iNet

International Networking for
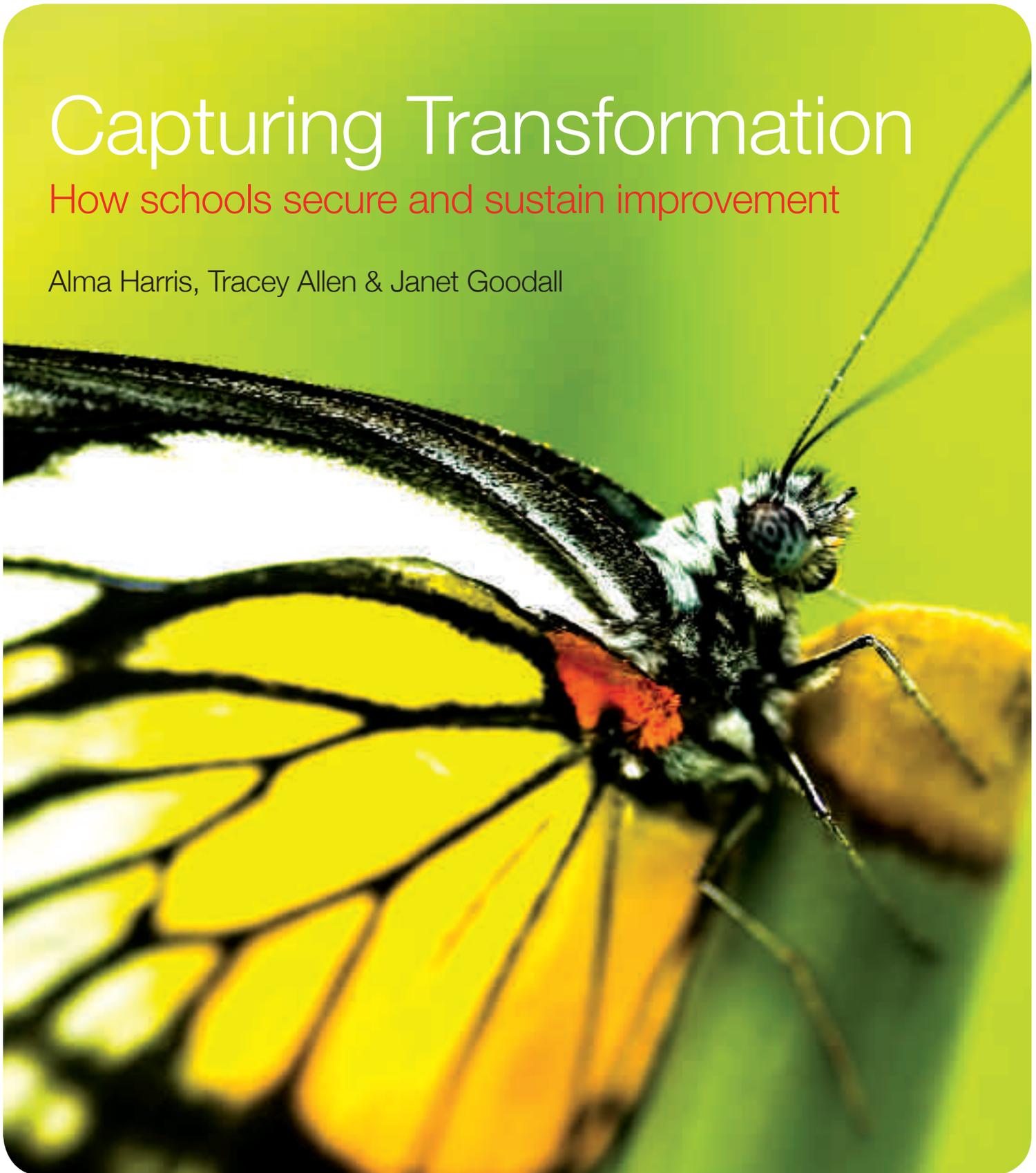Educational Transformation ™

Specialist Schools
and Academies Trust
THE SCHOOLS NETWORK ™

Capturing Transformation

How schools secure and sustain improvement

Alma Harris, Tracey Allen & Janet Goodall

Professor Alma Harris

Alma Harris is Pro-Director (Leadership) at the Institute of Education, London and Chair in Educational Leadership at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning. She has previously held academic posts at the University of Warwick, University of Nottingham and University of Bath. She is currently an Associate Director of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and is the editor of 'School Leadership and Management'.

She is internationally known for her work on school improvement, focusing particularly on ways in which leadership can contribute to school development and change. She is currently co-directing a large scale DCSF project on 'Leadership and Learning Outcomes' and an ESRC study on 'Multi-agency Leadership'.

Her website can be located at **www.almaharris.co.uk**

Dr Tracey Allen

Tracey Allen is Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Education, London. She has previously held posts at the University of Leicester and most recently at the University of Warwick.

She is engaged in research with a focus on practitioner and policy innovations; this involves investigation of contemporary configurations influencing education such as school-to-school partnerships, parent and community engagement and multi-agency approaches. She is currently Principal Investigator on the ESRC project, 'Multi-Agency Partnerships and Young People's Experiences.'

She has experience of leading research and development projects involving education practitioners, policy makers, and diverse pupil and parent communities.

Dr Janet Goodall

Dr Janet Goodall is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. She has previously been a Research Associate at the University of Nottingham.

Her research has centred around leadership and supporting change in schools. More recently, she has been involved with the Beyond Expectations project with Boston College in the US examining leadership in turnaround organisations in education, health, sport and business. Previously, she has worked with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, on engaging parents to raise achievement. She has also worked with the National College for School Leadership, looking at networks of schools, and with CEDAR, on the evaluation of federations. Previously, she worked on a project focusing on the effective evaluation of continuing professional development for school staff.

" the secret is there is no secret

Headteacher

Foreword

Capturing Transformation is a summary of what has been learnt from evaluation of twenty schools that have been associated with the Raising Achievement Transforming Learning Programme who have significantly improved and who have sustained improvement over time. Professor Andrew Hargreaves set a key challenge for schools to 'harmonise, sequence and integrate short, medium and longer term strategies for improvement.' This evaluation seeks to identify the key characteristics of schools who sustain change.

Transformation is a relative concept with schools often beginning by focusing on essential strategies to improve performance, based on their own needs and development areas. These strategies often tend to be 'quick fixes' or short term solutions. These endeavours whilst important for both individual students and a school are not enough. This study tests and attempts to validate a model of school transformation which identifies not only what schools do but how they do it.

The significance of the model is that it accepts that schools approach transformation from different starting points. Schools will have their own priority areas and will have action plans to build on strengths and focus on areas for development. In many cases and evidenced from the Raising Achievement Transforming Learning (RATL) programme, schools will be developing their use of data, focusing on teaching and learning and begin to identify the most effective and appropriate curriculum models. The combination of these three 'content levers' together appears to be the driving force behind schools making strides forward simply because of the correlation between them. In other words, data informs the most appropriate curriculum for students, which in turn informs the most appropriate pedagogies for the individual student.

The processes that underpin transformation also form a key part of the model. The processes ensure that the content levers work together in the most effective way and yield the desired outcomes at student, subject and whole school level. This approach optimises the impact and ensures that the focus is placed on appropriate strategies at the right time. However, in order to for this to be at its most effective there is a strong link with leadership and culture. The evidence and conclusions which follow not only demonstrates the most significant attributes to raise achievemment but also provides a sense of the type of strategies that can impact not only in the short term but over the long term as well and supports the conjecture that RATL and this model of transformation is actually a self-sustaining school system model for raising achievement. Our thanks to Professor Alma Harris, Dr Tracey Allen and Dr Janet Goodall for leading and analysing this research, and to Rosanna Raimato, David Moran and Kirstie Andrew Power for supporting us in the data collection and in carrying out what is as ever the most enjoyable part of our work, Finally our thanks to the schools for their welcome, openness and engagement during what was for us all a real privilege and pleasure visiting each school and meeting with both staff and students.

David Crossley and Graham Corbyn
October 2008

Contents

Executive Summary

■ Schools that sustain transformation see innovation and change as an integral part of their day to day activity.

■ School to school collaboration and networking is an essential component in sustaining transformation - it provides the infrastructure for new approaches to innovation and change.

■ Deep cultural change is at the heart of successful and sustainable school transformation. School cultures that support innovation are 'high risk and high trust'.

■ There are key content, process and dynamic levers that schools utilise to secure transformation. The particular combination of these levers varies according to the school's stage of development and its context.

■ Sustaining transformation is unlikely without some external impetus, drive and input and is highly dependent on knowledge transfer between schools.

■ The RATL programme has provided schools with expertise in school-based innovation which they continue to use to sustain transformation.

■ Data and self evaluation are at the heart of sustaining transformation; the use of data provides a powerful basis for ongoing review and change.

■ Leadership in schools that sustain transformation is purposefully distributed.

■ Sustainable transformation requires the active and purposeful abandonment of certain approaches, processes and ways of working that no longer meet the school's stage of development.

■ Schools that sustain transformation learn while innovating – they have feedback systems which allow them to refine and develop processes as change is happening.

1. Introduction

1.1 Transformation and change

It is clear that new organisational forms of schooling are required for system transformation and sustainable improvement to occur. Michael Fullan (2004:16) argues that changing whole systems means changing the entire context in which people work and it is clear that the current context of schooling is rapidly shifting. Innovation within and between schools is now the prime way of generating collective capacity for education transformation and change.

There is ample evidence that school to school networks and partnerships are a powerful means of achieving knowledge creation and sharing (Hargreaves et al, 2006). School to school collaborations provide particularly powerful mechanisms of self-renewal and growth during periods of extensive externally imposed change. Creating collaborative arrangements between schools is more likely to result in deeper organizational learning both collectively and individually. This is especially true within school networks where specialised knowledge can be created and transferred.

1.2 Raising Achievement Transforming Learning Project

The Raising Achievement Transforming Learning (RATL) project developed by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust has been shown to be an effective way of securing knowledge transfer and improvements in performance. As Hargreaves et al (2007:4) highlight in their evaluation, RATL provides a distinctive and possibly unique model for raising student achievement and improving schools. The RATL model is premised on effective networks and has incentivised school to school participation with positive results. As a model of collaboration it brings schools together through conferences and programmes of inter-visitation and exchange. RATL epitomises what Senge (1990) sees as being the key to successful and sustainable organizational development. He suggests that networks of schools do not just facilitate innovation but they also offer the possibility of new ways of working.

School networks such as RATL are increasingly being seen as a means of facilitating innovation and change in schools, as well as contributing to large-scale system reform. Contemporary evidence suggests that this investment in networking offers a considerable educational return in the form of higher student achievement and attainment.

But how does this successful transformation take place? Much of the literature concerning transformation and change tends to preoccupied with the components of initial turnaround. The stages of first phase recovery are well documented and the elements of successful turnaround in the initial stages are well known. However there is less evidence available about how transformation is maintained and sustained once an improvement trajectory has been estab-

1.3   The research

This document outlines the findings from a research project, undertaken in 2007/8, that looked at the process of school transformation with a cross section of RATL schools over a five year period. The study focused on a sample of secondary schools that had all successfully improved their performance and had succeeded in raising and sustaining achievement. All of the schools scored highly on measures of contextual value added and many schools are in areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage.

The study comprised performance data analysis and qualitative data collection. In depth, case study evidence was collected at each school site and data was triangulated from a variety of sources including focus groups, one to one interviews, informal observations, relevant archival data and web based data including OfSTED reports and a range of performance data.

Overall, 100 interviews were conducted with a cross section of respondents including teachers, parents, students and governors. The study aimed to 'capture the process of transformation' and to identify those features or factors that directly contributed to embedding and sustaining transformation.

The data collected throughout the research aimed to illuminate and illustrate the process of transformation as well as highlighting the particular approaches taken by schools to sustain their improved performance. A thematic approach was used to identify key components of success and sustainability factors across schools in the sample. Cross case findings are synthesised under the key thematic headings that were derived from the analysis.

lished. There are relatively few studies of sustainable transformation in schools.

Although the evaluation by Hargreaves et al (2006) explored the process of innovation and change in RATL schools, their evaluation looked only at the first two cohorts of RATL. Several cohorts and years on from this evaluation it is possible to look at a cross section of RATL schools that have improved performance and sustained improvement over time.

2. Successful transformation and change

2.1 Levers for change

In any change process there will inevitably be a range of factors or components that have contributed to success. The data across the schools in the study revealed that there are common components or levers for change and transformation. The research identified three types of lever that are integral to the process of transformation.

Drawing upon the work of Crossley and Corbyn (2006) these three strategies or levers for change have been categorised as: content, process and dynamics. While the combination of these levers vary from school to school it is clear that these levers feature heavily in the various approaches used by schools to sustain transformation.

One of the greatest challenges to all schools is that of sustaining improvement. Most schools know how to improve and many do so but the hard task is sustaining improvement over time. Inevitably schools go through cycles of change and face unpredictable difficulties and blocks to progress. Sustaining improvement means overcoming such difficulties without destabilisation.

The real challenge is not getting good results but getting good results year after year. The secret is there is no secret. You just have to keep at it (S6 H)

Sustainable improvement can only be achieved through deep rooted cultural change where schools have purposefully created the internal infrastructure to manage any external or internal challenges that come their way. Schools that have relied upon structural or technical changes alone to secure improvement are unlikely to be as resilient as schools that have invested in deep cultural change where managing change is a core part of what they do.

Crossley and Corbyn (2005) reinforce the importance of cultural change as one of the central keys to successful school transformation. Their model of transformation is premised upon the interplay of content, process and dynamic levers that collectively produce a cultural dynamic that secures and sustains improvement.

2.2 The model

The research set out to investigate the process of creating and sustaining transformation in schools. It also aimed to test the validity of the conceptual model developed by Corbyn and Crossley (2005). This model proposes that there are content and process strategies that are the catalysts for successful transformation in schools. The content levers are as follows:

- Approaches to learning
- New technologies
- Workforce modernisation
- Embedded use of data
- Empowering students and school organisation and design (Crossley and Corbyn, 2006: 70)

These content levers tend to be utilised within a broader context of personalisation and in a combination that is appropriate to the developmental stage of the school. In addition, the model contends that there are also process levers which mobilise the particular content levers that schools are using. These process levers are:

- Tweaking to transform
- Developing strategic intent
- Innovation
- Deployment of resources
- Making step changes
- Networking and collaboration
- Leadership and culture *(Crossley and Corbyn, 2006: 94)*

As Crossley and Corbyn (2006) note:

'The extent to which schools engage with each content lever is an important consideration and relative to context. In some cases, this engagement may be significant and induce a 'step change'. In other cases, it may simply be just doing what you normally do but a little better... The notion of engagement involves a range of processes that explains how schools sustain and develop their relationship with the key content levers'. (p 93)

The model outlined by Crossley and Corbyn (2006) makes it clear that the content and process levers are key factors in the process of school transformation. Further they argue that engagement with various process levers is absolutely necessary for any transformation to occur. As highlighted earlier, creating the right cultural dynamics is a key prerequisite of school transformation and this is unlikely to happen without effective leadership.

2.3. Findings

The main aim of the research was to collect evidence about the process of successful and sustainable change in schools. Performance data was used to identify and select schools that had demonstrated success over time, although they were operating in very different contexts and from very different starting points. While all schools had successfully raised and sustained performance, they had also pursued very different pathways towards school transformation.
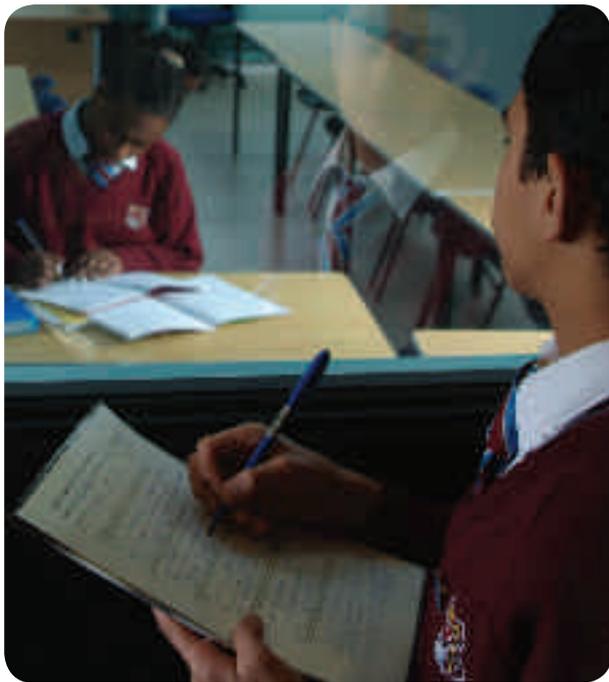
The research also allowed the model developed by Crossley and Corbyn (2006) to be empirically tested through data analysis and interrogation. The model was not superimposed upon the data in any way. Rather, analysis was conducted in a grounded way ensuring that categories and patterns emerged from the empirical evidence.

The data from the research project endorses many of the aspects of the transformation model. In all schools there was clear evidence that both content and process levers are being used with the prime purpose of improving or enhancing school performance. While the combination of the levers varied from school to school, it is clear that schools were using an amalgam of levers that best suited their context and the particular stage of development.

We are using a range of different ways to raise improvement. It's a mixture of strategies, no single approach will work, the power is in the mix (S 14 AH)

Hargreaves et al (2006:15) highlight the importance of sequencing, harmonising and integrating short, medium and long term strategies to secure and sustain improvement. It is clear from the data that schools are actively seeking a blend of strategies that best fit their context and stage of development. Such an integrated approach to improvement tends to be most effective in school cultures that are already ready and responsive to innovation and change. These are schools where the cultural dynamic is supportive and not resistant to new ways of working.

The notion of a cultural dynamic is important for school transformation and is endorsed by the research evidence. The culture of the school can either hinder or help the particular set of content and process levers being deployed. It is clear that if 'culture works against you, you can do very little' (Fullan, 2004). Schools that have sustained transformation are characterised by the cultural dynamics of trust, positive staff and student relationships and a willingness to take risks.

We have a different school now. This is a now good place to learn, the relationships are better. I am not sure why but something changed (S11 St)

This cultural dynamic is intrinsically linked to and mutually dependent upon leadership within the school. The evidence shows that the content and process levers are likely to be most effective when they are embedded within a school culture that is responsive and prepared for change. This culture is normally carefully orchestrated and designed by those leading the organisation.

Without question, leadership is the central driving force behind the process of school transformation, even though the particular style or type of leadership does vary from school to school. All the leaders in each of the case study schools share a determination that their school will be the best it can be.

I hold high expectations of my staff. They, in turn, hold high expectations of themselves and the children. I keep those expectations high and results follow (S4 H)

Heads hold high expectations of staff and students. They are driven by their desire to see the school reach its full potential and will not compromise on standards. Once goals are achieved, new goals and aspirations are immediately set in place, aimed for and subsequently achieved. It is this cycle of continuous innovation that is the platform for sustaining improvement. Leaders in schools that sustain transformation continually seek improvement, regeneration and reinvention. They are restless

to achieve more which means they are always seeking something new or better for the young people in their schools.

I am never satisfied with things as they are; I always want to move towards things as they might be. Continual change is the only constant so we may as well drive it rather than be driven by it (S 14 H)

The research also highlights the importance of the risk taking nature of the organisation and its ability to innovate. All the schools had been involved in the RATL programme and it is clear that many of the principles and processes associated with RATL continue to drive innovation and change.

We are a risk taking school. We have learned from RATL that innovation is not a safe option but ultimately worthwhile (S3 H)

Being involved in RATL gave us the tools for home grown innovation and we are using still them! (S8 H)

All the schools have refined their expertise in creating and managing change. They are all risk takers with a keen ability to innovate. The relentless pursuit of innovation is a consistent and integral feature of schools that sustain transformation.

2.4 Successful school transformation

Successful school transformation incorporates both ''fixed and flexible' components. There are certain fixed, non negotiable aspects of improvement (e.g. a focus on learning and raising attainment) but also a variety of flexible ways in which the central goals can be achieved (e.g. a mixture of content and process levers). The combination of the fixed and flexible components varies at each school and is largely context dependent.

Sustaining school transformation means that schools engage in constant self-renewal, driven from inside rather than dictated from the outside. Schools that sustain transformation have powerful mechanisms of internal accountability and set high professional standards for themselves. They have sophisticated feedback mechanisms in place that ensure that innovation is properly evaluated.

Our prime is to be internally accountable and to really focus on high quality teaching and learning as the one and only priority (S6 DH)

Sustainable transformation is dependent upon continuous innovation and change. All the schools sustained high performance through a continual desire to improve and through constant innovation. Schools that sustain transformation actively seek out new ideas to ensure they are continually innovating and moving forward.

It is clear that continual innovation asks a great deal of all staff. They are expected to lead innovation and to be active in trialling new ideas and implementing change. For some staff this is energising, invigorating and challenging. It is what keeps the job interesting and engaging. For other staff it can prove to be too much. The drive to be at the leading edge of change is not for everyone. Some staff feel that the pressure for change is too acute.

This school is a hothouse of change. If you can't keep up with the pace of innovation then it is best to move on, some staff have! (S7 T)

Sustaining school transformation is unlikely to happen without some external impetus, drive and input. Schools can improve themselves but usually there is the support of other schools or agencies. The study found that initiating and maintaining transformation is highly dependent upon schools supporting and challenging each other. By collaborating and learning from other schools, there is evidence that the process of change is more resilient and effective long term.

We are part of an active school network that keeps us on our toes. If they are introducing new ways of doing things, then we can't be left behind (S17 AH)

Sustaining school transformation also requires the active and purposeful abandonment of pro-

cesses and ways of working that no longer meet the school's stage of development. Schools that sustain improvement are highly innovative but they are also quick to relinquish ways of working that are no longer fit for purpose.

If it is no longer fit for purpose, then we drop it. Why keep putting energy and time into things that are no longer working? (S11 T)

These schools also tend to have fluid, dynamic and malleable cultures that can readily adopt and adapt to new challenges and changes. They are essentially 'risk taking cultures' where the dominant ethos is one of 'can do' and where the need to try new ways of working is a commonly shared imperative.

The next section looks at the process of transformation in more depth to consider how schools transform teaching and learning, the role and nature of leadership and cultural dynamics that are central to deep and sustainable change.

3. The process of transformation

3.1 How schools transform

The schools in this study epitomise school-led system wide change in action. Each of the schools has not only improved and sustained its own performance but also has shared its knowledge, advice and expertise with other schools. These schools are able to learn quickly and transfer that learning while simultaneously maintaining high quality standards. It is this ability to learn while innovating that is the main characteristic of schools that sustain transformation.

A number of the schools in the study had previously been underperforming and therefore the issue of raising standards and attainment remains of central importance. Initially these schools chose interventions or developments that had the greatest chance of impacting positively on the quality of teaching and learning. The rationale for this choice lay in the need to make direct and clear changes to instruction and learning outcomes.

In the early stages of transformation, a number of the schools had engaged in curriculum re-design with the prime aim of making the curriculum more accessible for young people. New developments and innovations in the curriculum was a common approach to raising achievement adopted by many of the schools.

The curriculum was quite disorganised I think. Children would spend an awful lot of their time doing very strange GCSE's, it seemed like someone had created a curriculum without the children in mind – and the school didn't seem to have a tangible ethos. It was a bit like a radio play school, just a lot of noise and shouting, and there didn't seem to be a common purpose. (S 8 HT)

I am clear that the main lever for transformation was an effective, appropriate curriculum which met the needs of the pupils, consistency in rewards and sanctions and data use (S14 HT).

Curriculum transformation and specialism have worked here. Specialist sports status and attendant co-ordinator have been integral to curriculum transformation (S15 HT)

Curriculum innovations have begun and staff are used to growing curriculum approaches such as early entry of Y9 students into BTEC courses. (S 5 MM)

The data also showed that across all of the schools there is a clear and central focus on improving teaching and learning. The prime aim of all of the innovations and developments undertaken by schools is to improve learning processes and outcomes. There is also a great emphasis upon accountability for performance and transparency around classroom practice.

The message to the staff was that I need to know what is happening in the classroom, we are accountable but from a professional development point of view (School 1 HT)

I definitely think that internal accountability has had a huge effect. There are records kept and the agenda is always focused on achievement that is our first discussion. We don't talk about behaviour...it is about the achievement within the department and the subject area their monitoring, how they are monitoring so the internal accountability is

really high. I think that this is one of the most significant features of our improvement as a school.(S 4 HT)

There is a focus on improvement as opposed to standards. This is both rewarding and motivational for pupils. It represents a culture change. (S 5 MM)

We've done a lot of simple things, and we've done them well. Preparing lessons, being a good teacher, being good at what you do. Is that the best that you can do? And if it is then are you happy with that? (S 2 HT)

All of the schools use data to inform future developments and to assist with the process of raising achievement. It is clear that data plays a major role in the process of transformation and change. It offers a basis for the scrutiny of performance but also allows schools to monitor the impact and effect of innovations aimed at raising performance.

We are far more data rich and data smart using the data that has an impact in teaching and learning within the classroom, so that has totally transformed. (S1 DH)

Data has just transformed what the school does. Students and parents use e portal to access data and there is information about using the data to support learning. (S 6 HT)

Achievement has been steadily going up for the past few years; this is mainly attributed to the increasingly adept use of data, which allowed our staff to target students in need of support (S7 HT)

Our use of the data is a relatively recent innovation but if you don't have those kind of goals it's very difficult to know where you're heading, it's like your teaching; if you don't have a specific aim then you're not really going to push up, and it's been the use of the data and various other things. So data has made a considerable difference (S 8 MM)

The use of data is unquestionably a powerful tool for assessing where innovation and change efforts are best placed. This targeted approach has proved to be successful and a major contributor to school improvement and raised student performance.

3.2 Leadership

As highlighted earlier, effective leadership is a key factor in successful school transformation. While leadership styles and approaches vary across the case study schools, there is a general acknowledgement that the vision and core values of the headteacher have been the catalyst for positive change and development at the school.

> *The head's vision of what we can achieve has moved this school forward. Her belief that we can do far better has made us do so much more and achieve so much more (S2MM)*

The dominant model of leadership, in the case study schools, is not 'top-down' or overly bureaucratic. There has been a purposeful and deliberate effort to distribute leadership (Harris, 2008). This has been driven by the head teacher with the prime aim of sharing responsibility and accountability more widely.

Across the schools distributed leadership took various forms. In some cases senior leadership teams had been extended, in other schools new teams had been formed, in some schools new structures had been

put in place in order to spread out leadership practice. By distributing leadership more widely schools had secured greater collective responsibility, decision making and support for the quality of teaching and learning.

> *I really believe in participatory decision making, really I genuinely believe that. I worked in schools where you had no opportunity to innovate. So I genuinely believe in participatory decision making that is beyond the consultative. (S 7 Head)*

> *There has been a distribution of leadership as we have now created Heads of Faculty and we are expecting those core Heads of Faculty to play an integral part, not only within their own subject areas, but to be leading elsewhere(S1 DH)*

> *Leadership is inclusive and very flat. Classroom teachers have autonomy to develop early on. (S 5 MM)*

> *Shared leadership and team work has been an important dimension of success here. We are a team i.e. a whole team not just departments or subjects-everyone sees themselves as part of the whole school picture. It would be easy to be fragmented lots of divisions but with distributed leadership we know what we're all working towards and are part of (S 13 HT)*

Support staff and associate staff are an essential part of the wider distribution of leadership. The data showed that the impact of distributed leadership is generally positive as staff feel empowered and involved.

3.3 Cultural dynamics

Innovation and change is most likely to succeed in a culture in which trust and respect flourish. In the schools in the study, formal leaders empower rather than control; they ask the right questions rather than provide the right answers and they focus on flexibility, rather than insist on adherence. All staff are aware that their ideas are welcome and that they can offer innovative ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning even further, thus laying a more solid foundation for their organisation's success.

In this school there are opportunities to innovate and try things out, that's the best bit. The SMT encourage you to try things out and ensure you have support. This way of working means it's a positive environment to work in (S9 T)

Schools that sustain transformation have a set of cultural dynamics which allow and indeed promote risk taking. They understand the need for constant renewal and change in order to maintain and sustain high levels of performance.

Everyone just seems to work together as a team, and it's great, and that's what I think is different from other schools. I find in some schools that you get a lot of separation both within the year and in the school, but here everyone's just working together to make sure rules are kept, and everyone tries their best really (S 8 Student)

What I think makes it special is the fact that you've got a hard working ethos and state of mind there, but it's also quite relaxed at the same time. The people, if you go into a lesson, they don't have to be told all the

time what they have to do, they will just get on and do it. We're given quite a specific time-scale of things, we're always reminded how close we are to the exams, how much time we have got left and how much we can improve by, and because we've always been told that, we can work out what we can do from that. (S8 Student)

I would say the teachers here really inspire you to do really well. From the moment you come into the school you are told that anything is possible if you work for it, which really gives people that motivation, and awards and stuff through the year helps to encourage people to just do their best and work hard. (S 9 Student)

I think the school's culture shifted with the school becoming a collective, and visible signs of the senior leadership team going across and making bridges and almost taking people from the separated area and bringing them across (S 9 Asst H)

Establishing a 'high innovation, high trust' culture is dependent on having a leader who has clear vision for the organisation but who can also set in place the right cultural conditions where innovation and change can be most effective. Building relationships and securing trust are two essential components of successful culture building.

4. Commentary

4.1 The power of collaboration

Over the last decade the rhetoric of school improvement has changed from a language of school reform to a language of school restructuring. The educational discourse has shifted away from school improvement to a preoccupation with innovation, change and transformation. This context of collaboration is centrally important to understanding the gains in achievement made by schools over the last decade. The move from individualism to col-lectivism has created a climate in which there is greater trust in schools' ability to help other schools to improve.

The emerging new educational forms and struc-tures have been created by schools working col-laboratively rather than as the direct result of any externally imposed changes. While policies such as 'Every Child Matters' and 'Building Schools for the Future' have provided the momentum for restructuring and redesigning schools, the greater impetus for change has been driven by schools working collaboratively with other schools. RATL remains a powerful example of a model of intervention and change that is school focused and school driven.

Schools that sustain transformation continually seek to regenerate and reinvent themselves. This is an internal cultural norm that is widely under-stood and shared among staff and students. These schools have a pervasive innovative qual-ity and they thrive on challenge. Deep cultural change is at the heart of successful and sustain-able transformation, this is how schools maintain success. Schools that sustain transformation are restless for change and avoid complacency; they act rather than be acted upon.

4.2 Transformation 'by schools for schools'

Transformation 'by schools for schools' is much more than an attractive strap-line. It now accurately characterises and describes the way in which schools are supporting each other in creating and maintaining high levels of innovation and performance. Schools are actively helping other schools to raise performance and through peer support are securing improvements that are sustainable.

Schools are improving performance and sustaining improvement through a combination of high internal professional accountability and network support. Schools are sustaining improvement through continually seeking new and better ways of doing things. Through the networks there is a collective responsibility for improvement and a shared belief that schools can learn together and can support each other in their quest for improvement.

This 'school to school' support has undoubtedly been heavily influenced by the RATL programme which has been a consistently positive feature of the educational landscape over recent years. Schools have embedded the professionally inclusive RATL principles of positive pressure and external support to continue to raise performance. Unlike other improvement projects, the RATL programme has equipped schools with the technical knowledge and professional infrastructure to carry on this work for themselves.

RATL has promoted school led innovation and change on a considerable scale. The rewards of this investment have been significant and it is clear, from the evidence in this study, that schools continue to benefit from the RATL model and are actively using the RATL processes to sustain performance long after they have disengaged from the formal programme. In summary, the principles underlying the RATL model continue to assist schools to sustain high performance.

Schools are now the change leaders. Through their collective efforts major system re-design is both possible and realisable. School based innovation is a major force for system renewal that is demonstrating sustainable success. School to school networks have the potential to move the entire system forward and as this research has shown, they significantly improve the life chances and achievement of young people in all settings.

References

Crossley D and Corbyn G – *Learn to Transform*
Network Continuum

Fullan, M (2004) *Leadership and Sustainability*
Corwin Press.

Harris, A (2008) *Distributed Leadership*
London Routledge Press

Hargreaves, A. Shirley, D. Evans, M. Stone-Johnson, M and Riseman, D. (2006)
Raising Achievement Transforming Learning: The long and short of school improvement
Summary of the evaluation report on the Raising Achievement Transforming Learning Project
Lynch School of Education Boston College

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation.*
New York: Doubleday.

List of participating schools

- **Alleyne's High School**, Staffordshire County Council, RATL Cohort B
- **Baxter College**, Worcestershire County Council, Consultant Head
- **Branston Community College**, Lincolnshire County Council, RATL Cohort A
- **Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College**, North Somerset Council, RATL Cohort C, D
- **Brookfield High School**, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, RATL Cohort C
- **Cornwallis Academy**, Kent County Council, Mentor School
- **Coteland's School**, Lincolnshire County Council, RATL Cohort A, D
- **Eggar's School**, Hampshire County Council, Mentor School
- **Glossopdale Community College**, Derbyshire County Council, RATL Cohort A, D
- **Grange School**, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, Mentor School
- **Hodgson High School**, Lancashire County Council, HPSS RAPP
- **Langdon School**, London Borough of Newham, Consultant Head
- **Newall Green High School**, Manchester City Council, Mentor School
- **Parkside Comprehensive School**, Durham County Council, RATL Cohort A
- **Stoke Damerel Community College**, Plymouth City Council, Mentor School
- **The Compton School**, London Borough of Barnet, Mentor School
- **The Matthew Arnold School**, Surrey County Council, RATL Cohort A
- **The Swinton High School**, Salford City Council, RATL Cohort C

The Raising Achievement Transforming Learning programme run by the SSAT involves the appointment of Mentor Schools and Consultant Heads who support RATL Project Schools.

RATL A Cohort : Spring 2004 – Summer 2006

RATL B Cohort : Spring 2005 – Summer 2006

RATL C Cohort : Spring 2006 – Summer 2007

RATL D Cohort : Spring 2007 – Summer 2008