are followed up by a home visit by the child's key worker and a member of the support staff who acts as interpreter if necessary.
- During the home visits, the key worker takes the role of building relationships with the parents whilst support staff members play with the children. Building this relationship involves listening to parents' perspectives on their children's needs and discussing appropriate strategies for meeting their needs.
- Admission on the first day is arranged to coincide with the availability of language support staff.

- A personalised induction strategy assesses how long the child should attend school and whether he or she should be accompanied. Some children require a six-month induction before they attend a full session.

The school insists that parents come in for the first day and stay as long as the parents feel is necessary. At the end of each day when parents collect their children, if there is an appropriate opportunity, teachers discuss the pupils' learning with them.

### **Friendship building and conflict resolution**

The staff at the centre strongly emphasised the development of skills for friendship building and conflict resolution in order to foster a sense of belonging, a sense of self and identity, and personal power. When the two former parts of the centre merged, the first leadership strategy focused on behaviour management and conflict resolution. This strategy was followed by the implementation of a personal, social and emotional curriculum, which focused on emotional wellbeing, asking children to reflect on their behaviour, and developing skills for life:

*At this age, children are at the beginning of learning how to make friends, [so] we therefore try to create scenarios to bring them together, mediating friendship building. Connecting with other children adds to children's significance and sense of belonging.*

Teacher

Building emotional awareness and social skills is an integral component of conflict resolution. The nursery consistently follows a staged model for this process.

1. Stating the problem
2. Recognising the feelings
3. Articulating the need for solutions
4. Asking pupils for solutions
5. Trialling and evaluating solutions
6. Repeating the cycle if the solution is unsuccessful

Key workers carry emotion cards which are used to enable children to recognise, label and communicate their emotions and those of others. Consistently adhering to these approaches is time-consuming.

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However, it is considered central to providing the tools for mobile pupils to recognise and articulate their needs and to start building relationships with their peers.

### **External agencies**

An advisory board is composed of representatives of external agencies that work with the centre in addition to the governing body. The external agencies include:

- the charity Barnardos, which works with families in difficulties
- health visitors
- advisers in social security services
- social services

The governing body has an excellent chair and the relationship with the centre was developing at the time of our visit. The governing body tends to expect the headteacher to be the main source of information during meetings. When the deputy headteacher attends meetings, she is able to give a broader perspective which helps the discussion.

Those we interviewed felt the school had a strained relationship with the local authority. The headteacher reported that very little support was offered during the merger of the nursery school and the social day-care nursery in 2008.

### **Summary**

Overall, Bees Hill is a model of what is best about the children's centre initiative. It is a one-stop shop which places learning at its heart. The staff understand that helping newly arrived families to negotiate the many demands on them is key to maximising pupils' learning.

### **Key messages**

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- having a passionate commitment to families
- building a learning community
- creating a stable, secure and routine environment
- building relationships, especially with and through key people

- engaging parents as partners in children's learning
- monitoring pupil progress closely
- implementing a long and well-structured induction programme
- developing social and interpersonal skills in the pupils
- establishing strong links with external agencies



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## Case study 2: Joan of Arc Nursery School

### Background

Joan of Arc Nursery School is a Sure Start nursery in south-east London. The nursery has approximately 150 children on roll, but only 100 are on site at any one time. It offers family services and is in the process of building a new self-contained meeting room to be used by parents. The pupils speak approximately 30 different home languages in total. A high proportion have learning difficulties, mainly in speech and language delay, medical needs and autism. The school comprises a main hall and two units, each containing two open-plan classrooms. There is also a meeting room, conference room, dance space, pupil centre, sensory room, wildlife garden, natural garden space and playground.

The headteacher was appointed in 1998 following the previous headteacher's retirement. At that time, the nursery was failing with an Ofsted inspection report describing 27 per cent of the teaching as unsatisfactory. As a result, the school was placed in special measures. Since that time, the headteacher, in close collaboration with the deputy headteacher, has built up a strong team of staff – the 'dream team' as she called it – and provision has improved substantially. At its most recent Ofsted inspection, the school was classified as outstanding in every category except 'standards reached by learners' (judged 'satisfactory') and 'attendance of learners' (judged 'good'). The nursery was the first in the borough to be awarded Sure Start status, having linked services with two other local nurseries in 2004.

### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

Children from various mobile groups attended the school including the following.

#### *Children from immigrant families*

Immigrant children from a range of countries, including Eastern Europe, Vietnam, China, Africa, Jamaica and South America, are pupils at the school. There are also children from families who were illegal immigrants. Pupils from BME communities in the UK sometimes leave the nursery for extended periods in order to visit family overseas. Pupils from mobile community groups, who used English as an additional language, frequently present language acquisition and development challenges.

This particular need affects their learning and also their personal and social development "because they are unable to vocalise their needs" (headteacher).

#### *Children suffering from trauma or neglect*

A significant number of the mobile pupils had experienced trauma. These pupils included children of asylum seekers and refugees; children of families escaping domestic violence; children in care; children living in temporary and social housing; and children who had experienced family break-up or who lived in two homes. There had been three large fires in the local area in the previous 12 months. A number of pupils had joined the school after being rehoused because of fire damage to their previous home.

Mobile pupils who had experienced trauma, including some who had experienced family break-up, "need a lot of emotional support" (headteacher). They could be aggressive and violent or could withdraw into themselves and would arrive at the school very quiet and uncommunicative. The deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), observed that these children sometimes presented unhealthy behaviours such as refusal to eat, talk or go to the toilet. She felt that these children were "almost more worrying [than aggressive and violent pupils]". They seemed to be suppressing rather than releasing their emotions.

#### *Traveller children*

Children from a nearby Traveller site also attend the school. These pupils frequently join and leave with little or no warning. Their parents are often wary of the school and concerned about the security arrangements for their children:

*Traveller families need to feel their culture is accepted and respected. It is harder to build their trust and they are fearful of their children being taken away. It is not unheard of for family members to wish to make thorough checks of the security arrangements at the nursery before their child joins.*

Headteacher

#### *Children leaving to secure a place in a preferred primary school*

Recently, mobility had increased because of parents removing their children prematurely from the

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nursery school when a reception place became available in a local primary school. The headteacher reported that although parents were reluctant to take this action, following recent changes in admissions procedures, they had far less influence over school choice. The local authority decided on school admissions, which, as the chair of the governing body explained, had led to cases where siblings from the same family were placed in different schools. Thus, if a place became available in a preferred primary school, parents felt they had no choice but to move their child so that he or she could continue their education at that school.

Children joined the school with a range of needs, some of which were features of certain mobile groups. For example, members of staff noted that Traveller parents and those from asylum-seeking or over-stay families (ie, illegal immigrants) as well as some parents from social and temporary housing were often anxious about the authorities and associated formalities such as form-filling or note-taking.

Children from most of the mobile community groups at the school have low self-confidence, low self-esteem and low self-worth. As a result:

**These children often have friendship issues; these are often associated with separation issues for those left behind.**

Teacher

Members of staff noted that loss and grief were often the result of severed relationships both from previous schools or homes and from new friendships formed at the nursery when a friend moved on again:

**It's so sad, for days you can see them zipping around the hall looking for their friend who's left, because they're too young to have any concept of what's happened.**

Teacher

Members of the school leadership team (SLT) spoke of the isolation of many mobile families and the school's need to connect not only with these families but also to enable families to connect with each other.

## Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos

### *Enabling every child to learn and develop*

The headteacher explained the central professional belief held in the school as:

**Every child should be able to be the best that they can be.**

Headteacher

The chair of the governing body explained that achieving this vision for every pupil may take time because of the pupils' previous experience:

**They may have come from a war-torn country, they may have low self-worth, be distrustful parents and we want to make them feel valued, to bring them in, then unfold gradually. They come into the school feeling 'I don't understand, I don't belong' and then, they blossom.**

Chair of governing body

The headteacher underlined the school's patience and understanding in allowing the pupils the time they need to go through this process:

**It's about giving children the time they need to come to terms with their new environment, not conforming is OK, it's fine to conform in their own time. Little Tommy might not want to join the rest of the class sitting on the carpet for story time. He might want to play in the corner, and that's OK. Maybe next time he'll want to know what's going on over on the carpet and see for himself.**

Headteacher

An understanding of the nature of grief, loss, trauma and recovery underpins the SLT's recognition of enabling learning and development. All the members of staff we spoke to were exceptionally alert and sensitive to the emotional needs of pupils, and understood the complexity of the pupils' response to their experience. They recognise the complex process of rebuilding of pupils' confidence, wellbeing and happiness.

The school's leadership endeavours to ensure that all members of staff consistently use an appropriate approach to the management of mobile pupils.



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## The importance of a flexible approach to meeting learning needs

Staff at the school are resolutely determined to meet the diverse range of needs of mobile families whose children attended the school. They are quick to access external support and new resources where necessary. The headteacher said that a flexible approach to meeting learning needs was central. The chair of the governing body's response reflected the school's overarching drive to be flexible in meeting the needs of families:

**Flexibility: be the willow not the oak. Don't set it in stone. If you set it in stone you're limited. You have to bend, and that's what's given us an outstanding [grade from] Ofsted.**

Chair of governing body

The chair of the governing body felt that the support the school offered was governed by the needs of the families rather than being dictated by school resources. At the heart of this approach is taking the needs of the family as a starting point and then being flexible:

**Fit in with them and don't expect them to fit in with you. Work from where they are and start with them.**

Headteacher

The school is very creative and proactive in identifying resources to meet the needs of families and pupils:

**Sometimes things can be accessed straight away, other times it needs to be done formally.**

Chair of governing body

## The importance of building relationships

Joan of Arc School is clearly positioned at the heart of the community and all the staff we spoke to understood the nursery to have a pivotal role in enhancing community cohesion. This role and place are the main reasons why mobile families come to the school. Many turbulent families experience a sense of isolation and the school thus has a dual role. It both connects with these families and enables them to link with each other. The headteacher stressed the importance of relationship-building in securing the trust that underpins the school's success in working with families, saying:

"People, relationships, they're more important than resources, they're the main vehicle for community cohesion".

## Seeing mobility as a learning opportunity

Whilst the staff recognise the often traumatic experiences of mobile pupils, they are also aware of the positive aspects of pupil mobility. The headteacher acknowledges the potential to learn from the experiences of others and from other schools in this country and abroad:

**We get lots of new ideas from other schools, other countries. We have links with other schools made through the pupils. We have one in South Africa for example. There is the potential for lots of information from other schools.**

Headteacher

One teacher of a class with a particularly high number of mobile pupils recognised that for the settled pupils at the school, high mobility offered the potential to learn about different ways of living which provided valuable social development:

**We get lots of input from other cultures which fosters recognition and understanding of diversity and equality, shows children there are different family set-ups which is really important, and helps build a sense of resilience.**

Teacher

## Viewing every pupil as a child in transition

The staff at the school view the pupils and their families as being in transition. Their approach aims to build a clear picture of the educational history of the pupil and his or her family in order to understand the child's present needs. Staff feel they have a responsibility to support transition to the next school for these children and families. The responsibilities of the school do not end at the school gate, and nor do they end after the child had left to go to another school. This way of thinking has implications for the way staff in schools work with mobile families and raises the possibility of understanding high pupil mobility as a system issue as opposed to an issue dealt with by individual schools and centres.

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## Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice

### *Making links with previous schools and next schools*

Joan of Arc School is very keen to forge links with mobile pupils' previous schools in order to:

- gain an in-depth understanding of the pupils and their needs
- build pupils' sense of self-value
- learn from pupils' previous schooling experiences

#### **Dario's story**

Dario is an Algerian pupil in the nursery. He had spent several months away from school, staying with members of his family in Italy. The headteacher encouraged Dario's mother to document his experiences. She recorded them onto a DVD and when Dario returned his teacher played the DVD in the nursery. The teacher used it as an opportunity for the staff and children to gain an insight into Dario's experiences and at the same time make him feel valued and understood.

#### **Rohan's story**

Rohan came to Joan of Arc School after living in South Africa with his extended family. He returned to South Africa for an extended period. The members of staff at Joan of Arc used his visit to link with his previous school in South Africa. They now have regular correspondence with the school and have raised money for resources there.

### *Drawing parents into school*

Building relationships with children and their families begins as soon as a new pupil joined the school. The initial meeting between the parents and a member of the SLT is:

a long interview all about their child.  
We ask parents to tell us about their last nursery and ask if there is anything their last nursery did that they'd like to see here.

Headteacher

This meeting conveys to the parents the importance of their opinions and their needs, and helps develop good practice.

The school's settling in policy stipulates that whenever possible parents should spend at least one week in the nursery with their children. As the headteacher explained, this practice was to:

enable the child to settle in gradually, build relationships between the nursery and the parent and enable parents to understand the school.

Headteacher

The nursery provides a range of services for families:

- family numeracy groups
- family literacy groups
- dad's groups
- Muslim mother's groups
- a Chinese cooking group
- English as an additional language (EAL) groups

Meeting rooms are available for these groups and a new self-contained room had recently been built for parents. The nursery also connects parents with a number of other agencies which meet at the school:

- social services
- a domestic abuse charity
- a back-to-work group for women
- counsellors and behavioural therapists

The headteacher feels that initiating and encouraging these networks is an important part of her role because new families can often be very isolated and suspicious of formal support.

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### Jake's mum's story

Jake had joined the school with significant undiagnosed behavioural problems. His mother was very suspicious of external help, as she felt his previous school had blamed her for his behavioural problems. She had built quite close relations with staff members during the week she spent at Joan of Arc while Jake was settling in. As trust was established, the headteacher encouraged her to meet with a behavioural therapist at the school. At first, she was very reluctant, but warmed to the idea, encouraged by the confidentiality of the nursery setting. The headteacher had told Jake's mum: "You can gain support and no one needs to know". According to the headteacher, "She came out of the meeting beaming, and the next week she brought a friend."

The school's success in drawing in parents is apparent in the growing interest of potential parent governors approaching the school. In her four years in post, the chair of the governing body has noticed a shift from it being difficult to get any applicants from parents to having many parent applicants for vacancies:

When I started here it took a lot to get a new parent to apply to the governing body but now because the school has such a good reputation towards the community, parents feel they have a voice and that the school would take notice.

Chair of governing body

### Close observation and tracking systems

Careful observation and monitoring systems enable a rounded understanding of children's educational, emotional, social and language skills to be gained. These systems include the following.

- There is ongoing observation of pupils during their first week.
- Observations are recorded and pupil progress tracked as weekly assessments. This tracking includes what pupils are doing; who they are interacting with, their language and social skills, and their achievements.
- These observations are fed into detailed termly assessment reports on the six Foundation Stage curriculum areas: communications, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, ICT, physical

development and creativity.

- As part of the termly assessment, targets are set, which include formal learning and social and emotional targets.
- New pupils and pupils presenting concerning behaviour are monitored closely.

Each unit of two classes has two teachers and two support staff to enable careful observation. In addition, there is always a floating teacher. This arrangement allows every member of staff a half-day per week for pupil observation.

### Elka's story

Elka, a Polish pupil at the school, was presenting separation anxiety following the return of her friend to Poland. Elka's file included daily notes of her behaviour. Among other things they noted that she refused to take her coat off and wouldn't let go of her school bag. Elka's file included samples of her drawings, and photos of her playing alone and with her jacket on. The documentation revealed a gradual story of readjustment as Elka rebuilt relationships with new children and opened up to the adults around her. The most recent picture showed Elka smiling and playing. She still had her coat on but it was unzipped, signifying the school's gradual movement towards enabling Elka to accept the loss of her friend and settle back in.

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## Honouring home languages

The school's emphasis on honouring home languages shows its respect for diversity. The work of the EAL group is very well-resourced. The headteacher confirmed the importance of recruiting staff who can speak additional community languages. The diversity of language spoken in the school is evident. Members of staff speak to children and even each other in a range of different languages. Teachers and governors are concerned to learn the basics of all the languages spoken in the school:

*I always make a point of learning how to say 'hello' in the child's first language. I don't always get it right and sometimes I make the parents laugh, but it communicates to families that we care about their cultural background.*

Chair of governing body

The school makes a point of pairing new pupils with a pupil who speaks the same language. This 'buddy' strategy does not always lead to friendship but is seen as a starting point. The nursery displays flags from all the nationalities of pupils at the school. It also has a number of multi-language picture books so that members of staff can help pupils practise their language skills. If the pupil's language was not spoken in the school, the headteacher brings in an interpreter.

All the members of staff recognise the importance of the pupils' home language in language development:

*When I first joined the school I was amazed to hear children's home languages spoken so frequently. I thought surely we must be teaching them to speak English by now, but then it was explained to me that progressing in their home language actually fosters language acquisition and development and helps their English so we should be encouraging these languages, and we do.*

Chair of governing body

## Staffing as key resource

Investment in teaching and support staff is a key aspect of the successful leadership and management of mobile pupils. The headteacher was clear to us

that her dream team, comprising approximately 30 staff members, is the most important resource at Joan of Arc. The ratio of adults to children is approximately 1:8, which she felt was high. She said:

*It's important to have more staff around that children can talk to so we have more staff than [the local authority] considers necessary.*

Headteacher

The local authority provides £29,000 for special educational needs (SEN) provision. However, the headteacher adds £70,000 from the school budget. She believes that staff are the most important resource for children with SEN. The headteacher acknowledges that this allocation means there are fewer financial resources for new play equipment. However, she encourages staff to use their ingenuity to make the most of resources available. And they do - for example, they have made a large and impressive play castle for the playground from inexpensive materials.

The headteacher is also very careful about recruitment. She acknowledges that attracting applicants can be difficult because of the reputation of the local area, which is very disadvantaged. She feels the media have contributed to this reputation in emphasising gang crime and violence, which has not given an accurate impression of the local community. However, difficulty in recruiting new staff does not mean that standards have been lowered when new members of staff are appointed. Not making an appointment was always an option. Indeed, a member of the SLT acknowledged that "it is quite usual to have no appointment made". The headteacher prefers to keep working with agency staff who are known and trusted in the nursery than appoint someone who "wouldn't quite fit in". The way staff interact with the children and with each other was evidence of their commitment. Morale is clearly high at the school. The school also has a very stable staff team and turnover is low.

## A sophisticated approach to managing change

In common with many schools, Joan of Arc has an improvement orientation. As the headteacher put it: "We are always striving towards improvement". Because changes are instigated gradually and reviewed constantly, improvement is a matter of tailoring strategies or not investing in them if the investment is not warranted. The desire to learn from others feeds into policy development. The chair of the governing body described how policies are reviewed termly. However, sometimes this review

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process is not frequent enough and policies have to be individually amended between termly meetings of the governing body.

The school has a sophisticated view of change, perhaps because of its highly turbulent and mobile circumstances. The staff are immersed in change as a process and their experience and approach to change underpins the way the school supports pupils and families through change.

### Akbar's story

Akbar was away from school for an extended period as his mother, who was expecting a baby, was very ill. Throughout this period, the school kept in touch by sending notes to his home and through phone calls. This contact helped reinforce the value Akbar had to the school and when he returned he settled quickly, having maintained the bonds with staff and children through correspondence during his mother's illness. The school understood and went with this significant period of change in Akbar's life. The headteacher felt that a more interventionist approach, for example, insisting that Akbar attend school, would not have had such a positive outcome.

### Summary

The staff, led by the headteacher, show care, understanding and dedication to meeting the social, emotional and educational needs of mobile pupils and their families. The school goes to great lengths to make families of all backgrounds feel they belong at the school. This sense of belonging is achieved by taking gradual steps to secure children's trust, as well as that of their parents. Many children come into the school feeling displaced, distrustful following trauma, or alienated by a different culture. The school responds by creating a space that celebrates diversity across the school community and gives children the time and space they need to acclimatise.

For good reasons, children's histories as well as their futures are important to Joan of Arc School. Bridges are built between the receiving and previous schools in order to create a more harmonious educational trajectory for the children. The school finds and exploits advantages from pupil mobility, identifying opportunities to learn from other schools and other cultures as well as from the rich diversity of experiences of the pupils themselves and their families.

### Key messages

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- enabling self-actualisation in the pupils
- having a flexible approach
- building relationships
- seeing mobility as a learning opportunity
- viewing every pupil as a child in transition
- making links with previous and receiving schools
- drawing parents into school
- observing new pupils closely
- implementing pupil progress tracking systems
- honouring home languages
- recognising that the members of staff are a key resource
- having a sophisticated approach to managing change



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## Case study 3: Kimber White School

### Background

Kimber White School is an above-average-sized primary school in an urban setting and caters for pupils aged 3-11. Many are just beginning to learn English and over 30 languages are spoken in the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which mainly relate to language and literacy skills, is large.

The school is in a local federation with two primary schools and two children's centres. Seven years ago, it was in special measures but is now graded 1 ('outstanding') overall by Ofsted. Last year, all the pupils gained Level 4 at the end of KS2 despite the school clearly being in challenging circumstances. For example, in 2009, 42.9 per cent of the pupils were eligible for free school meals, English was an additional language for 37 per cent of the pupils, 25 per cent of the pupils had SEN, and the overall school deprivation indicator was double the national average. In addition, the school had mobility above the national average. The borough in which the school is located has over 30 per cent mobility. Interestingly, many of these indices are declining as a result of the school's increasing popularity. At the time of our visit, the school had a waiting list and there was less room to accommodate new mobile pupils.

### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

The headteacher observed that the borough has 30 per cent mobility because the area is often a first base for new arrivals in London. The school has experienced particularly high mobility because it is situated on the borders of five boroughs and there has been considerable movement between boroughs. As a consequence, children from several mobile groups attend the school, including the following.

#### *Children escaping domestic violence*

A small number of children came from families that had entered a women's refuge near the school. For these children, moving schools was typically very sudden and often took place without warning.

#### *Children of immigrant families*

Children from many immigrant backgrounds including Eastern Europe and South America

attend the school, and there is a growing group of Portuguese children attending. These children often entered the school with little or no spoken English.

There are also children at the school whose families are illegal immigrants. In these cases, when children join the school, the legal status of their family is not known.

#### *Children from families in temporary or social housing*

The school serves a social housing estate where overcrowding in accommodation is not uncommon. It is not unusual for six people to be living in a two-bedroomed apartment. Families were often housed temporarily and then moved because of overcrowding.

#### *Excluded children*

The school also has a small number of pupils who have been excluded from their previous school. The inclusion manager told us that these children are often of African or Caribbean heritage and from families who present anti-school attitudes. Parents may blame schools for their children's poor behaviour and may move the children in the hope of improving their behaviour. Excluded children were sometimes sent abroad to the family's country of origin, and may even return after being excluded from their school overseas.

#### *Traveller children*

At one point within the last couple of years, eight Traveller children attended the school, which was the largest number in any school in the borough. However, when we visited, there was only one child from a Traveller family at the school. Traveller children often have SEN because of their disrupted schooling.

Social and emotional issues are frequently associated with many of the mobile groups. In some cases, these issues are extreme, for example for pupils whose families are escaping domestic violence, those living in temporary and social housing, and pupils suffering from trauma and neglect.

We were told that children who move frequently also exhibit behavioural problems resulting from the anticipation of another move which can make them feel insecure and unable to settle into school.

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## Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos

### Viewing turbulent pupils as equally deserving members of the school community

The general approach at Kimber White School is to treat all pupils equally, whether they are from settled families or belong to one of the mobile groups. There is a strong expectation that they will fit in, “and they do - quickly!” says the headteacher. Because each and every child is valued and respected as an individual, the equal treatment of mobile pupils with other children was not to their detriment:

**Mobile groups benefit because they benefit from a good system that works for all children.**

Chair of governing body

Data is collected on the performance of mobile pupils in order to demonstrate that these pupils can, and do, progress just as other pupils do. However, the headteacher believes that to treat all mid-phase transition pupils as a group would be to assume that all new pupils are the same and below national average: “I get very annoyed with heads that use high mobility as an excuse for poor standards”.

There is also a strong emphasis on not seeing incoming pupils as bringing a deficit either in relation to themselves or the school. This approach recognises that mobile pupils may not reach a high level of attainment in some areas of the curriculum but it does not follow that they would only reach a low level in all areas.

### The importance of high expectations

The headteacher reported that:

**The biggest shock to new pupils is the high expectations on them in terms of their learning, behaviour and outputs.**

Headteacher

Having high expectations for all pupils is interpreted by the staff at the school as not just about discipline but about what is required of pupils as learners. There are high expectations for learners which are constantly reinforced by all school staff. All the school’s policies focus on the learner and the learning process.

## The pupils deserve education of the highest quality

The view among staff that all children deserve the very best education underpins the ethos of high expectation. Providing the very best education means getting the best teachers. Making the right appointments when teachers are appointed and not tolerating poor teaching is considered essential: “The head and [executive] head are uncompromising about getting the best teachers,” said the chair of the governing body.

This approach to recruitment is feasible because the school’s reputation is such that it is very attractive to potential applicants. Also, the way that responsibilities are delegated creates the potential for career progression. Every teacher has a management responsibility and the federation system allows for greater flexibility in promotions. Staff turnover is low and the teachers we spoke to were proud to be on the staff of the school and felt valued and respected:

**Staff see that the [senior leadership team] puts the needs of kids first and take pride in the quality of the learning environment. Little details like modernised toilets demonstrate to staff that they are respected and invested in. Everyone works very hard and takes pride in the school.**

Teacher

Teachers focus on making the curriculum exciting. Hallmarks of this enriched curriculum included the following.

- Streaming in mathematics: children progress at the pace that is right for them, which maintains engagement.
- Mixed-ability teaching in literacy: higher attaining pupils model and develop language development for lower attaining pupils.
- Focusing on literacy: this is crucial for engaging learners and developing core skills. There are literacy objectives across the curriculum.
- Creating exciting and inspiring lessons: using drama, music, ICT, and a range of media, with particular reference to improving literacy, motivates and engages pupils.

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- Weekly collaborative planning: all the teachers in the same year groups from all three schools plan together. Planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time is organised so that all the same year-group teachers have this time together. Three very experienced teachers are always involved in lesson planning, and teachers take the lead by advising on their own subject specialism. This continual revision and updating fosters a very strong understanding of the curriculum.

This curriculum strategy is firmly embedded at the school. It helps to integrate mobile pupils into Kimber White School from the start.

### **Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice**

#### ***Modelling appropriate learning behaviour***

At Kimber White, continuous modelling and reinforcement of appropriate learning behaviours is the key to raising expectations and fostering high aspirations. To this end, a fair and consistent reward and discipline system operates throughout the school. Praise and support are emphasised rather than criticism and blame. The members of the SLT are very conscious of the importance of modelling the behaviour they expect from teachers and pupils. The following extract from the field notes from the observation of an assembly demonstrates the emphasis placed on positive reinforcement.

*Children file into the hall in a quiet and orderly fashion and are seated. The teacher leading assembly comments to a child ‘Well done, Zara, you are sitting beautifully, you have come a real way since Year 5, you should be very proud of yourself’. She then addresses the group: ‘Yesterday there was a large group of adults who came in, who were undertaking what the school calls a learning walk [ie, a group of heads visits to observe best practice in the school]. Because the standards and the quality of your learning are so high, lots of visitors want to come and observe it. When visitors come into the school they don’t want to see us, they want to see you. They’re really excited about what you’re doing. So you should feel very proud of yourselves. You should feel very proud of how you were yesterday with a large group of eight*

*adults who went on a learning walk. You carried on as normal and didn’t turn and stare at them, so well done. You should pat yourselves on the back.’ Children then proceeded to pat themselves on the back.*

Field notes

#### ***A commitment to professional development and training***

Professional development and training relating to the school’s policies and ethos, including the behaviour policy, are emphasised. Half a day of training and development every term is assigned to behaviour management in particular, reflecting its importance and the importance of a united approach to behaviour management. The frequency of training and development enables behaviour management policies and practices to be renewed and refreshed.

#### ***Close monitoring of pupil progression***

The progression of newly arrived pupils is closely monitored so that any settling in problems – social, emotional or academic – are identified and responded to promptly. Newly arrived mobile pupils are closely tracked by teachers through assessment and termly examinations. This enables any children who are struggling in one particular area to be identified quickly and offered support. A range of support mechanisms focus on pupil learning, especially with respect to literacy.

Mobile pupils’ social and emotional development is monitored informally. In the playground, there are organised games and other ways of ensuring that no child is isolated. These strategies are very effective.



## James' story

James moved to the school two terms ago from a nearby school as he was not getting on well there. James' behaviour, such as his aggressive attitude towards other pupils, was preventing him from making friends and affecting his work. Informal conversations with James and helping him to form friendships have enabled him to settle down. James was able to explain the help he had received from the teaching staff:

**James:** They are really polite and if anything happened they would help you straightaway and make you happy if you're alone.

**Researcher 1:** How do they do that?

**James:** They encourage you to play with other people that you wouldn't play with before.

**Researcher 2:** How would they encourage you to play with other people?

**James:** Usually in the playground, like some people who I would never play with. They come and play games that I play and I have to teach them, but it's still fun.

Field notes

## The importance of having clear systems of communication

The headteacher felt that communication must be clear and formalised because Kimber White is a large school. There is excellent communication between the senior managers and teachers using established information systems. Staff meetings at the start of every morning enable members of staff to relay messages, concerns or issues relating to pupils to their colleagues.

## The green card system

A green card system is used to manage pupil behaviour. If pupils misbehave, they are issued with a green card. This is circulated among the SLT so that its members are aware of what has happened and can ensure that an appropriate sanction is applied. Pupils are tracked in this way, discussed at a senior level and appropriate support is put in place. Termly analysis of the green cards informs further intervention. This approach to managing behaviour is conveyed to new pupils:

When it comes to misbehaviour, new children know there is nowhere to hide.

Teacher

This approach is important for newly arrived mobile pupils because it establishes clear boundaries which in turn creates a sense of security and consistency.

## Building good relationships with parents

Productive, consensual relationships between the school and parents are essential in orienting the child and family to the ethos of the school. Those we spoke to felt that without them the pupils would struggle to make progress. One teacher was clear that any conflict or disagreement between the parents and the school would seriously impede the school's effectiveness of achieving pupil respect in school rules and authority. He saw coherence between school and parent authority as paramount, without which the school was doomed: "When a child sees their parent challenging the school's authority, they've had it".

Members of staff we spoke to recognised the importance of standing up to parents who might not want to acknowledge that their child has misbehaved. The headteacher and another member of the SLT situate themselves at the school gates at the start and finish of the school day. This enables them to talk with parents and build relationships with them; to make parents feel welcome; and to be visible as an informal point of contact for parents. Members of staff are encouraged to approach parents and offer positive reinforcement about their child's work or behaviour. Teachers felt that this approachability makes building relationships easier and also makes conveying difficult messages easier should problems arise.

The school's ethos is explained to new parents when the executive headteacher gives them a tour of the school. Creating a culture of value and respect and identifying and responding to individual needs have built parents' and pupils' trust in and respect for the SLT, which in turn has contributed towards a mutual objective of achieving excellence. Parents are notified immediately by letter or telephone of serious misbehaviour, which is classified on a graded scale of 1-5 (5 being behaviour worthy of exclusion). This close attention to building relationships reflects the concern and respect of the school staff for the pupil's families. There is further support from external agencies for families who have moved into the area.

### ***Insisting on recruiting only the best teachers***

Potential teachers are rigorously assessed. They are asked to show examples of their work and planning and undergo lesson observation. The headteacher feels that the interview is “the least important part of the [recruitment] process”. In return, the federation of which the school is a part “sells opportunities for career progression”. The school advertised for ‘outstanding, ambitious teachers’: “It’s all in the teaching, getting the best teachers,” remarks the headteacher.

Senior managers are in constant touch with day-to-day matters in the school, especially in the classroom. They have, as we were told by teachers, “a magnifying glass” on the classroom. This close attention to teaching included:

- checking curriculum plans every week, which are expected to be annotated according to the specific needs of the pupils
- reviewing pupils’ exercise books, which are expected to demonstrate individualised responses showing an awareness of each pupil’s progress
- observing lessons frequently and organising teachers to moderate each others’ work
- monitoring marking schemes and checked that comments reflect a dialogue between the child and the teacher

The teachers deliver exciting and engaging lessons in which pupils are expected to be constantly attentive, listening and engaged.

### ***The importance of the respect and support of the local authority***

The headteacher feels the school has a very supportive relationship with the local authority. In his view, this is because the local authority has been convinced by what the SLT has achieved. The headteacher has close links with the director and the assistant director who are ardent supporters of the federation. They had recognised that the realisation of school’s vision required financial investment: “We are greedy in what we ask for and we generally get it,” says the headteacher. The SLT appreciates the flexibility accorded to the school by the local authority:

The local authority’s timeframe is too slow for us; if we waited for them this wouldn’t have happened. They have given us the freedom to do what we want to do.

Headteacher

### **Summary**

Kimber White School has undergone significant changes under the leadership of a highly committed SLT. The school’s success is underpinned by the insistence that all children deserve the very best education regardless of background or circumstance. The school demands the highest quality in every aspect of provision, from the learning environment, teaching and resourcing, to providing care and support for every child and family. The SLT is proactive and relentless in its search for funding to enable the school to achieve its vision. Whilst each pupil is considered equal, this perspective does not translate as having equal needs; on the contrary. Effective channels of communication coupled with care and respect for the school community have resulted in the transmission of high expectations to the staff and pupils. Mobile pupils feel respected and valued and clearly proud to belong to the school community.

### **Key messages**

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- viewing mobile pupils as equally deserving members of the school community
- having high expectations
- being clear that all pupils deserve education of the highest quality
- modelling appropriate learning behaviour
- having a commitment to professional development and training
- monitoring pupil progression closely
- having clear systems of communication
- building good relationships with parents
- insisting on recruiting only the best teachers
- gaining the respect and support of the local authority

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## Case study 4: L S Lowry Primary School

### Background

L S Lowry Primary School is situated on a military base in the north of England. At the time of research, it had 91 pupils on roll but this number is subject to change because regiments move in and out of barracks. The headteacher had been at the school for almost 21 years and the members of the SLT had been in post for more than 12 years.

### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

Pupil mobility is determined by the changeover of regiments, which typically occurs every three years, along with a small number of postings throughout the school year. As the headteacher noted, “the school is re-created with every new regiment”. There was a significant increase in the number of pupils with SEN two years ago when a new regiment arrived. With approximately 30 per cent of pupils identified as having SEN, the school had additional challenges over and above those of mobility.

When the fathers of pupils are on a tour of duty in Afghanistan, the focus is on their mothers. Life can be difficult for the many young mothers who are perhaps isolated within the base and away from extended families. Building trust between the school and families is therefore essential. The children can also be unsettled when fathers are away, which can be expressed in many ways.

### Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos

#### *Creating a stable learning environment*

One of the school’s core priorities is to create a stable learning environment for its school family. This priority acknowledges the school’s central place in the children’s lives. Thus, the school works hard to establish good working relationships with parents and the Forces community, often against a background of challenging circumstances. The school aims to provide safety and security and to build pupils’ self-esteem. This then creates a sense of happiness and belonging for the pupils, which the staff see as a necessary condition for effective learning.

### *Building high expectations*

The process of building high academic expectations has several elements in the school. The first concerns the stability of the staff and recruitment strategy. As the deputy headteacher said:

*We look for staff who would fit in with our team; people with the same commitment and enthusiasm - wanting to be part of our school.*

Deputy headteacher

The members of staff got to know every child in the school quickly. Making children feel welcome from day one is important for the teachers, as is treating all pupils fairly. Expressed by one teachers, the focus is on saying to children “you’re special, you can do this” and for pupils to see that they are part of the school community. Teachers referred to this approach as the ‘L S Lowry way’. It included developing positive attitudes towards others and to learning.

### *Creating consistency and continuity*

Consistency among staff is important. As the headteacher noted, “the staff see the vision and practices of the school through the same eyes”. Creating a sense of continuity for the pupils is considered important because it helps the pupils to understand that they will not be forgotten once they leave. Many of the teachers spoke of pupils who were about to leave breaking up with their friends. They interpreted this behaviour as the pupils preparing themselves for the loss of their friends when they moved away. The sense of belonging to the school family, even when a child moved on, would continue in some way following their departure. The implicit philosophy of being at the centre of the community is extended by giving the pupils a history and an institutional memory, which was something they may have lacked in the past.

### *Seeing the school community as one family*

All the members of staff we interviewed expressed a very similar positive approach to their work but in various ways. A member of the governing body talked of the school as having “a family spirit”, and pupils being encouraged to look after each other:

*Everyone is made to feel welcome, no one is shunned. This is the right way forward - how to live their lives.*

Member of governing body

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As the headteacher pointed out, “As soon as they put on the Lowry uniform, they are part of our school family”.

### **Ellie and Sally’s stories**

Sally, a Year 5 pupil, said, “Everyone in the school is really nice, even the teachers”. When Ellie first started at the school, the headteacher showed her round. During her first assembly, Ellie stopped feeling nervous because L S Lowry has a ritual in which new children are welcomed into the school family. A candle is lit in their friendship ring and their classmates say a few words to welcome them. Ellie said, “It feels like everyone will be your friend and that lessons are more fun than strict and boring”.

We asked Ellie and Sally to tell us how happy they felt when they arrived at L S Lowry School compared with their previous school. Were they happier at their previous school and how happy are they now? Sally said she was less happy at her previous school and was now much happier. Ellie said she was OK when she first arrived, had one unhappy moment and had since become even happier.

These views are reflected in their friendships. Sally had seven friends who were still in the school, one who had left and two from her gymnastics club. Ellie had five friends in school, two from her old school and one outside school. These friendships were enabled through the school’s family spirit and welcoming approach, which was in turn based on mutual respect.

### **Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice**

#### ***Preparation for the newly arriving pupils***

Preparation for newly arriving pupils is considered important. For the current cohort, which arrived two years ago, this preparation had been difficult. Some pupils had arrived early and problems from the older children were expected. These children had not been well-behaved at their previous school and the thought that they could continue in the same way at L S Lowry. During that first year, the school faced some challenging times as the children arrived en masse at the beginning of the autumn term, and the regiment went to Afghanistan for six months. However, a year later, the school was judged grade 1 (‘outstanding’) overall by Ofsted. Those we spoke to felt that careful preparation for the newly arriving cohort had been the key to success.

With previous cohorts, families from new regiments had arrived from the end of the autumn term and during the spring term. The pupils thus arrived in small groups and children could be socialised into the ‘L S Lowry way’ a group at a time. However, when families arrive en masse, this process takes longer. The headteacher visited the pupils’ previous schools, some of which were in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, as part of the preparation work. These preparations enabled the headteacher to take children’s photos and also provide them with photos of the L S Lowry School. When a new cohort arrives, their photos are already displayed at the school to achieve a sense that children are not strangers when they enter the school. The visits also enable immediate contact with the new families and the headteacher is able to emphasise his open-door approach to all parents.

Obtaining a full record of the pupils’ previous work is important but not always possible. The headteacher reported that the academic records of mobile pupils were often not available. In such cases, the school attempts to find the records but is not always successful and the staff just have to make do.

#### ***Clear rules but flexible boundaries: carrots rather than sticks***

L S Lowry has clear behavioural rules, strongly encourages pupils to behave appropriately and focuses on good relationships and high academic standards. This approach is reflected in its school behaviour policy:

*Our behaviour policy is not primarily concerned with rule enforcement. It is a means of promoting good relationships, so that people can work together with a common purpose of helping everyone to learn.*

School behaviour policy

The school employs a typical reward system for good attendance, homework and classwork, especially in literacy. Rewards include being awarded golden time when well-behaved pupils can choose an activity with friends. The school also demonstrates flexibility, for example, with attendance. Requests for absence when fathers returned from a tour of duty are typically granted.

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## Assigning responsibilities to pupils

Assigning responsibilities to pupils appropriately is important in building high expectations at L S Lowry School. For example, there is an indoor and outdoor activity scheme, which involves pupils from years 5 and 6 leading activities for younger children during break times. Pupils have to apply for these positions. They receive training and sign a contract specifying their responsibilities. This scheme gives pupils a sense of involvement in and commitment to the life of the school.

## Parents as co-partners in educating children

Parents are seen as co-partners in a variety of ways. The school endeavours to build close relationships with parents and has an open-door policy so that parents can talk with staff easily. The school has an excellent relationship with the regimental welfare officer, who is a member of the governing body. This relationship helps the school and the regiment to solve problems jointly that are affecting a pupil at home or in school.

### Ryan's story

According to his teacher, Ryan had "mega problems" at home. The school devised a system for monitoring his homework which involved his mother keeping a record of the homework done. For completing the homework and good behaviour at school, Ryan received tokens which could then be exchanged for a prize that his mother gave him.

L S Lowry School seeks close contact and excellent relationships with pupils' fathers. Two years ago, pupils whose fathers were in Afghanistan and their fathers carried out a joint physical challenge, linked by webcam, to raise funds for the school. Messages from children to their fathers and vice-versa were posted on the school's website, along with pictures of the latest school events. The school has been filmed by a regional television news programme in order to link up with Afghanistan. When the fathers returned from a tour of duty, there was a celebratory welcome-home assembly at the school.

## Generating a sense of belonging

The staff endeavour to generate a sense that the pupils belong to the school. Leavers' pictures are displayed when pupils move on to remind the pupils of their friends. There is also a 'hello and goodbye' book that pupils can write in. Children who left can also keep in touch via the school's website.

## The listening box

The listening box is an important innovation at L S Lowry. When pupils are unhappy, they can post a note in the box and a teacher will arrange to listen to their problems and try to help them solve them. Pupils use the listening box frequently.

### Jonny's story

Jonny's father was terminally ill and Jonny had to shoulder family responsibilities. During this distressing period, he was helped to cope with the problems at home by using the listening box during the week to talk over his worries.

The listening box illustrates the trust the pupils have in their teachers. Many members of staff mentioned how important this trust is in the pupils' lives. The headteacher observed that it is particularly important when supporting children whose parents are serving in war zones. The listening box also reflects a philosophy in which pupil's self-esteem and happiness are seen as prerequisites for effective learning.

## Appropriate resources to meet pupil learning needs

The headteacher observed that:

A central component of building a family ethos is that every child, regardless of need or circumstance, is a valued member of the school community.

Headteacher

The school is well-resourced as a result of the local authority funding the school on the basis of average pupil numbers on roll over a number of years. This arrangement smoothes out potential fluctuations in funding. L S Lowry has a higher than average proportion of children with SEN, and sourcing appropriate resources to meet the needs of these pupils is a priority. Practices for ensuring that pupil learning needs are appropriately resourced include:

- immediate and in-depth assessment of need when the pupil first enters the school
- taking appropriate action promptly and without delay if the pupil has SEN
- fostering excellent relations with the relevant local authority agencies, especially its inclusion services



- providing enhanced school action plus (ESAP) funding, which can be accessed more quickly than funding attached to a statement of SEN, in order to provide pupils with additional learning support quickly

We were told that the time taken to obtain a statement of SEN is a problem with children whose parents are in the armed forces. Children moving out of the authority are likely to lose this funding, which can only be provided on production of a statement of SEN.

The school is particularly well-resourced to cater for pupils with SEN. For example, one class of 23 pupils had a teacher and two teaching assistants. In another there were three assistants in addition to the teacher. Resourcing relates not only to teaching assistants assigned to particular children, but to places in the school building that have been created for them, including a rainbow room for SEN activities, a quiet room for counselling pupils, and a meeting room for parents and governors. The headteacher is particularly supportive of children with SEN and continually seeks additional funds for them. He noted that:

**The generous number of teaching assistants clearly adds to the relationships between staff and pupils.**

Headteacher

Pupil progress is carefully monitored and information on progress shared between staff. There is a special moments book where particular achievements by children with SEN are recorded.

As with the overall approach to teaching, creativity in making lessons enjoyable is emphasised. Many of the problems encountered by the pupils with SEN relate to speech, language and communication. There are quizzes and a speaker's corner where a pupil speaks for a minute on a particular topic. These strategies build pupils' confidence and self-esteem and are considered particularly helpful to mobile pupils.

### **Teaching and making lessons fun**

There is an emphasis on creating an exciting and fun learning environment where pupil achievements are celebrated. Many good primary schools are a visual delight and L S Lowry is no exception. Pupils' work covers the school walls, and the school was a hive of purposeful activity on our visit.

### **Managing teaching assistants and target-setting**

The teachers and the teaching assistants in the classes we observed clearly worked together as teams. This approach involves ensuring teaching assistants are focused on the objectives of lessons and how these can be achieved.

Annual targets are set by the SLT for both teachers and teaching assistants in relation to:

- pupil performance in a particular area (for the current year it was mathematics)
- the development of a subject area that could help broaden the curriculum for the children
- teacher development

### **The governing body and the school**

The school is strongly supported by its governing body. Because of the turnover of regiments, it is difficult to establish a stable governing body. At the time of our visit, there were 8 governors in place out of a possible 10. The second in command of the regiment and regimental welfare officer were co-opted members.

The chair of governors did not feel the governing body was short of capability as a result of the vacancies. There is a clear division of responsibility between policies agreed by the governing body and the day-to-day management of the school. However, in practice, because of the turnover of governors, the teachers often play a more significant role on the governing body than is typical of other schools. The governors we spoke to, the chair of the governing body and the regimental welfare officer were clearly highly supportive of the 'LS Lowry way'.

### **The role of the regimental welfare officer**

The regimental welfare officer is particularly important in helping with the integration of new pupil arrivals in the school and liaising with the regiment.

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## Summary

L S Lowry School has confronted a range of challenges that might overwhelm many schools. The focus is on developing pupils' self-esteem and happiness as a necessary precursor to effective learning. The school provides a very effective centre for the community. For the children, stability and continuity are established through a range of policies and practices. The school has established strong and effective links with families, the children of members of the regiment, the local authority and external agencies.

## Key messages

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- creating a stable learning environment
- building high expectations
- creating consistency and continuity
- seeing the school community as one family
- preparing thoroughly for newly arriving pupils
- having clear rules but flexible boundaries
- assigning responsibilities to pupils
- engaging parents as co-partners in educating the pupils
- generating a sense of belonging
- deploying appropriate resources to meet pupils' learning needs
- making teaching and lessons fun
- managing teaching assistants effectively
- setting targets for the pupils
- establishing a good governing body

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## Case study 5: Phoenix School

### Background

Phoenix School is a specialist sports college catering for children with autism and social and emotional difficulties. Its pupils are aged 9-16 and come from within the county and some neighbouring counties. The school has weekday residential facilities which virtually all the pupils attending the school use. Children are admitted to the school following the award of a statement of SEN by the local authority. As a consequence “there is no such thing as a 1 September joining age” (headteacher). Children are admitted throughout the school year at a rate of approximately one pupil a week, or occasionally two. The nature of the intake is therefore highly mobile.

Since joining the school five years ago, the headteacher had implemented a number of changes. The school had achieved a grade 1 (‘outstanding’) overall judgement from Ofsted at its most recent inspection. In the last three years, the number of pupils has tripled. The school has held specialist status in sports for the last four years. In addition, the school has a large vocational facility and provides many additional services including operating a Connexions centre, and organising mental health and speech and language support.

### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

Almost every child who comes into the school is a mobile pupil having transferred from mainstream schooling at a non-standard time. Some pupils are highly mobile following exclusion from many schools. One class teacher observed that parents often felt that the school was:

*a last point of help, they are at their wits’ end, desperate as they feel they have no control over their child’s behaviour and don’t know what to do.*

Teacher

Other pupils, such as those looked after by the local authority, had frequently changed school because of the care system. One Year 9 pupil at the school had lived in 60 foster homes in 3 years, with 6 of these moves also involving a change of school.

The majority of children at the school come from extremely disadvantaged family backgrounds.

The headteacher observed that 80 to 90 per cent of children enter the school with significant attachment and identity issues associated with huge changes in their friends and family following school changes. The school also receives children of families escaping domestic abuse. Children from two families at the school had recently joined following the attempted murder of one parent by the other. Only one pupil was currently living in a dual-parent family.

Disrupted schooling and neglected home backgrounds create severe mental health issues for children at Phoenix, which results in a huge educational penalty. The headteacher observed that some pupils, including those of secondary school age, struggle even to read or write their own name. However, at the heart of these needs are the fundamental issues of social and emotional development:

*We need to get the social and emotional aspects right first. Before anything else these children need to play and make friends, but they don’t have the skills to equip them to do so.*

Headteacher

When new pupils join the school, “the social is more important than anything” according to one teacher. Often children have no interest in learning and instead are disruptive in class, largely as a result of lack of confidence and self-worth:

*Self-esteem and self-worth is a massive issue for the new ones. ‘I can’t read, I can’t write. I won’t be able to learn how.’*

Teacher

New pupils also often lack faith in the schooling system.

*They don’t think it matters how they behave, in the end they’ll just be kicked out, as they have every time before. It comes as quite a shock when the message sinks in, you can kick off, you can misbehave but we’re still going to be here, and so are you.*

Teacher



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## Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos

### Needs-led provision

Taking a child-centred, needs-led approach is central at Phoenix School because of the significant and complex needs affecting the pupils. The headteacher reported that “Approximately 60 per cent of children have needs in addition to [educational and behavioural difficulties]. Every child needs to be treated as an individual”. This standpoint provides the starting point for decisions on provision. Underpinning this ethos is a dual emphasis on “embracing diversity and celebrating the complexity of need” (headteacher).

### Consistency of approach

Providing a consistent and stable environment is another key to the successful inclusion of mobile pupils. The headteacher recognised that “for most children, this is the first time they have had any stability”. This consistency permeates every aspect of the school including: behaviour management; sanctions and rewards; relations with staff and pupils; and the establishment and maintenance of school routines and schedules:

**Pupils must feel secure in the knowledge that staff will keep their promises; these children have been let down so many times before.**

Headteacher

Consistency in the dual pillars of care and education is especially important for successfully integrating new pupils at the school. The pupils recognise the consistency of approach among staff. Regular strategy meetings include all care staff and teaching staff, which helps ensure a consistent approach.

### Flexible boundaries

Whilst consistency in approach is central, there is also flexibility to respond to circumstances. Consistency is not the application of a rigid framework which does not accommodate context. It was acknowledged that being sensitive to pupils’ individual needs requires flexibility:

**Staff must have empathy and understand, and must not believe in ruling with an iron fist.**

Head of care

Consideration for context and personal circumstance therefore guide all staff responses to managing child behaviour. The headteacher recognised that:

**When new pupils come in, it’s a dual learning process; we are learning about them at the same time as they are learning about us. Therefore it’s a process of working out what works.**

Headteacher

Flexible boundaries refer to the need for both staff and pupils to accept fallibility when mistakes are made and to move on:

**We are human, we get things wrong sometimes but have to feel safe to hold up our hand and admit it and ask for help.**

Headteacher

The headteacher adopts a flexible approach with the local authority in relation to the admission of new pupils. Sometimes he accepts a pupil before the statementing process is complete. Although this practice is against local authority policy, he justifies it because it puts the pupil’s needs first.

### Care, understanding and respect for pupils

Care, respect and understanding underpins the way the teachers work with pupils in order to build confidence and self-esteem:

**It’s about showing care and respect for every child; this underpins staff attitudes towards pupils and makes a difference right from the start - even the smallest things like a tap on the shoulder and pulling out a chair.**

Headteacher

All members of staff spoke of the respect and admiration they had for the headteacher and the way he passionately cared for others. They said that he goes out of his way to make everyone feel special and that their opinion mattered:

**Respect and understanding are embedded now, people want to please. Everyone counts in [the headteacher’s] world and the children know that he cares about them and knows their world, as well as the staff’s world.**

Head of care

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## **Belief that change is possible**

Headteacher

In overcoming resistance to change, the headteacher acknowledged that retaining an unwavering belief that the best was possible had been essential. This belief is founded on another passionately held belief that the school can transform lives. He considered that this overall approach had been crucial to the success of the school. With regard to the needs of new pupils, he believed strongly in the capacity of pupils to change. His approach also draws on “a solution-orientated approach” to children’s challenges as opposed to regressing to blaming. The point of entry of new pupils is seen as a new beginning for them and the opportunity to start afresh:

We don’t encourage staff to dwell upon past records. They can cast a shadow upon the new child, but rather we look to the future, the phoenix rising from the ashes.

Headteacher

This allusion to ‘the new pupil born from the ashes of the past’ was a core belief.

Teacher

### **Mike’s story**

The school’s belief in new beginnings and challenging the impossible are illustrated by Mike’s story. Mike had joined the school two terms ago following several exclusions from mainstream school. In his last school alone he had on record 54 assaults against staff and pupils. Since being in Phoenix, Mike had caused no assaults and was, from our observations, engaged in learning and participating with the teacher, support worker and other pupils. In Mike’s own words:

It’s better here [than any of his other schools]. The people are more friendly and kind... It’s easier to be myself...and I get on better with everyone.

### **Viewing pupil mobility positively**

Mobile pupils are viewed in a positive light, perhaps understandably given the beliefs underpinning the school’s work. For new pupils, being new offers a fresh start and a new beginning but is also of benefit to the pupils in the settled school community:

I think new pupils are a great thing for the existing ones, it gives everyone else a chance to recognise how far they’ve come and gives them the opportunity to guide others into making this journey.

This view is also evident in the way the teachers consider the notion of mobility. One teacher demonstrated the value of changing a potential negative into a positive when she explained the effect of a new pupil on the class and the way she responds:

There is the potential to unsettle them. They all like the teacher’s attention and a new pupil creates the possibility to detract attention from them. So I turn it round, use it as an opportunity for children to empathise with their situation. So when Timmy joined, I asked Verity (who had joined fairly recently) to show Timmy round and help get him sorted. She was very proud of the responsibility. Through using other pupils to help settle the new one, you get to give the new pupil the attention they need, but in an indirect way.

### **Viewing learning as a shared pursuit**

The school seeks to engage pupils in their own development in order to build their confidence and belief that change is possible. This shared ownership extends to parents who are always part of the consultation process on any change or development affecting their child or the school. Shared ownership also involves incorporating the twin pursuits of emotional wellbeing and social development with more formal academic learning:

This involves fostering within children lifetime processes, the whole-child development, how children perform, make friendships, operate within the community. The aim is to equip children to make a positive contribution to society.

Deputy headteacher

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## Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice

### *The importance of two-way channels of communication*

The headteacher felt that the key to the success of fostering a collective responsibility for the development of the pupil had been open and honest two-way communication between him and the staff.

### *Devolving responsibilities*

The headteacher noted that devolving responsibilities and taking up a position of support and guidance was important. It has helped to build collective ownership of the responsibility for the pupils' development. This strategy also involves giving members of staff the opportunity to try new ideas without fear of failure.

### *A clear, supportive management structure*

The management structures have a clear, three-point design which connects the headteacher, deputy head and unit leader. It underpins a successful communication system and support network. Through the faculty supervision arrangements, members of the teaching staff are supported both by a line manager and senior line manager. In this way, members of staff always have a point of support available at the school.

### *An open-door policy*

The deputy headteacher was clear that a "truly open-door policy" is central to the foundation of a supportive senior leadership team. "The kids know they can go down the corridor to see the head and deputies any time and so do the staff" (deputy headteacher). The headteacher makes a point of impressing upon parents that they can approach members of the senior leadership team at any time.

### *Open forums with parents*

The school holds regular forums with parents, some without a fixed agenda. The meetings are used for two-way communication and for parents to raise concerns about any aspect of the school and what it is trying to do. In this way, "Parents get to be involved in choices that are made; they feel part of the process" (member of the governing body).

## Thorough assessment

On joining the school, each pupil is assessed for a period of six weeks in order to ensure that provision is needs led. This assessment period reflects the importance of the individualised approach the school gives its pupils. New pupils are supervised on a one-to-one basis 24 hours a day which continues for as long as necessary.

### *Connecting with new parents*

Staff members acknowledged that parents of new pupils often approach the school feeling frustrated or distrustful. They may have had negative schooling experiences themselves and might have been blamed for their child's behaviour in other schools:

*In some cases there has been inconsistency between home and school: children might be fantastic at school but difficult at home [and] this lowers parents' confidence in the education and care of their child. Therefore it's essential to establish a strong parent-school partnership right from the outset.*

Teacher

One of the deputy headteachers believed that having a "first point of contact is integral in establishing a two-way correspondence between home and school." Prior to admission, a member of the SLT visits the child's home to conduct an initial assessment "which demonstrates to parents the value the school places upon the family" (head of care). Parents are then invited, together with the child, to take part in a school activity. The head of care then discusses their child's needs with them. This approach demonstrates to parents the importance of their opinion and involvement and positions the parents as partners. Members of staff personally collect and return pupils to and from their homes. This practice enables a regular personal point of contact between care staff and parents.

### *Positive reinforcement*

Building confidence and self-worth is achieved through continuous positive reinforcement of pupils' self-esteem from every angle and at every opportunity. Celebration of success permeates the school. A celebration occurs formally in weekly award assemblies to recognise a range of successes: academic, social and personal. Postcards are sent to parents informing them of their child's successes.

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Pupils are set individually tailored learning and behaviour targets each week and these are worked on both in the residential facility and in the classroom. Positive reinforcement is also apparent informally through praise of even modest achievement and in finding the positive when pupils make mistakes. This approach was evident in the following classroom observation:

The activity for Verity is to sort shapes into those with curved and straight edges. She has to do this independently in order to achieve her weekly learning outcome, which is indicated by a green star. At the end of the lesson, [the teacher] addresses Verity. 'I don't think I can give you a green star on your learning objective today Verity because you weren't quite confident to do it on your own but you've done really well in working on your own and sitting in your seat, so I'll give you a sticker.'

Field notes

### Modelling

Modelling appropriate behaviour is important at the school. It encourages the pupils to share responsibility for their learning and conveys consistent messages of acceptable behaviour. Staff model the expected behaviours to pupils and pupils are encouraged to model them to other pupils. The head of care described the success of this approach in relation to a new pupil, Timmy:

When Timmy first joined the class, he wasn't interested in working or behaving appropriately. He wanted to be the entertainer, make the other children laugh. But they weren't having any of it and didn't respond at all. In fact they were shocked that he was violating the behavioural points system code. They are so keen to impress they totally ignored his attempts to distract. The peer effect was significant: Timmy soon quietened down and changed his outlook.

Head of care

### Summary

Ensuring the pupils' social and emotional wellbeing provides secure foundations for learning. There is a

widespread sense of valuing and respect for others. This permeates from the SLT through to staff and pupils and their families. The consistency in approach and attitude in both education and care provide a stable and secure environment that enables new pupils to settle in quickly.

The Phoenix approach differs from other case study schools in its wish to give pupils a fresh start. For example, children's histories are not preserved as they are at L S Lowry and Joan or Arc schools. The reason for this approach is that many of these pupils' histories are associated with negative experiences and failures. The school wants pupils to focus on the future in order to build self-esteem and self-worth. This drive towards self-improvement is reflected in the SLT's approach to the school. However, whilst the SLT has high expectations of staff and pupils, its members also recognise their (and their own) fallibility. Mistakes are acknowledged and learned from.

### Key messages

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- establishing needs-led provision
- having a consistent approach
- having flexible boundaries
- showing care, understanding and respect for pupils
- believing that change is possible
- viewing pupil mobility positively
- viewing learning as a shared pursuit
- having two-way channels of communication
- devolving responsibilities
- establishing a clear, supportive management structure
- having an open-door policy to enable communication with parents
- establishing open forums with parents to assist with communication
- assessing the pupils thoroughly
- connecting with new parents
- giving plenty of positive reinforcement
- modelling appropriate learning behaviours

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## Case study 6: Esperanza School

### Background

Esperanza School is a larger than average mixed secondary community school in east London with just over 1,000 students on roll. The ratio of boys to girls is 2:1 and 85 per cent of the pupil population are of Bangladeshi heritage. The school has a seven-form entry. There are two or three all-male and all-Bangladeshi classes in every year group in order to maintain a balance of non-Bangladeshi students and girls. The school serves an area of significant social disadvantage. The headteacher has been in post for 17 years and members of the SLT are similarly long-standing members of staff.

### Mobile pupils: their families and learning needs

The deputy headteacher acknowledged that the “special educational needs and emotional needs [of newly arrived pupils] can easily be missed”. The thorough assessment of children on arrival in the school is essential to gain a clear picture of each child’s needs and background.

All the members of the SLT observed that newly arrived pupils had left their homes and cultures and therefore could find their new home and country daunting and alien. This experience affects the pupils and their parents as the SENCO observed: “A lot of parents have their own emotional and mental health issues”.

However, not all newly arrived pupils live with their parents and the SENCO observed that many live with carers, because they have been brought into the country by an extended family. Often such pupils are not supported in the way they would have been by members of their immediate family. Children living with extended families sometimes experience what the SENCO termed ‘the Cinderella syndrome’, which is:

when children are brought across to England ostensibly to get a better education but [are] treated as very servile. There are many children working long hours on the market stalls, for example, who are under 16.

SENCO

However, the majority of parents of mid-phase transition children, as the school referred to them, engage with their children’s education. Nonetheless, as the chair of the governing body observed:

Many of these parents have had poor educational backgrounds themselves; they want to help their children succeed academically, but don’t know how.

Chair of governing body

This challenge is often exacerbated because families typically have very narrow social networks and few connections with the local community and school.

One of the deputy headteachers, who is also head of school inclusion, explained that the school has particular success among schools in the locality with mid-phase transition pupils accepted according to a formally agreed protocol. This protocol is an agreement between headteachers in the locality to transfer children to a new school as an alternative to permanent exclusion. The school was particularly successful with these children in that very few went on to be excluded at Esperanza. The 10-fold reduction in days lost through exclusion is a measure of the school’s success with these pupils.

There is a strong Islamic influence in the local community and as a result many parents do not want their sons and daughters to be educated together. There are two male single-sex schools in the locality as well as three female single-sex schools. As a consequence, the girls who attend Esperanza mixed school are in the minority; girls in the local community are more likely to attend single-sex schools.

There is some mid-phase transition between these local single-sex schools and Esperanza. For example, one female pupil we spoke with had recently moved to Esperanza from White Thorn, a local girls’ school, as she was being bullied. She said that girls’ behaviour was very different at Esperanza in comparison with her last school, and that she was much happier at Esperanza, although the difference in the culture was not without its difficulties:

Girls were quite bitchy and loud at [White Thorn]; here they are quieter and better behaved. It’s good because you’re not tempted to say something to get you in trouble, bad because you can’t stand up for yourself.

Female pupil



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A significant majority of mid-phase transition pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds including the following.

### **Bangladeshi pupils**

Most mid-phase transition pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage, which reflects the ethnic composition of pupils in the school. Most of these pupils are immigrants from Sylhet and a minority from Dhaka. The assistant headteacher observed that:

**Because these children are of the same cultural heritage as the majority of pupils at the school, they don't stand out.**

Assistant headteacher

This feature of not standing out is seen as an advantage in terms of settling in. However, these pupils had significant English language learning needs. Some children, of all ages, arrived speaking no English whatsoever.

### **Other immigrant groups**

Children of recently arrived immigrant families of other nationalities attended the school including Lithuanian, Polish, South American and Somalian children. The last group in particular is growing: as the deputy headteacher observed, "We are becoming the Somalian school of choice" in the locality. These pupils often come into the school with very low levels of (English) literacy and have considerable difficulty settling in to the school.

### **Managing pupil mobility: leadership vision and school ethos**

#### **Building high expectations**

All the members of the SLT voiced the importance of high expectations for every child at the school: "We have the very highest expectations for them" (associate headteacher). This expectation is particularly important for newly arrived pupils for whom English is an additional language: "Not being able to speak English does not mean you're not able" (associate headteacher). As one of the deputy headteachers observed, "self-esteem can be an issue for new pupils". The members of staff we spoke to considered that boosting children's confidence in their abilities and fostering within the pupils the same high expectations for learning and achievement were essential:

**As youngsters become more confident, then the child develops a sense of 'I will do it', especially for new arrivals, successes are so immediate, every step is a success.**

Assistant headteacher

The SLT takes the lead in building confidence, self-esteem and positive learning behaviours. It sets the tone for the rest of the staff. The assistant headteacher explained that insisting on high expectations was the only way to equip children for a successful future:

**Our youngsters may be poor, they may have a poor educational background, but we must have high expectations. You don't make excuses because outside the world doesn't care about their stories. We do.**

Assistant headteacher

#### **Adam's story**

Adam's story illustrates how successful the approach of the SLT and the teaching staff can be. He arrived at the school in Year 10. His father is Mongolian and his mother Hungarian. Adam entered the school speaking no English whatsoever. However, the school did not compromise on the expectations for Adam. Through personal tutorials with the inclusions manager, followed up with intensive language support tutorials applied directly to Adam's core curriculum, Adam left the school fewer than two years later with 14 A\* grades at GCSE. He has now progressed to university.

#### **Listening to and caring for pupils and using data to demonstrate good practice**

All members of the SLT recognised the social and emotional issues that produce low confidence and low self-esteem as important matters that affect new pupils. In order to address this issue, the headteacher has attempted to create a family ethos at the school:

**We are a family irrespective of where people come from and that family extends after they've left. I talk about family a lot and say, 'we treat each other like brothers and sisters'.**

Headteacher

This approach includes listening to pupils, valuing their opinions and responding to their concerns.

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As testimony to this approach, one of the deputy headteachers with responsibility for inclusion cited the independent opinion surveys the school had commissioned. These surveys were for pupils, parents and staff, and sought opinions on every aspect of the school. Data analysis was thorough, and the way responses had changed over time was checked. From these reports, the deputy headteacher was able to target specific areas of pupil concern and tailor strategies to address them. He used the example of bullying which was the key area of concern in 2007. The most recent opinion survey (2009) shows that since the action plan on bullying, it is no longer an area of concern for pupils and the data now features on the school's Ofsted self-evaluation form:

This demonstrates to pupils that we're listening and enables us to create an action plan around areas of pupil concern. Pupils now recognise teachers are caring and it also helps us in our [self-evaluation form].

Deputy headteacher/inclusions manager

### ***Consistent and tightly enforced behaviour code***

The ethos of care and support at Esperanza is not to be confused with leniency. All the members of the SLT recognise the importance of communicating and upholding strict boundaries in relation to school rules and expectations:

Upon first meeting pupils and their parents, we welcome them into the family and community but explain what this means. With respect to the formally agreed protocol for mid-phase transition pupils, we explain that people make mistakes and present [joining Esperanza] as a chance to learn from them, so here are the consequences of not learning from mistakes. The key to good behaviour is consistency. We draw a lot of attention to the 10 golden rules but the absolute number one rule is listening to and respect for teachers. 'Always do what teachers say and do it immediately'.

Deputy headteacher/inclusions manager

We witnessed this behaviour code being strictly enforced by members of staff. The deputy headteacher/inclusions manager explained the importance of insisting on strict boundaries even over low-level behavioural aspects such as presentation and appearance:

The latest survey showed that pupils think we are too strict here [laughs] well it's better to be too strict than too lenient. We insist on appropriate uniform, ties, jackets etc and building expectations around uniform infiltrates behaviour. If we tackle conformity on a low level it doesn't play out on a higher level. We have very little high-level misbehaviour here because we get it right at the low level.

Deputy headteacher/inclusions manager

### ***Parents as partners in educating the pupils***

Parents are partners in pupils' education as the chair of the governing body reported:

If you'd like to know how we succeed, we are in partnership with the local community and the parents. I remember 12 years ago I went to every single class, because the Bangladeshi background that I have, that was an advantage. So I can talk to these boys and I said 'Look, tell your parents that Mr Masood has requested that you come to the parents' evening and asks you to buy two samosas, one for me and one for the parents to share'. Because food is very important to this local community, if you go somewhere (as a visitor) you don't just sit on a cup of tea, you have to have something to eat, it's their culture, so we go a long way to get into this community. We know that we can't achieve unless we bring the parents with us.

Chair of governing body

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The SLT also recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents. Reaching into the local community and building relationships with parents and families are integral to gaining a full understanding of pupils' needs, and then meeting those needs:

*If we can't always get through to pupils, we can get through to parents. We do whatever we can do.*

Headteacher

### ***Using a firm but fair approach***

Following consultation with parents, the school introduced an exclusion room for pupils who had been excluded from school for a fixed period. Pupils spend their fixed-term exclusions in isolation in this room where they work on tasks assigned by teachers. This approach is in direct contrast to the normal protocol following fixed-term exclusion, when pupils are expected to work on such tasks at home. This strategy keeps disaffected pupils in school and enables one-to-one mentoring by members of staff and discussions between the pupil, members of staff, representatives of external agencies and parents. Key to this approach has been the support and co-operation of parents in working with the school. The chair of the governing body referred to the importance of speaking personally both with the child and parent, particularly for mid-phase transition pupils who are refusing to conform with the school's code of conduct:

*These pupils, I talk to them direct and I say, 'You love your mum don't you?' 'Of course I do,' they say. I say 'Well, because you did something wrong I had to call your mum, but I want to call your mum to thank them [and say] how wonderful your mum is because [your] child has achieved so well. This is the opportunity I look forward to, not to call your mum and other people to say you have been bad.' Then I give that boy my number and say if there is any problem you contact me direct, and I have done this many times, because we are not in the field of expelling children, we are in the field of educating them.*

Chair of governing body

The chair of the governing body felt he had a responsibility for building the school's presence within the local community. He has attempted to ensure that he is visible at community and religious meetings and events. This approach has enabled him to get to know many parents and important community figures. It has helped to communicate the school's vision, especially in relation to expectations of high achievement. Building parents' confidence in their role as educators of their children has created a more active and participative local community. This in turn has reinforced the school's high expectations:

*Connecting with parents has resulted in high levels of accountability. We can't hide and the community now expect the best. It's a vocal community looking to improve itself. This is now recognised as all aspects of life for children and they will not tolerate slackness.*

Chair of governing body

### ***Managing pupil mobility: vision into practice***

#### ***Building confidence and assertiveness, particularly in girls***

Raising the confidence of pupils and particularly of girls is given a high priority by the SLT: "We do a lot of work into making girls more assertive" (deputy headteacher). This strategy involves developing confidence and building self-esteem as core objectives of the whole curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. One teacher who had an unusually large number of mobile pupils in her tutor group explained:

*Here there is a particular emphasis on building confidence and self-esteem in girls than other schools. There are lots of clubs for girls during lunchtime and after-school which are a confidence booster for new arrivals who aren't confident speakers.*

Teacher



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A large proportion of the curriculum is devoted to personal, social and health education (PSHE). English lessons often use confidence-building activities and class discussions on the subject of valuing yourself and others. Two pupils spoke about English as a subject they enjoyed especially as it built their confidence:

**In English at the moment we have to stand up and talk which makes you more confident.**

Pupil

**When you stand up you want to get a good grade so it makes you more confident to try.**

Pupil

Generous resourcing for performing arts at the school has helped to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The head of drama was recruited to inspire pupils and also given responsibility for enabling new pupils to settle in. The work of his department – and his leadership – was recognised by pupils and teachers:

**The drama department do a fantastic job in developing pupils' communication skills and in empowering pupils. [The head of drama] uses pupils' own experiences of coming into school in many workshop activities.**

Headteacher

### **The Esperanza on-screen PSHE resource**

The Esperanza on-screen PSHE resource is another initiative that has been used to build pupil confidence and wellbeing. The head of performing arts devised the resource which involves educational films that are made at the school. The films support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural work of the school. Senior staff felt the resource was an important way of addressing personal and social issues affecting the children within the school community:

**Esperanza on-screen films are shown in assemblies and PSHE lessons and are an amazing tool enabling children to settle into school life. They are very powerful but distanced enough to give a context to thinking about things.**

Headteacher

### **Connecting with parents**

The school provides many opportunities for parents to link with the school and broaden their social networks, whilst at the same time developing skills. Parents' clubs are often educational with an English language or ICT focus and there are also book clubs and crochet clubs in English. The Parents Matter journal, which is published by the borough for staff in schools and early years, specially mentions the success of one of the deputy headteachers in setting up a crochet class for parents. The aim of the class was to:

**encourage mothers and carers to be more confident about coming into school and at the same time either learn a new skill or extend their repertoire.**

Parents Matter, Issue 20, November 2009

Other strategies for building relationships with parents include the following.

- One-to-one discussions are held between each parent and their child's tutor on the first day of term.
- Parents' evenings encourage greater participation by parents. These meetings discuss matters that are relevant to parents of mobile children such as GCSE options. They offer an opportunity to meet and get to know parents personally and discuss what support might be helpful.

### **Modelling success**

Using pupils as role models helps to build the expectations of mid-phase transition pupils. This approach involves sharing the success stories of previous pupils. These stories are regularly featured in the school magazine which is published twice a term. The headteacher deliberately employs ex-students as members of staff whenever possible. Past pupils attending university often return during university vacations to act in support roles in the school. The headteacher claimed that it was easy to maintain such links with past pupils because they are drawn to the caring ethos of the school:

**It's a place pupils want to come back to. We always have ex-pupils popping in, we're like one big family.**

Headteacher

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Pupil successes are also celebrated within the school. The school holds regular achievement assemblies to which parents are invited.

### **Talib's story**

Talib joined the school in Year 9 from Dhaka in Bangladesh. When he arrived he could speak very little English and could hardly write his name. However, two years later when he was in Year 11, Talib was made a head boy at Esperanza. Whilst head boy, Talib took a special interest in new pupils. He looked out for them and was able to empathise with their experience. Talib was very successful as a public speaker and took an active part in activities inside and outside the school. He was frequently an ambassador for the school in the local community. Talib has now been accepted at Exeter University to study law.

There were many posters around the school advertising Talib as a head boy and the headteacher kept press cuttings of his public speaking achievements. His success story is used to inspire other pupils in the school, especially new arrivals and his achievements are continuously raised by staff to pupils at the school.

### **Targeted language support**

The ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) team, which was funded by the local authority, has been crucial in the success of the school with pupils with English as an additional language. The local authority has been very supportive of the school's work with mobile pupils. The headteacher said that EMAG support was very important:

### **In-depth initial assessment of learning needs**

The staff emphasised the importance of the assessment of learning needs and ensuring progression. When a pupil arrives there is an in-depth discussion between the child, the parent(s) and the head of year. The head of English might also be involved to discuss additional language teaching. If that is the case, there is a thorough discussion with the EMAG team as well. The intention of this exercise is to gain a full understanding of the child's needs and capabilities. Pupils' capability in their first language is also assessed when they arrive, usually by a representative of an external agency at the school. The pupil's progress is then closely monitored by the EMAG team. If necessary, other specialists such as the educational psychologist, mental health practitioner or educational welfare officer, are brought in.

### **Curriculum-centred language support**

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) felt that "immersing children in the curriculum as soon as they arrive, at the same time as their developing their language skills" is crucial to enhancing the learning of non-English-speaking mid-phase transition pupils. The EMAG team is committed to tailoring language development to the specific needs of each pupil. In this way, new pupils learn English at the same time as they learn through the formal curriculum. Encouraging participation in out-of-school learning clubs enhances this process. Some of these clubs are geared towards subject-specific objectives, while others are designed to help pupils with their homework. The EMAG team also provides one-to-one support and withdraws pupils for intensive language support in the core subjects.

### **Additional KS4 provision**

There are additional study programmes for non-English-speaking mid-phase transition pupils who arrive in KS4. This programme involves targeted support in homework and coursework. It provides small-group tutoring outside class time, and the SLT encourages participation. These groups have a high uptake because the pupils have been inspired to take responsibility for their own learning as their rapid progress builds confidence and motivation.

### **Ensuring a stable and committed staff**

The assistant headteacher felt the school was so successful with mid-phase transition pupils because the staff were a "close team" and committed and dedicated to the school:

**Other schools don't have the staff that we do. It's all about stable staffing and offering stability for these youngsters.**

Assistant headteacher

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## High-quality staff-pupil relationships

Pupils hold the staff in high regard. Pupils are respectful and well-behaved with their teachers and clearly like and admire the senior staff at the school. During our visit, we saw pupils frequently greet and smile at the headteacher or deputy headteachers, who would greet pupils by name and often stop and engage them in conversation. This attitude towards pupils clearly demonstrated the care and regard of the staff for the school and built on the consistency of messages in relation to the school's rules and family ethos.

## Joined-up approach to pupil support

The school has a co-ordinated approach to external agencies in order to provide a consistent and effective support system for the pupils and their families. The educational welfare officer (EWO) at the school was appointed because of her strong links with the local community and external agencies. She was clear that:

The school invests a lot in outside agencies including: 'Step forwards' a [local authority] initiative, Lifeline, Connexions, counselling [and] transition workers to name a few.

educational welfare officer

The EWO also has a role as attendance officer in the school. She spoke of the emotional and social issues that can affect attendance for new arrivals. Individual pupils with more complex needs are discussed by a highlighting panel of experts, which includes the EWO. This group tracks the progression of support and intervention for children and their families. All the members of the SLT spoke of the success of these regular highlighting meetings. They enable all the interested parties to ensure that provision is appropriate; that pupils are supported and cared for; and that the voices of pupils and parents remain paramount.

## Summary

Esperanza has high expectations for its pupils. The staff did not see low levels of English language capability as a barrier to pupils reaching high levels of attainment. The school has fostered the same high expectations in new pupils and their families. The staff achieve this by demonstrating to the pupils and their families that children are cared for and valued in school. As a consequence perhaps, the members of staff at the school are highly respected.

Unlike L S Lowry, Phoenix and Joan of Arc schools,

the approach to boundaries at Esperanza especially in relation to pupil discipline is not flexible but uncompromising. Members of staff recognised that this approach may be interpreted by new pupils as being overly strict. However, they felt it was important to prepare pupils for the outside world which would not be so understanding about their difficult experiences.

The staff turnover is low. Pupils, parents and the local community understand that the members of staff are dedicated to the wellbeing and success of pupils. Understanding the needs and beliefs of the local community is central to generating the support of families of mid-phase transition pupils. The cultural background of the predominant mobile group (Bangladeshi) presented a specific issue of low levels of self-confidence in girls. The school emphasises confidence-building and vocal expression in the school. This emphasis reflects an appreciation of the connection between social and emotional wellbeing, confidence, high self-esteem and educational achievement.

## Key messages

The following are important in the management of pupil mobility and all have significant leadership implications:

- building high expectations
- listening to and caring for pupils
- using data to demonstrate good practice
- having a consistent and tightly enforced behaviour code
- engaging parents as co-partners in educating children
- using a firm but fair approach to pupil discipline
- implementing curriculum-centred language support
- implementing additional KS4 provision
- ensuring the school has a stable and committed staff
- ensuring high-quality staff-pupil relationships
- having a joined-up approach to pupil support

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# Main good practice themes

## Introduction

This section sets out the strong messages in the data that relate to good practice in the management of pupil mobility in order to maximise pupils' learning. Practice was established as 'good' by eliciting the explanations of the participants themselves as to why they felt that what they were doing was valuable, and through our own rationalisations and interpretations.

## Schools that manage pupil mobility to maximise learning were 'good schools'.

It is important to note that schools that manage pupil mobility successfully are 'good schools'. They were chosen for study in the first place because Ofsted had assessed them as such. Our data more than confirmed the Ofsted assessments. Many had the characteristics of excellent schools. In reviewing the data, it was very apparent that the good practice in managing pupil mobility was simply (sic) part of leading and managing a good school. It was deeply embedded in good educational and leadership practices. That is an important outcome, which we refer to in section 5 as part of our concluding comments, but it also sets the scope of the themes that were of interest to us in the analysis.

It is clear from this study that managing pupil mobility well, in terms of maximising pupil learning, is difficult if the school is not functioning well. Further, it is hard for any school to function well without high-quality leadership from the headteacher in particular. We would argue that the core behaviours of headteachers that are required for the leadership of schools with high levels of pupil mobility are similar to those that are essential in all schools. However, the way these behaviours are exhibited – relentlessly and with passion and commitment – is important, and there are other important behaviours as we discuss below.

## The educational leadership challenge of managing schools with high levels of pupil mobility was substantial.

The review of the literature revealed a large number of factors that may underpin pupil mobility. This study confirms and extends those findings. From the case studies, it was clear that many of the reasons for mobility were highly complex, multifaceted and interconnected, and all were potentially highly disturbing for the children involved. The disrupted home life of pupils may affect their behaviour as well as their educational attainment. Pupils may have witnessed domestic violence, especially if escaping such circumstances had been the cause of their mobility. Further, "children worry" as one headteacher put it. They are often very aware of the financial concerns of their families. They may worry about the precarious existence of their families if their parents are over-stayers whose entry visas have expired. At the other end of the scale, the disruption caused by socially and financially secure parents moving their families to advance themselves may still be very significant for the children. Even with children who move for educational reasons, the explanation for their educational need may lie in their disrupted, insecure or volatile home life. There was evidence that the housing policies of local authorities may contribute to unnecessary pupil mobility. Mobile families, perhaps those seeking asylum, or economic migrants, may be regularly re-housed in different locations in the authority, with new local schools for their children.

## Pupil mobility presents significant challenges to educational leaders in high-pupil mobility settings.

**The challenge is real.** The educational leadership challenge of managing mobile pupils to maximise learning is not an abstract, theoretical or hypothetical consideration. It is very real. The child and probably the family arrive at the school in person and require an appropriate response to their needs.

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**The challenge is immediate.** The educational needs that some mobile pupils present often require an immediate response. It is professionally unacceptable to delay children's participation in education. Such a delay will only increase the already high penalty incurred by their mobility.

**The challenge is complicated.** The matter of pupil mobility will have educational implications. However, these may be set in an array of other, interconnected social and economic difficulties for the pupils' families.

**The challenge is public.** How the school responds to the mobile child will be on view to the parents. The way the school responds to the child and the family is very likely to become known in the wider community.

**The challenge is unpredictable.** Mobile pupils and their families may arrive at the school unannounced and may depart without warning.

**The challenge may be political.** Responding to mobile pupils has a political dimension. For example, not everyone agrees that economic migrants should be catered for and that resources should be provided to meet the educational needs of their children. There may also be political tensions among the various mobile pupil groups in school.

**The challenge has blurred boundaries.** The educational needs of pupils may be an integral part of their social and financial circumstances. There are decisions to be made about the scope of the school's involvement in these wider issues.

**The challenge is not an excuse for poor educational practice.** An important aspect of the challenge is that it should not be used to excuse:

- low standards of professional work: as in 'Why bother? These children will probably be gone again in a few weeks'
- low expectations of pupil attainment: as in 'There's no point expecting much from these mobile pupils with them moving schools so often'

The central issue here is that all the schools we studied experienced these challenges and responded appropriately. Interestingly, appropriateness for them included:

- having the will to solve problems and respond to issues and at the same time knowing that some concerns are not solvable and maybe just have to be lived with
- showing considerable passion and commitment

but not naïvely so in rising to the challenges

- understanding that for mobile pupils and their families, the school represents a place of stability, wisdom, expertise, sensitivity, alertness, protection and care

These qualities were highly evident in all those we spoke to during the data collection.

It was clear from our study that the headteachers were pivotal in:

- leading and motivating others to respond appropriately on the basis of deeply held professional beliefs and values
- establishing systems and processes so that the institution was able to respond effectively to the learning needs of mobile pupils
- understanding and modelling professional generosity and high expectations, matters that we discuss below

## High-quality educational leadership was important in managing pupil mobility.

Not unexpectedly, the quality of the leadership of the headteachers and members of SLTs was a significant theme in the data. Headteachers modelled this high-level capability to ensure that it was developed and sustained in the staff group. It helped to engender a sense of collective educational leadership that understood and was fully committed to managing pupil mobility in order to maximise learning. The level of pupil mobility in a school may change and rise significantly and rapidly. The school leaders in this study demonstrated the capability to respond to such changes.

A very important educational leadership principle was that high levels of pupil mobility were not an excuse for poor educational provision or low levels of pupil attainment. In the words of one headteacher: "I get very annoyed with heads that use high mobility as an excuse for poor standards". Responding to the needs of mobile pupils was part of the commitment and motivation of the collective educational leadership to running a 'good school'.

## Supportive school-local authority relationships were important.

In the main, the schools had supportive relationships with their local authorities, which were very helpful



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in enabling the schools to manage pupil mobility effectively. These relationships were based on high levels of trust in which service directors felt comfortable giving schools the resources and autonomy to develop their practice. In turn this enabled schools to respond readily to the challenges frequently posed by mobile pupils.

However, we also identified instances where school-local authority relationships were not positive, often for historical reasons. There was significant impact as a result. One school, which had merged recently with another, resented the lack of information and support from the local authority during the merger. In another instance, the local authority had split up the siblings of mobile families when allocating places. Some schools worked around local authority guidelines to put in place the provision they thought was necessary. In one school, a Sure Start nursery, the ratio of adults to children was approximately 1:8 which was high. The headteacher said:

**It's important to have more staff around that children can talk to, so we have more staff than [the local authority] considers necessary.**

Headteacher

The implication here is that developing productive relationships with the local authority was part of managing pupil mobility successfully.

## The schools' governing bodies were effective.

In all the schools, the governing bodies functioned well, despite the challenges that turbulence and other related factors present, especially in recruiting governors. In one school, many parents were in the armed forces and often away on tours of duty. The second in command of the regiment and the regimental welfare officer were co-opted governing body members in this case. In another school, the chair of the governing body was also the school crossing patrol warden. As a result of her work, she knew all the parents and children and they knew her. The chairs of the governing bodies we spoke to typically had a powerful vision for their schools and what their schools were trying to do, especially in relation to mobile pupils.

In some of the schools, the governors, including and especially the chair of the governing body, were a significant presence in the school. Often they worked with newly arrived pupils and those with

behavioural problems. Importantly, the members of governing bodies understood the challenges their schools were facing in managing mobile pupils and meeting their educational needs. They were supportive of the school leadership and worked to ensure that the school was functioning appropriately. It was clear that the body responsible for the conduct of the school – the governing body – understood and in many instances provided additional leadership for the school.

Schools in high-mobility settings may be considered vulnerable as institutions because they face challenging circumstances. They need to be stewarded thoughtfully and with commitment. The governing body has the central role in this. Arguably, headteachers in all settings have a part to play in ensuring the school is well-governed but that is especially so in settings with high mobility. Local authorities also have an important role in ensuring good governance for maintained schools.

## The headteacher's leadership and professional authority were important.

Many of the headteachers in the schools we studied had been in post for a long time. They had developed considerable expertise during that period. The teachers we spoke to held their headteachers in very high regard. At one school in particular, all the members of staff spoke of their respect and admiration for the headteacher, his passionate caring for others and the way he made sure everyone felt special and valued. In the words of the head of care at the school:

**Everyone counts in [the headteacher's] world and the children know that he cares about them and knows their world, as well as the staff's world.**

Head of care

Some of the headteachers had been appointed to their schools when the schools had not been functioning well, and had led radical change since that time. In one school, the headteacher had been appointed in 1998 following the previous headteacher's retirement. At that time, the nursery was failing with an Ofsted inspection report describing 27 per cent of the teaching as unsatisfactory. As a result, the school was placed in special measures. Since then, the headteacher in close collaboration with the deputy headteacher had built up a strong team of staff and the school had



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progressed considerably as a result. The school had been awarded a grade 1 ('outstanding') judgement in most categories at its most recent Ofsted inspection.

The key point is that in a range of ways the headteachers worked to set the tone of the organisation and the way it responded to the needs of mobile pupils. The principles underpinning their practice included ensuring that:

- the individual learning needs of mobile pupils were identified, made clear and responded to
- there were sufficient resources to meet the learning needs of mobile pupils
- organisational and educational practices in the school were managed properly to ensure their high quality and continual improvement
- they modelled high standards of generous and responsive educational professionalism

## **It was important that teachers were authorised to work professionally and to develop a shared sense of good practice.**

There was a sense of collective authority among the staffs of the schools. It appeared to be significant in leading the institution so that mobile pupils were effectively managed. In one school, the headteacher referred to the staff group as her 'dream team', so delighted was she with the high standard of their collective work. In another, which was part of a federation, joint planning by groups of staff enabled an appropriate, individualised response to the learning needs of mobile pupils. Curriculum provision was devised weekly by all the teachers in the same year groups from all three schools. Planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time was organised so that all the same year-group teachers had this time together. As a result there were always three very experienced teachers involved in lesson planning, and teachers were able to take the lead in advising on their own subject specialism. This continual revision and updating fostered a very strong understanding of the curriculum. The key issue here is that professional teachers worked together and developed a collective leadership capacity. This capacity was deliberately encouraged by the headteachers and other members of the school leadership teams.

## **A high level of responsiveness was required to manage pupil mobility effectively.**

The schools understood the need to respond to the learning needs of mobile pupils and were ready to do so, in terms of their overall approach and the systems they had in place. Leadership practice in all the schools rose to and met the challenges of managing pupil mobility.

The challenging issue that is being responded to - in this case high levels of pupil mobility - does not go away because it has been responded to. Pupil mobility may indeed be a long-term challenge for schools in particular areas. Over time, being responsive in a particular way may shape the school and the way it works. There was evidence that schools in an area where there was a high inflow from a particular ethnic group had gained a reputation for working with new arrivals from a particular community. In one of the schools, children of recently arrived immigrant families of a range of nationalities attended the school including Lithuanian, Polish, South American and Somalian. The last group in particular was growing and as the deputy headteacher observed: "We are becoming the Somalian school of choice" in the locality. This reputation was likely to change the school over time.

Specifically, being responsive may mean the following.

### **1. Taking the initiative**

As one headteacher said "If we have a group of people asking for information, then we realise we need to do something". Thus being responsive was not simply a matter of being passive and reacting to circumstances. It was important to take the initiative and intervene in a pre-emptive way. The headteacher and staff of the military school were proactive in visiting the school where the regiment that was just about to arrive was garrisoned. They took the initiative to find out about the pupils who would be joining the school in order to establish a sense of school community before the pupils arrived.

### **2. Schools becoming experts in receiving all non-standard entry time pupils**

There was evidence that some schools which have become adept at receiving pupils who are perhaps from economic migrant families are also skilful at receiving pupils who have been excluded from nearby schools for behavioural reasons. In one school we studied, the deputy headteacher, who was also the inclusions manager, explained that the

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school had particular success among schools in the locality with mid-phase transition children accepted according to a formally agreed protocol. This protocol was an agreement between headteachers in the locality to transfer children to a new school as an alternative to permanent exclusion. The school was particularly successful with these children, very few of whom were excluded from the school.

### 3. **Being flexible but within the constraints of what it means to run a good school**

The schools' flexible and adaptable processes were embedded within and constrained by the practices required to run a good school. There were thus varying degrees of flexibility – some were highly flexible in their overall approach. The chair of the governing body of one such school was very clear about the school's overarching drive to be flexible in meeting the needs of families and what it meant:

**Flexibility: be the willow not the oak. Don't set it in stone. If you set it in stone you're limited. You have to bend, and that's what's given us an outstanding Ofsted.**

Chair of governing body

Whilst setting clear boundaries enabled mobile pupils to settle in, how those boundaries were worked with was very important. In one of the schools, although consistency in approach was central, there was flexibility which took the context into account. Consistency was not the application of a rigid framework which did not take account of the context. The head of care at the school acknowledged that flexibility was required in order to be sensitive to the individual needs of pupils:

**Staff must have empathy and understand, and must not believe in ruling with an iron fist.**

Head of care

Consideration for context and personal circumstance therefore guided all staff responses to managing pupils' behaviour. The headteacher recognised that:

**When new pupils come in, it's a dual learning process; we are learning about them at the same time as they are learning about us. Therefore it's a process of working out what works.**

Headteacher

Flexible boundaries therefore referred to the need to accept fallibility and move on, both of the child and

staff:

**We are human, we get things wrong sometimes but have to feel safe to hold up our hand and admit it and ask for help.**

Headteacher

Flexible boundaries also referred to the way this headteacher worked with the local authority in the admission of new pupils. Sometimes he would take on a pupil before the statementing process had been completed. This practice was against local authority policy but was preferred because it prioritised the pupil's needs.

One school, a secondary, had a racially mixed intake with a high proportion of Muslim pupils including Muslim girls. We were surprised by the apparently very strict classroom and behavioural management practices. These practices worked well in the school and the mobile pupils rapidly realised what the expectations were. The strict rule may have been effective because of the age of the pupils. Flexibility may have been exploited unhelpfully by older pupils. Also, the school was the largest we studied. There may have been a need to ensure that such a large organisation was secure. The way boundaries were managed may have helped to provide a stable and safe environment for a mixed-gender school where girls may have been unwilling to assert themselves as learners.

### 4. **Recognising that there is a matter to respond to**

The schools in this study had recognised that increasing numbers of pupils arriving and leaving at non-standard times was an issue to respond to and that their practice needed to adapt accordingly. This aspect of good practice also encompassed a recognition that the issue being responded to may change. For example, the level of mobility may change, or different ethnic groups may feature more prominently in the mobile pupil group. In one school, there was a large influx of Somali children four or five years ago from families who were new arrivals to the UK. Since then, there had been fewer new arrival Somali families and a growing number of newly arriving Punjabi children.

### 5. **Developing the capacity to work flexibly with a wide range of agencies**

The data indicated that the capacity for working with a wide range of different agencies and organisations was an important aspect of responsiveness. Responding appropriately may mean engaging with a range of other agencies to provide an appropriate response. This involved establishing

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good relationships with external agencies in order to share a vision with external representatives as to how to manage pupil mobility successfully. One of the schools we studied, a children's centre, had an advisory board in addition to the school governing body. The board comprised representatives from the external agencies it worked with:

- the charity Barnardos, which works with families in difficulties
- health visitors
- advisers in social security services
- social services

The key point is that leading a school that has to be highly responsive in the way that the schools we studied were differs substantially from leading a school where the context and pupil learning needs require a lower level and different kind of responsiveness.

## Developing a particular approach to change is important.

The schools we studied appeared to be very secure, stable and established places despite the high level of pupil mobility. This characteristic did not mean that they lacked the capability to respond to changing circumstances. Change occurred within the frame of their professional insight and understanding and how they felt a good school should be. So, although the schools were ready to make changes, they made them within that particular frame. Thus change was typically incremental and built on established successful practice. Possible changes were talked through and the potential implications and unintended outcomes explored. There was a high level of professional educational expertise in these schools on which such discussions could be based. This approach seemed to minimise mistakes and added to the sense of the security of organisational and educational practices.

## Managing mobile pupils requires professional generosity.

There was a strong impression of a high level of professional generosity in the schools. So, for example, although the staff in one school understood the implications of pupils from another country arriving unexpectedly three weeks before national tests were undertaken, they responded positively. The newly arrived pupils were not viewed negatively. These schools readily committed

resources to enable mobile pupils to settle in. The sudden departure of pupils was also accepted and the likely reasons for it understood. Indeed, if a pupil's departure was anticipated, additional professional resources might be deployed to enable the pupils to move on successfully.

The schools were not naïve in their generosity; far from it. They had a very sophisticated view of their work. It was simply (sic) that they configured their work in this way. Their motivation was not to get the best SATs/GCSE results in the borough. Their motivation was to meet the educational needs of the child and if another school gained the benefit of their work through the pupils' good test or examination results when the pupils moved on, then so be it.

Part of the professional generosity equation appears to be having high expectations of the pupils. All those we spoke to had very high expectations of the pupils in terms of how they approached their learning and what they could achieve. There was no evidence of the 'poor dab' syndrome (James et al, 2006), where a pupil's unfortunate and difficult experiences and situation become an excuse for low educational attainment and achievement. Very importantly, the schools – teachers, leadership teams, governors – were generous with themselves and what they gave to the pupils. However, in return, the pupils and indeed their families had to do their bit.

## It was important to work with mobile pupils and their families together.

The schools worked with families in the management of pupil mobility and not just with pupils and their parents. The extent to which a particular pupil was able to settle into the school appeared to be significantly influenced by her or his siblings and extended family. This matter was particularly important with younger pupils. In the words of the headteacher of the nursery school we studied: "We want to know what the care arrangements are in the home".

The schools were places where families accessed information. The schools were seen as important conduits of information about the social system in general, such as how to find out about access to welfare benefits, where to find information about work opportunities, and how to get advice on legal matters.

Many schools appeared to feel they had a role in

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educating parents about what were acceptable wider cultural norms. The reference to 'the Cinderella syndrome' in one of the case studies illustrates this point. The syndrome refers to typical family behaviour in which families move to enhance educational opportunities for their children, but then require their children to work long hours in the family business, thus detracting from settling in and learning. The schools felt they had a responsibility to counter this practice. A number of participants referred directly or indirectly to the idea that parents may want to help their child's learning but may not know how to. Many of the schools responded by educating parents so they could help with their children's learning. Schools also helped parents to access language education. Some schools intervened on behalf of families, helping with housing for example, attending court as witnesses on behalf of over-stayers and acting as advocates on other matters.

Arguably, the leaders of schools in high-mobility settings need to be ready to place their schools at the heart of their communities and to work with pupils and their families.

## The rapid and sensitive assessment of the learning needs of mobile pupils was important.

Mobile pupils may have a multiplicity of personal and social needs which interact with a potentially complex set of learning needs. These needs were expressed in the context of being in transition, ie leaving one place and entering another. The assessment of the arriving pupils' learning needs had to be rapid but sensitively managed.

Early assessment was particularly significant in cases of special educational needs. One teacher we interviewed was clear that it may not be helpful to explain to a parent whose child has been in the school a very short time that her child has some quite serious learning needs. It may set back the settling-in process or reduce the parents' willingness to co-operate in enabling the pupil's learning needs to be met.

There was evidence that the sometimes protracted nature of the statementing process could be very difficult for schools. They may have needed to assign additional resources to support such pupils while the statementing process was being completed. In one of the schools where this matter was significant, the local authority had a system where funding was provided much more quickly for students just below the level where a statement would be appropriate.

## Managing the full cost of responding to the learning needs of mobile pupils is important.

The management of mobile pupils is costly and includes hidden costs. For example, a pupil may arrive and clearly have complex learning needs that would require a statement so that his or her learning can be supported. That process takes time, and provision has to be made in advance of the funding arriving.

One school had a very good reputation locally. It could easily start each year full and the school would be fully funded. However, the headteacher always decided to leave spaces available for pupils who were almost certain to arrive during the year. As the deputy headteacher put it, "[The headteacher] holds places back".

Schools that manage pupil mobility well have to invest resources in developing relationships with parents. The initial interviews, follow-up discussions and other meetings to discuss a particular learning need all take time.

The proactive securing of resources, especially in the form of grants, to support their work with this pupil group contributed to the success of these schools in managing pupil mobility.

The effective management of pupil mobility required astute, sophisticated and proactive management of the school's budget by the headteacher and the governing body. Such management ensured that resources were available for mobile pupils and should be seen by educational leaders as an integral part of maximising pupil attainment. Even with careful management, rapid changes in pupil numbers could put a strain on a school's finances.

## Developing and implementing thorough induction and departure programmes is important.

The schools had well-established induction routines to manage the arrival of mobile pupils. Typically, such programmes would involve the parents and would endeavour to:

- establish quickly a sense of partnership with parents
- build foundations for the development of trust and secure relationship-building
- understand the individual needs of the pupil



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- recognise the family's history and home environment

The initial contact with parents appeared to be crucial. However, there was evidence that the schools sustained those contacts and that they have engaged in a long-term learning relationship with the parents as well as the pupils. Induction may be a lengthy process for many pupils, especially if they have experienced serious disruption as a result of mobility.

One particular school invested heavily in an induction programme for new pupils despite the cost. This induction included the following.

- Once the child had been offered a place, invitations to visit the school were sent to the child's parents in English and in the parents' mother tongue.
- Two school visits took place in which parents met members of the SLT and saw the children at play.
- Schools visits were followed up by a home visit by the child's key worker and a member of the support staff who would act as interpreter if necessary.
- During the home visits, the key worker took the role of building relationships with the parents whilst support staff members played with the children. Building this relationship involved listening to parents' perspectives on their children's needs and discussing appropriate strategies for them.
- Admission on the first day was arranged to coincide with the availability of language support staff.
- A personalised induction strategy assessed how long the child should attend school for initially and whether he or she should be accompanied. Some children required a six-month induction before attending a full session.

Many schools had departure programmes in addition to induction programmes. These helped the pupils to leave and join their new schools using various learning activities and provided their receiving schools with important and useful information.

Monitoring has increased significance in schools with a high level of pupil mobility, as does target-setting. The schools concentrated on checking the progress of newly arrived pupils and helping the pupils to be proactive in their own settling in and to take responsibility for it.

Acknowledging pupils' culture and history was important. In many instances, different cultures were celebrated and provided opportunities for learning. One headteacher reported a conversation with a parent which was aimed at encouraging the family to speak in their own language, and not to neglect their home language in their eagerness to become fluent in English. This approach was seen as a way of retaining the connection with their culture and history. It also recognised that literacy development in English is aided by literacy development in the child's home language.

The data reinforced the notion that for pupils, their school was an important aspect of their own history and identity. Some schools went out of their way to show to departing pupils that they had been important to the school and that the pupils would not be forgotten.

As with so many aspects of school leadership, the capacity to organise matters within the school, in this instance pupil induction and departure programmes, is crucial and has significant pedagogic implications. However, in order to avoid school leaders having to reinvent the wheel on this specific issue, good practice in the organisation of induction and departure programmes should be widely shared. Such a strategy will be of benefit to all schools, even those with a relatively stable pupil population.

## **Pupil mobility should be viewed as a pedagogic issue and an opportunity.**

Although being a mobile pupil may incur a penalty, if being mobile is managed well, that penalty may be reduced. Further, it can be used as an opportunity for learning in both a cognitive and an affective sense and for mobile and non-mobile pupils. Existing pupils benefited from the insights gained through learning something of the culture, background and experiences of mobile pupils. They also benefited from the opportunity to participate in the process of including new pupils into the school community. The issue of mobility enabled pupils to learn about and to reflect on their feelings, emotions and moods and those of other pupils. Mobile pupils brought new insights and have new experiences as a result of their mobility. The experience of mobility may enable them to gain an enhanced understanding of their feelings and how they express them.

Many of the schools used buddying systems where an existing pupil would be paired with a new pupil to help the latter settle in. These arrangements enhanced understanding for all concerned, assisted

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with the induction process, and helped new pupils to feel safe, secure and less anxious. Importantly, it helped to raise the self-esteem of all pupils, which was an important feature in the management of pupil behaviour.

Arguably, all high-quality teachers and educational leaders can recognise and take advantage of the opportunities for learning that arise from particular circumstances and events. This approach is an essential requirement for the leaders of schools in high-mobility settings.

## The pupils' emotional wellbeing was of paramount importance.

A significant theme in the data was that social and emotional wellbeing underpinned all learning. Thus addressing pupils' emotional needs as they deal with disruption in their home circumstances, their relationships with peers and teachers in their previous school, and the new circumstances they now face was important. Further, a very strong message from the school leaders and teaching staff we spoke to was that the social and emotional development and wellbeing of pupils must be attended to before any formal learning can take place. Building self-esteem was considered to be important. A teacher at one of the schools identified three factors that were important in building the self-esteem of mobile pupils. They were:

- developing a sense of belonging
- building the pupils' sense of their identity
- enhancing the pupils' own sense of their personal power

Mobile pupils are likely to have their sense of belonging, identity and authority compromised and undermined. The schools therefore endeavoured to create an ethos which addressed these aspects directly. The approach included:

- building relationships with pupils by making them feel noticed and valued as individuals
- celebrating achievements
- giving pupils the skills to make friends with others
- having a behavioural policy based on positive choices

Addressing the social and emotional needs of pupils required a highly thoughtful approach that encouraged reflectivity in pupils. Those we spoke to were clear that there were opportunities for

enhanced personal learning for the mobile pupils themselves and all those who have relationships with them.

School leaders need to take the lead in ensuring that the emotional needs of pupils are met and that their emotional wellbeing is ensured. There may be professional development needs here for headteachers.

## It was important to create a secure, safe and routine school environment.

This theme represents a significant aspect of the organisation of all schools. However, it appeared to be more important in the successful management of mobile pupils. This theme had several aspects:

- **a stable staff group:** in all the schools there was a relatively low turnover of staff and new members of staff were appointed with care
- **predictable routines:** the schools gave the impression of having well-established routines – 'the way things were done' was established, clear and widely known
- **a visible and consistent behaviour and learning policy:** the expectations of pupils were very securely established. Pupils knew what they were joining and were made very well aware (by staff and fellow pupils) what was expected of them

The metaphor of family featured significantly in interviewees' responses to describe what they were attempting to create in their schools.

In essence, transition may have disrupted children's educational trajectories and as a result they may lose balance. For some mobile groups, school was the secure place in a disrupted home life. It was essential to build a routine, recognisable, knowable school environment.

School leaders should take the lead in ensuring that the school provides a safe, secure and routine school environment for mobile pupils.



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## Provision for mobile pupils was individualised and needs-led.

In all the schools, there was a strong sense that it was important to:

- recognise each (mobile) pupil as an individual
- make the time and space to understand the needs of each pupil
- fit resources and ways of working according to the pupil's needs, not the other way round

High-quality communication among members of staff was important in meeting pupils' individual learning needs and there was ample evidence of some sophisticated systems of communication – formal and informal – about individual pupils in the school we studied.

Typically, English language learning needs were significant and extensive, not only for pupils but their families as well. In many of the schools, the members of staff collectively had considerable and diverse language capability. Interestingly, although this need was recognised and responded to, there was evidence that pupils were encouraged to use their indigenous language, both at home and at school.

All the schools we studied monitored the progress of newly arrived pupils very closely. In some settings, notably in early years, this monitoring included cognitive and affective development and data collection involved pupil observation. In addition to monitoring, the schools used the information collected to modify and adapt pupil learning programmes.

School leaders ensured that provision was individualised and needs-led for mobile pupils and that newly arrived pupils were appropriately monitored.

## Systemic leadership was important.

The educational leadership necessary to maximise the learning of mobile pupils required the development of high-quality relationships with a large number and wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. Thus leaders of high-mobility schools needed a systemic perspective. Their leadership responsibility extended to galvanising those in the wider system to positively influence the work of the school. They needed to engender systemic leadership for their schools (James et al,

2007).

The central notion was that a school with a high level of pupil mobility was embedded in a range of varied and interconnecting relationships with individuals, agencies, organisations and communities. Energising all those individuals and organisations to work in the school's interest was an important task for the school leadership.

## All the aspects of good practice were interconnected.

In identifying these themes for interpretation, and indeed in considering all the themes from the whole data set, we were conscious of their interconnected nature. All the themes were significant and they were all part of other themes. The schools we studied were perhaps successful because they worked with all the themes and were thereby able to gain benefit from the synergies between them.

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## Concluding comments

In this study, we have been concerned to identify what the case study schools do that is special in relation to meeting the needs of mobile pupils and to distinguish those aspects from what one might expect in any 'good school'. Another perspective on why these schools are good at managing pupils to maximise pupil learning is that they are good schools in mobile contexts and that mobile pupils, because of their needs, require good schools. Such an assertion begs the question: what constitutes a good school? The question raises two important issues. First, we know quite a lot about good schools, and we have known that for some while. These schools display those characteristics. The second issue is that of responsiveness. What these schools were especially good at was being responsive to the needs of all those connected with the school. In being responsive, they were also generous, a quality that was in turn complemented by having high expectations. An interesting point here is that the first issue (what constitutes a 'good school?') shapes practice in relation to the second issue (how should a school be responsive?). These matters are worthy of further exploration.

The final point is that many of these schools were, in a sense, vulnerable. They rely on having good members of staff, who may leave, and they are undertaking difficult and sophisticated work. They are working with young people who are experiencing or who have experienced extreme upset verging on trauma. We have been in awe of the considerable professional knowledge displayed by the headteachers we interviewed and the members of their staff and indeed by the governors we spoke to. They all carry a considerable burden, which adds to the impression of vulnerability. Protecting against this vulnerability requires the inter-linked, joined-up and collective support of all those connected with such schools.

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